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ABSTRACT:

Legislatures have recently started to invest in anticipatory governance. Alongside new practices, they have introduced designated future committees and organs that connect MPs to future-regarding visioning and advice. Two decades ago, only Finland had a ‘future committee’, today broadly similar organs exist in 10 countries around the world. While signaling an important attempt to take expert-driven anticipatory governance closer to voters, legislative future organs may become short-lasting or remain politically weak, as their efforts to gain power typically threaten established legislative actors. To examine this emerging tension, we theoretically distinguish the unorthodox methods of future committees from traditional legislative practices and empirically compare the operation of all existing legislative future committees and similar organs. We uncover a considerable similarity between these institutions that mostly operate outside of the ordinary legislative process. To survive, they must add value to MPs without endangering the existing division of power. Finding this balance enhances the consolidation of legislative future organs, but it simultaneously limits their conventional political impact.

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