

EVALUATION OF DEMOCRACY RESEARCH GROUP

Director:

Lou SAFRA



Lou Safra holds a PhD in cognitive science awarded by the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris in 2017. She is currently assistant professor in political psychology at the CEVIPOF-Sciences Po and an associate

researcher at the Institut d'Études Cognitives (Laboratoire de Neurosciences Cognitives & Laboratoire de Neurosciences Cognitives et Computationnelles, École Normale Supérieure, Paris). She adopts an ecological and evolutionary approach to better understand inter-individual differences in these domains, across both space and time. To do so, she relies on behavioural data, social surveys, computational modelling and, more recently, the analysis of cultural artefacts such as paintings and books.

Affiliated members:

- Julia CAGE
- Hortense DE PADIRAC
- Edgard DEWITTE
- Roberto GALBIATI
- Emiliano GROSSMAN
- Colin HAY
- Arno LIZET
- Elisa MOUGIN
- Sofia WICKBERG

The research group "Evaluation of Democracy" (EvalDem) aims to provide an interdisciplinary, comparative and innovative evaluation of the democratic character of the public policy production process. Its work is organised around two themes.

The first, which focuses on **democratic institutions and the way they operate**, aims to assess the impact of institutional reforms and the development of democratic tools that can change the way citizens perceive and interact with institutions in general. It is particularly interested in issues of representation, electoral process, and political influence, notably via the media.

The second focuses **on the place of citizens in the development of public policies**. More specifically, it seeks to assess the extent to which citizens' opinions are considered in the various stages of the public policy cycle: the definition of public policy issues, the development of public policies and their evaluation. Among these questions, a specific place is given to those linked to the development of participatory democracy and the articulation between experts, non-expert citizens, and political agenda. In addition, specific attention is being paid to the issue of evaluating citizens' preferences in all their diversity, from an interdisciplinary methodological perspective.

Main projects

Déterminants sociaux des décisions de justice pénale (sodejupe) - Aurélie Ouss et Roberto Galbiati

The aim of this project is to take an interdisciplinary look at the question of the influence of the characteristics of professional judges and trial jurors on criminal justice decisions. By combining quasi-experimental quantitative approaches based on administrative data (criminal records, assize court dockets, minutes of proceedings, official journal) with interviews with professional judges, this project will shed new light on the social determinants of criminal justice decisions - highlighting the influence of factors such as age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and the profession of jurors, as well as the career paths of magistrates - a subject little studied in France, yet essential for understanding how justice works and its ability to guarantee equal treatment for all those subject to trial.

La déontologie parlementaire : usages et effets d'un nouveau régime de probité (polethics) – Sofia Wickberg et Colin Hay

The PolEthics project evaluates the ethics policy implemented within the National Assembly through the reception of its instruments by its citizens. The aim of the project is to explore the obligations relating to the fight against corruption, the prevention of conflicts of interest and the promotion of deontology through the way in which they are received and used by their constituents. It aims to shed light on the relationship between MPs and other 'publics' within the Assembly, such as parliamentary assistants and administrators, and these various ethical instruments. To this end, it is based on a methodology that combines a prosopographical perspective and a semi-directive interview approach with the MNAs, parliamentary assistants and Assembly administrators who make up the new legislature, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of their perception of this new probity regime, as well as the uses they make of it and its effects on their practices.

Public opinion, democratic accountability and evaluation of defence: towards a new comparative research agenda – Cyrille Thiébaud et Lou Safra

The aim of this project is to gain a better understanding of the specific nature of citizens' attitudes to defence policies through a series of experimental surveys conducted in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The lack of data on attitudes to defence makes it very difficult to assess the match between defence policies and public preferences. Already characterised by weak democratic control, defence thus seems to escape any evaluation. By combining the study of public policy, opinion and cognitive science, this project first addresses the methodological issues raised by the measurement of opinions. Secondly, this project seeks to study defence as a multidimensional policy that cannot be reduced to the most visible military operations, by analysing the variation in attitudes towards different aspects of defence, as well as their articulation with more general political values.

Scientific events

- 21-22/09/2023:** "Workshop "women in politics". Workshop sur les causes et les conséquences de la représentation politique des femmes en démocraties.
- 17/05/2023:** "How Congressional Committee System Reform Affects Issue Attention". Séminaire avec Sean Theriault (Université du Texas à Austin & visiting au LIEPP)

The mechanics and determinants of anti-science attitudes : a literature review – Yasmine Tuffy

This project, initiated by the Axis as part of the redeployment with Université de Paris, aims to explore, summarise and discuss the existing literature that provides insight into the nature and operation of anti-scientific attitudes. To this end, the review draws on literature from a variety of academic fields, such as history, philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology, and addresses a number of topics relevant to the study of anti-science attitudes, such as the environment, public health and scientific governance. This review provides an overview of anti-science attitudes, their mechanisms and determinants, with a view to encouraging reflection on the issues surrounding the public's perception of science and on ways of improving it.

Etude des caractéristiques des candidats aux élections générales au royaume-uni depuis 1918 – Florence Binard, Anne Boring, Julia Cagé et Edgard Dewitte

This project aims to understand the disequilibrium in the representation of different identities in election candidates. The first objective of this project is to collect and quantitatively study the profiles of all candidates for British parliamentary elections since 1918 (i.e. 30,590 unique candidates), using a number of historical sources (in particular the Times Guide to the House of Commons which, since 1885, has published data on all candidates for parliamentary elections in Great Britain). These data are essential for identifying long-term historical trends that were previously invisible using data on elected representatives alone. Secondly, this project is looking at the extent to which the over-representation of individuals with a university degree can have an impact on the smooth running of democracy, and aims to help us better understand the new political dynamics that our societies are witnessing.

Axis publications

- THERIAULT, Sean, DYE, Connor. An Evaluation of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946: How Reforming the Congressional Committee System Affects Issue Attention. Sciences Po LIEPP Working Paper n°152, November 2023.
- MORENO-MEDINA, Jonathan, OUSS, Aurélie, BAYER, Patrick, BA, Bocar. Officer-Involved: the media language of police killings. Sciences Po LIEPP Working Paper n°144, May 2023.
- THIEBAUT, Cyrille, FRIEDERIKE Richter, SAFRA, Lou. Saisir les opinions au-delà de la moyenne : La perception des enjeux de défense en France dans le contexte de la guerre en Ukraine. Sciences Po LIEPP Working Paper n°145, June 2023.
- TUFFY Yasmine, The mechanics and determinants of anti-science attitudes: a literature review, Sciences Po LIEPP Working Paper n°140, February 2023.
- Yasmine TUFFY, The mechanics and determinants of anti-science attitudes: a literature review LIEPP Working Paper n°140, February 2023