Editorial

Celebrating a Decade of Excellence in Parliamentary Studies

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1. State-of-play in parliamentary research and the emergence of REPA

Parliaments entered the second quarter of the 21st century confronting unprecedented challenges. The bipolar and unipolar orders that shaped post-war parliamentary diplomacy have given way to a multipolar configuration in which representative institutions must reconcile national sovereignty, regional integration, and global interdependence. Artificial intelligence, automation and data-driven governance are transforming legislative, oversight and representative functions faster than most institutions can absorb. The consequence is that parliamentarism is being tested by forces it did not design and does not yet fully understand.

Parliaments can react, importing tools and practices developed elsewhere, or they can build around an evidentiary and scientific base needed to shape these transformations on their own terms. Such a base can only emerge from the global community of parliamentary scholars and practitioners. New tools for collecting and processing knowledge open possibilities for parliamentary research, reflecting the broader transformation of knowledge production and scientific inquiry in the digital age (Floridi, 2024). Bringing this knowledge

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into parliamentary institutions will require new research approaches, dedicated conferences and scientific journals.

The Austral Journal of Parliamentary Studies, in Spanish *Revista de Estudios Parlamentarios Austral* (REPA), is a new bilingual journal for parliamentary researchers seeking to contribute to more resilient, future-oriented parliaments. It aims to publish original, evidence-based research in English and Spanish from scholars and practitioners around the world. Its inaugural issue, titled 'A Decade of Excellence in Parliamentary Studies', celebrates two anniversaries: ten years since the collaboration that gave rise to the Hellenic OCR Team began (2016-2026), and the first decade of the School of Politics, Government and International Relations at the Faculty of Law of Universidad Austral (2015-2025). The present issue brings together research by members and collaborators of the Hellenic OCR Team, alongside contributions from current and former members of parliament from Argentina and Spain, parliamentary officials and senior advisors at national and subnational levels, and professors and graduates of the academic programmes of Universidad Austral's School of Government, to mark this shared occasion.

2. Ten years of academic excellence at Universidad Austral's School of Government

The School of Politics, Government and International Relations, in Spanish la Escuela de Política, Gobierno y Relaciones Internacionales,[4] was created in 2015, within the Faculty of Law, to be a bridge between the knowledge produced in Universidad Austral and the world of politics. Founded on the initiative of its director, Alfonso Santiago, and inspired by the Harvard Kennedy School in its determination to join theory with practice, it adopted the motto of 'training leaders with values' and organised its mission around three axes: institutional quality, the quality of public management and Argentina's insertion in the world (Santiago, 2025).

Its growth has been steady. The undergraduate degrees in Political Science and International Relations opened in March 2015. They were followed by the Master's in Public Policy in April 2017; by the Master's in International Relations and the Master's in Environmental Policy, Law and Management in April 2020; and by the Doctorate in Political Science in March 2023. The School had launched its first journal, Revista Política Austral, in 2022.[5] Its classrooms have brought together legislators, ministers, mayors, public officials, journalists and social leaders from across the political spectrum, and its graduates now form a network of more than 1,000 people in Argentina and the region. International recognition has followed. The United Nations System Staff College selected the School for its Mandela Project on leadership for social change; the European Union chose it to train thirty Argen-

4 https://www.austral.edu.ar/escueladegobierno

5 https://ojs.austral.edu.ar/revistapoliticaaustral

tine municipalities in digital transformation and open government and to deliver a Jean Monnet module on relations between Europe and Latin America; and the Organization of Ibero-American States entrusted it with a project on the internationalisation of subnational governments (ibid.).

Much of the School's research and outreach is carried out through its study centres and observatories. The Centre for Asian Studies, active since 2015, hosts the 'Korean Corner' created with the Government of the Republic of Korea and organised the XIV National Congress of Korean Studies in June 2025. The Centre for Global Governance Studies convenes debates on the multilateral agenda, and the Centre for the Internationalisation of Subnational Governments and Social Organisations, led since 2023 by Fernando Straface, supports the external action of provinces, municipalities and civil society. The Middle East Studies Unit brings currently fifteen researchers together and hosted the National Conference on Middle East Studies in September 2025. The Observatory of Institutional Quality and the Centre for Regulatory Quality produce reports that draw media attention.

Among these centres, the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies, Research and Foresight (Centro Internacional de Estudios, Investigación y Prospectiva Parlamentarios, CIDEIPP) has given the School its most distinctive voice. Its premise is that parliaments are the heart of democracy and that those who serve in them deserve an academic home of their own. The Centre grew out of the International Diploma in Parliamentary Diplomacy, first taught in 2018, and was formally created in 2021 on the initiative of Juan de Dios Cincunegui and Mariano Palacios, with the Hanns Seidel Foundation as its principal partner. Its teaching, offered in Spanish and English, is built around three diplomas, in Parliamentary Law, Parliamentary Diplomacy and Twenty-First Century Parliaments. Since its creation, the Centre has provided high-quality education, training and specialisation to hundreds of parliamentarians, parliamentary officials and advisers, and other members of the parliamentary community of Latin America and the Caribbean. The faculty is highly international with scholars and practitioners from Argentina, the rest of the Americas, Europe and other regions.

