

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS: THE ARCHITECTURE OF POWER, ACCOUNTABILITY AND DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE
12 November 2020, 10am-7.00pm



Parliament Buildings is an one day conference exploring the architecture of power, accountability and democracy in Europe

Organiser

The Bartlett School of Architecture and UCL European Institute s.parra@ucl.ac.uk, c.sternberg@ucl.ac.uk

About

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/architecture/news/2020/may/announcing-parliament-buildings-conference-call-papers>

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<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/grand-challenges/ucls-six-grand-challenges/cultural-understanding/current-activities>

In the face of ongoing political, social and economic changes, confidence in democracy is waning – calling upon us to rethink our political institutions and the buildings in which they are accommodated. From Churchill's claim 'we shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us' to Mitterrand's belief that 'there is no great politics without great architecture', parliamentary buildings are widely recognised as the symbols and instruments of political life. They express political values, structure political life, the space where government is held to account and democratic representation is embodied. The architecture, history and rituals of parliament buildings say a lot about ideals of legitimacy, norms of governance and behaviour. With the wide adoption of television coverage and social media, these buildings project/propel political culture outward ever more, changing the scale and speed of communication between citizens and their parliament.

Most architectural explorations of parliamentary buildings and their debating/assembly chambers show that the spatial forms of congregation and negotiation remain fixed, reflecting the political processes of past times. These studies also reveal that most architectural accounts of parliaments offer mere records of typology. Although cognizant

of the manipulation of the wider physical environment to achieve political effects, architectural theory has little to say about parliamentary buildings as political institutions that facilitate spatial democratic practices including theatrical spectacles, rituals and discourses alongside the making of laws and policies. Political approaches to the architecture of parliaments are disappointingly lacking, much of the literature focusing instead on the metaphoric use of space or some abstract exploration of the spatiality of agency and process.

We invite contributions from architecture as well as from political science and political theory, history, law, geography and associated disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. We seek to engage parliament buildings in Europe, shifting attention from their monumental expression to the spatial construction of political practices and traditions. The aim is twofold: to explore the role of politics in architecture and architectural theory; to explore the place of architecture and spatiality in political science and the social sciences. Some of the questions we would like to address include the following:

- How do parliament buildings shape concepts of their political selves and of the body politic?
- How do their real and televised spaces structure political practices within; what parliaments do and how, and what kind of politics and policies they produce?
- How do parliament buildings relate to the broader political culture, ideologies and consciousness in which the parliamentary work is embedded? How do spaces, narratives, ceremonies and insignia shape collective identities, democratic practices, and citizen participation? How do they enable, structure and constrain political representation?
- Can we resist destructive politics re-imagining how parliaments can shape the diverse national narratives and the shared narrative of Europe in the future?
- Can experiments with performance art in re-created parliamentary settings help re-imagine the space of political debate in contemporary societies?

The organisers will publish an edited volume based on contributions to the conference.

Please send abstracts of 500 min-700 max words to: s.parra@ucl.ac.uk, c.sternberg@ucl.ac.uk

Time table

5 May 2020	Announcement
15 June 2020:	Submission of abstracts (extended abstracts consisting of 500 min - 700 max words excluding title and bibliography) should be sent to s.parra@ucl.ac.uk and c.sterberg@ucl.ac.uk
22 June 2020	Notification of acceptance
15 September 2020	Submission of paper
12 November 2020	Conference