



# Political Processes and (the lack of) Parliamentary Deliberation

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# Overview



1. What is deliberation?
2. No deliberation in Parliaments. Importance of anticipation and negotiation
3. Voting ➡ Parliamentary debates
  - Example 1: Legislative agenda setting
  - Example 2: Strategic amendments (e.g. killer amendments)
  - Example 3: Survey on voting in Norwegian Parliament
4. Conclusion



"the central element of the democratic process resides in the procedure of deliberative politics."

**Jürgen Habermas**

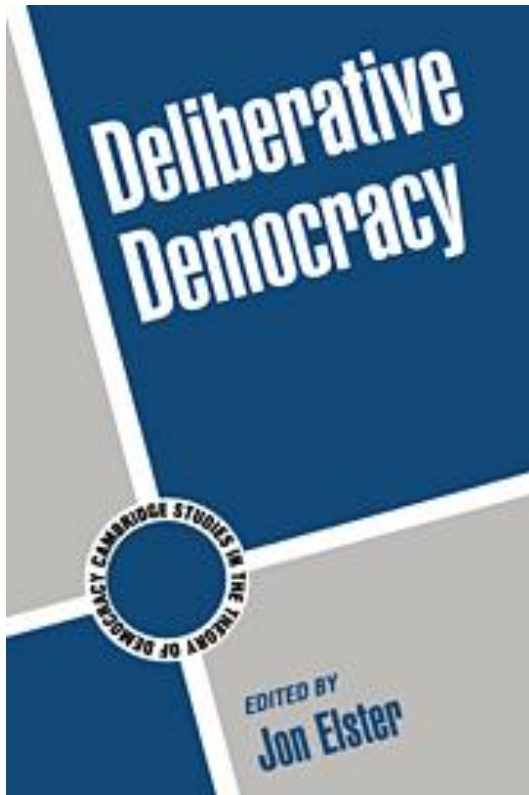
"Even under favorable conditions, no complex society could ever correspond to the model of purely communicative social relations."

**Jürgen Habermas**

"Our main argument will be that *talk matters*: the nature of speech acts inside legislatures is a *function of institutional rules and mechanisms*, and bears an influence on political outcomes that transcends those rules and mechanisms."

**Jürg Steiner, André Bachtiger,  
Markus Spörndli and Marco Steenbergen, p. 1**  
(emphasis added)





## What is deliberation?

"... includes decision making by means of arguments offered *by* and *to* participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality."

**Jon Elster, p. 8**

"... the endogenous change of preferences resulting from communication."

**Susan Stokes, p. 123**

"'Deliberation' is a form of discussion intended to change the preferences on the bases of which people decide how to act."

**Adam Przeworski, p. 140**

"... a conversation whereby individuals speak and listen sequentially..."

*Minimalist definition by*  
**David Austen-Smith**

# Deliberation

- *Dynamic* process:  
Sequential discussion
- Participants offer arguments (give reasons)
- Participants accept the better argument
- Aims at consensus



# Parliamentary debates

- Legislators often speak to virtually empty chambers
- Strong party-discipline (individual action restricted)
- Legislators from the same party often repeat the same arguments over and over
- Often too late to propose (formal) amendments
- Policy-outcome typically known in advance

# Policy-Processes in Parliaments:

## Deliberation

- *Dynamic* process:  
Sequential discussion
- Participants offer arguments (give reasons)
- Participants accept the better argument
- Aims at consensus



- **Non-Negotiated Bargaining**
  - Unilateral action
  - Anticipated reaction
- **Negotiated Bargaining (explicit majority formation)**
  - Logrolling and vote-trading
  - Compromise (and consensus)
  - Side-payments (non-policy rewards and punishments)

**Lewis Froman, 1967. *The Congressional Process: Strategies, Rules, and Procedures***

## *In Game Theory:*

### **Backward Induction**

(analyzing sequences of choices; work backward from (anticipated) final outcomes in order to sort out optimal strategies)