Around the diplomas, executive courses, masterclasses and public hearings have taken up many of the questions that parliaments face today. Two executive courses stand at the frontier of this offering: Parliaments and Artificial Intelligence, and Journalism, Media and Parliamentary Diplomacy. The Centre is also a meeting place. Its International Workshop of Scholars and Parliamentarians brings to the region the format launched in Berlin in 1994 and continued by Lord Norton of Louth at Wroxton.[6] It met in Villa La Angostura in 2022 (Fitsilis & Cincunegui, 2022) and in Buenos Aires in 2023, 2024 and 2026; the last two editions in partnership with the University of Luxembourg.

6 https://wroxtonworkshop.org

The Centre's research is applied by design. The technical report *Ciencia y Parlamento en Argentina* (Cincunegui et al., 2021) followed the POSTnote model of the United Kingdom's Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. It drew on forty interviews with scientists, legislators and other stakeholders, examining how the Argentine Congress could be provided with high-level legislative science advice. Later work has dealt with indicators for democratic parliaments, parliamentary committees of the future and cybersecurity. Its publications also include *Los parlamentos en el sistema de gobernanza global* (Cincunegui, 2020), a history of the creation of the P20, the forum of the speakers of parliament of the G20 countries, and a study of the rules of procedure of the legislatures of Argentina's twenty-three provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. The Centre has signed cooperation agreements with, among others, the Organization of American States, the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO), the Library of the Argentine National Congress, the UNITE Parliamentarians Network for Global Health, the University of Luxembourg and the Hellenic OCR Team. Its partner institutions also include the Geopolitical Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Artificial intelligence has become the School's most visible line of work in an international research endeavour to study its applications and effects in parliaments. A landmark activity has been the translation and publication of the *Guidelines for AI in Parliaments* into Spanish (Fitsilis et al., 2024). The relevant federal programme has since taken this edition to several legislatures across Argentina. The collaboration also produced the aforementioned certified course Parliaments and Artificial Intelligence, the first of its kind, whose inaugural edition in 2026 gathered participants from the Americas, Africa and Europe. A second edition opened in October 2026, with a third in the planning for 2027.

The inaugural issue of REPA commemorates the School's tenth anniversary and opens its second decade: it gives the Centre's work a bilingual journal of its own and offers the experience gathered at Universidad Austral to the wider community of parliamentary scholars and practitioners.

3. Celebrating ten years of parliamentary research at the Hellenic OCR Team

In the mid-2010s, we felt there was scope to broaden the focus of research on digital parliaments. Most relevant studies examined how parliamentarians used digital channels and social media to connect with constituents, and how parliaments could use these channels to become more visible. Much of this work was descriptive, focusing on parliamentary websites, online communication practices and the use of social media primarily to disseminate information (Dai & Norton, 2008; Griffith & Leston-Bandeira, 2012; Williamson, 2009). This is where we saw a need for closer examination of the technology itself, particularly the possibilities offered by machine learning and natural language processing.

This need became more pressing as technology advanced and the digitisation of parliamentary materials accelerated. Yet parliamentary institutions often seemed slow to adapt and risked falling behind developments elsewhere in society. We also recognised that the complexity of the work required expertise beyond what individual researchers could provide. We therefore decided to bring parliamentary professionals and academic partners closer together.

In 2016, Fotis Fitsilis, Head of Scientific Documentation and Supervision at the Scientific Service of the Hellenic Parliament, was working on transforming parliamentary documents held in paper form into open data, before the adoption of Akoma Ntoso as an OASIS Standard (Palmirani et al., 2018). Specifically, he was investigating the parliamentary oversight data, written parliamentary questions in particular, that were entirely left outside the ongoing digitalisation process that mainly dealt with the plenary proceedings. From 2009 onwards, these documents began to be scanned routinely and made available online through the parliamentary website.[7] However, their text was not available and only a limited non-validated set of metadata was captured by the relevant directorate.

Facing budgetary restrictions and limited support, Fitsilis sought academic collaborators who could contribute their expertise. He soon contacted George Mikros, whose work in computational and quantitative linguistics included the study of specialised Greek corpora. The parliamentary material offered an opportunity to apply Mikros's expertise to a largely unexplored corpus. The collaboration brought together parliamentary knowledge and computational methods to make this material accessible for research.

Fitsilis and Mikros quickly formed a small team, bringing together students from the university and interns working at parliament. The team became operational in 2017, adopting the name 'Hellenic OCR Team' to reflect its initial focus on optical character recognition. A logo and a webpage followed,[8] making the team more visible. More students and interns started joining to gain hands-on experience with parliamentary materials and institutional processes. Graduates and professionals were also drawn to the initiative's grassroots character. Training methods, tools and procedures were developed to manage the workload and validate the material. The co-founders soon realised that this crowdsourcing approach could support research beyond parliamentary questions, including lawmaking, diplomacy, institutional development and procedural innovation. Inevitably, the team gradually expanded beyond Greece and, by its tenth anniversary in 2026, included more than 80 active members across six continents.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we also saw relationships among team members strengthen. Afterwards, members agreed to move from a centrally governed structure towards a more loosely connected international expert network able to respond to emerging issues. Today, the team contributes to parliamentary studies at national and international levels (Fitsilis & Mikros, 2025).