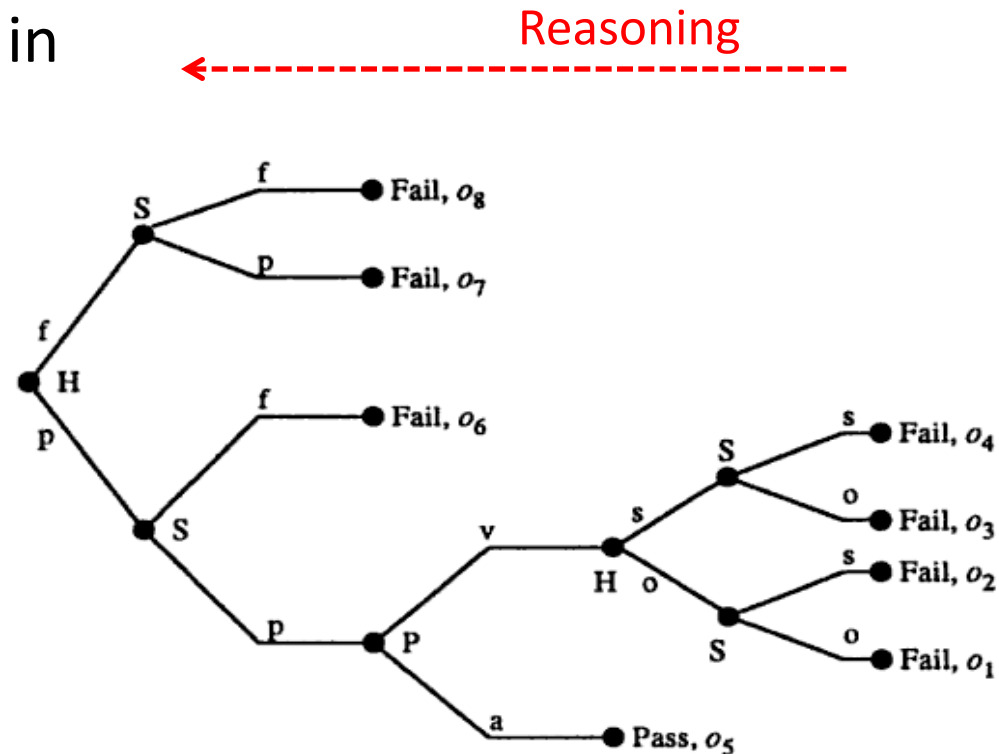
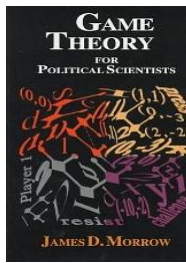


Figure 1.2 Legislative Extensive Form

Action (process)



“Strategy is the essence of politics; a nonstrategic politician cannot achieve his or her aims.”

James Morrow, 1994. *Game Theory for Political Scientists*

### *Similarly in legislative politics:*

We need to look towards the final stage of decision-making processes [voting stage]...

... to understand how politicians behave at preparatory decision-making stages and in parliamentary debates



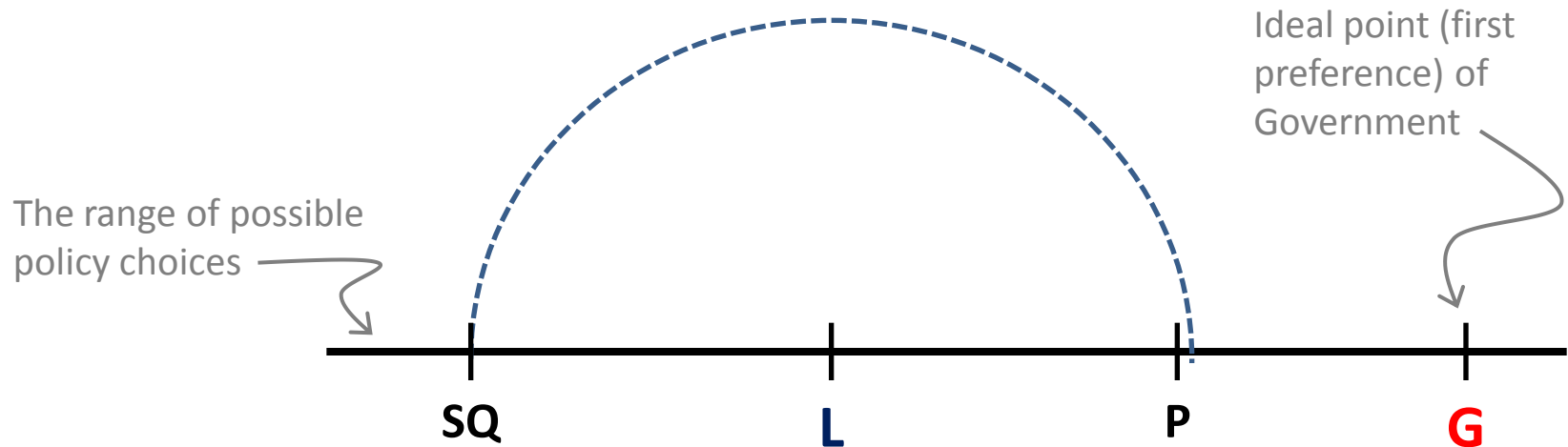
AGENDA SETTING  
BARGAINING  
NEGOTIATIONS

DEBATE

VOTING

# One-dimensional Setter Model (Romer and Rosenthal 1978)

Closed rule (take-it-or-leave-it)



G = Government (agenda setter)

SQ = Status quo

L = Legislature (median); no amendment power

P = Proposal

For L, P marginally better than SQ

P is the best alternative G can achieve

Government's choice:  
-Propose G and be defeated (L will veto the proposal)  
-Propose P and it will be adopted

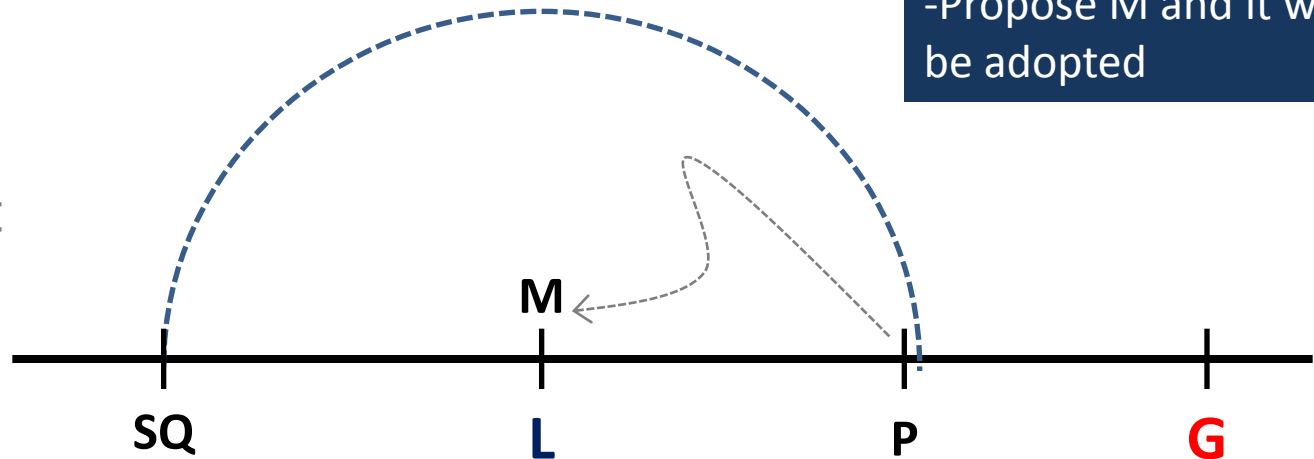
## ... and if legislature has amendment power

Open rule

Government's choice:  
-Propose P and be defeated (L will amend)  
-Propose M and it will be adopted

G = Government

SQ = Status quo



L = Legislature (median)

P = Government proposal

M = Median alternative

L gets ideal point adopted

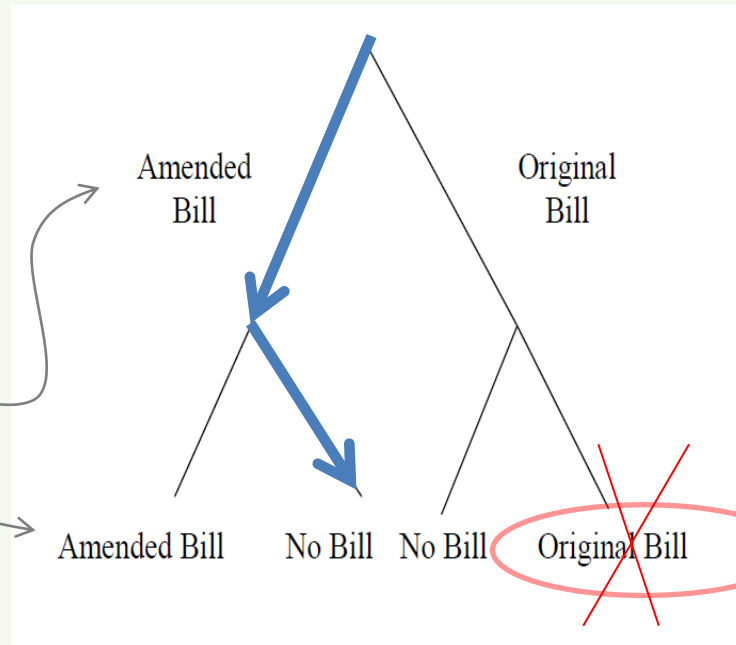


### Legislative Agenda Setting Power of Governments:

1. *Institutional* (closed rules, gatekeeping power, etc.)
2. *Partisan* (majority government)
3. *Positional* (centrally located in policy space)

The character and dynamics of the parliamentary debate will depend on institutional details (e.g. closed or open rule) and the strategic approach of the actors involved

**Strategic amendment:** Not intended for adoption, but for defeating the original bill and preserving *status quo*

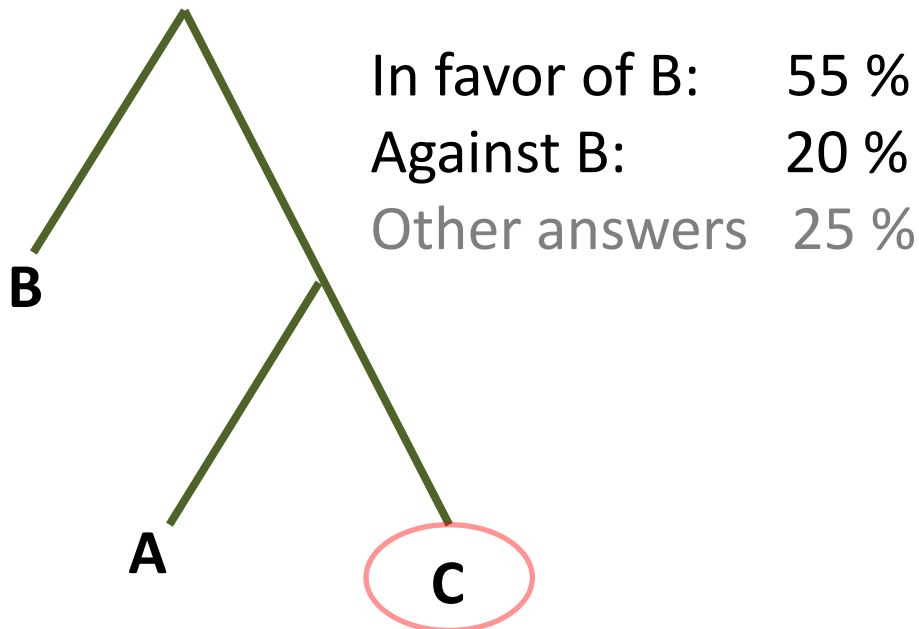


A **killer amendment** to an original bill is an amendment such that without the amendment the bill is expected to win, but with the amendment the bill is expected to lose.

**Thought Experiment.** Norwegian MPs were asked what they would do in the following situation:

1. Three alternative A, B and C exists
2. Your party has not proposed any of the alternatives
3. Assume you have preference ranking  $A > B > C$  (C is worst)
4. B is voted first
5. If B is defeated, C will win

➡ Do you vote in favor of B or against B?



Strategic voting