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7 https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Koinovouleftikos-Elenchos/Mesa-Koinovouleutikou-Elegxou

8 https://hellenicOCRteam.gr

Its most significant publications include the edited volume *Smart Parliaments: Data-Driven Democracy* (Fitsilis & Mikros, 2022), which covers most topics the team addressed during its first five years, the landmark publication *Guidelines for AI in Parliaments* (Fitsilis et al., 2024), developed by several team members, and *Cybersecurity for Parliaments* (Fitsilis et al., 2026), which maps cyber threats facing contemporary parliaments and offers practical implementation guidance. It has trained dozens of students in the study of parliamentary materials, and several members have contributed to research on parliamentary and government technologies (ParlTech and GovTech), particularly emerging technologies and artificial intelligence (Koryzis et al., 2021, 2026).

Looking ahead, the team's diverse membership, bringing together leading experts from around the world across public institutions, universities and the private sector, positions it well to study how legislative bodies at the national, regional and local levels evolve and how emerging technologies affect their work. Its interdisciplinary approach enables collaboration across fields that have rarely intersected, including linguistics, political science, electronic governance, organisational studies and law. The team plans to further develop its guidelines and frameworks on artificial intelligence and cybersecurity for parliaments, digitise and analyse additional parliamentary archives, and translate its research into practical digital tools that legislatures can use over the long term.

All three co-editors of this special issue are members of the Hellenic OCR Team. In addition, four team members, Sotiris Leventis, Ariadne Angelopoulou, Foteini Vittou, and Angeliki Skoura, are authors or co-authors of three articles in the issue.

4. Structure of the special issue

Following an open call in late 2025 and a structured peer-review process, eight articles were selected for this inaugural issue: four in English and four in Spanish.

Articles in English

Angelopoulou and Vittou present the Hellenic OCR Team as a model of volunteer-driven innovation that evolved from a crowdsourcing initiative into an international, interdisciplinary collaborative network. Their survey of team members suggests that shared scientific purpose, voluntary participation and knowledge exchange sustain the initiative, while the exchange between younger and long-standing members strengthens collaboration.

Skoura presents a methodology for comparing documents from the legislative procedure of the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act against seven ethical principles through text similarity. Oversight and safety rank highest, while well-being ranks lowest, across all versions. The final version has higher lexical similarity scores than the committee version, but these remain below those of the initial proposal.

Leventis argues that public organisations should adopt artificial intelligence through a holistic yet incremental strategy, with a vendor-agnostic architecture preserving human

oversight and institutional accountability. He proposes a multimodal, multi-agent integration platform intended to support responsible adoption of artificial intelligence while minimising institutional disruption.

Xuclà examines the Science and Technology Office of the Spanish Congress of Deputies (Oficina C), a technology assessment body distinct from the research service. It is methodologically credible and well received by experts, yet few surveyed Members of Parliament use its products directly. It is a legitimate, reusable source of analytical capacity, but not yet routine in parliamentary work.

Articles in Spanish

Martin and Sarubi examine citizen participation in the Chamber of Deputies of the Province of Entre Ríos, Argentina, through its Office of Citizen Suggestions, created in 2007. Their survey of the Office's paper records for 2008-2025 identifies 124 citizen initiatives, of which only three became law, and finds no digital system for tracking them. The authors conclude that the problem lies in implementation and that closing the gap calls for open-parliament policies and a change of institutional culture.

Martínez, Bonifacio and Ojea Creppy present the Sustainable and Responsible AI Adaptation Strategy designed by the Parliamentary Pro-Secretariat of the Argentine Senate. They argue that institutional adaptation and governance should come before the adoption of tools. The model they aim to implement is structured around five guiding questions, four dimensions (culture, people, processes and technology) and a collaboration ecosystem, and is informed by a staff survey.

Ramírez describes the digital transformation of the chamber of the Honorable Chamber of Deputies of the Argentine Nation between 2019 and 2026, carried out entirely with in-house staff and resources. The system combines biometric identification, presence detection, digital voting, speaker management and the immediate publication of voting records. The process enabled the Chamber of Deputies' first hybrid sitting, in May 2020.

Butvilofsky and Knutson propose a model of parliamentary algorithmic governance for the Chamber of Representatives of the Province of Misiones, Argentina, built on normative, technical and deliberative dimensions. Their qualitative analysis separates the Chamber's existing capacities, among them its Secretariat of Artificial Intelligence, Legislative Drafting Manual and Legal Digest, from a draft resolution pending before one of the Chamber's committees. They discuss 'institutional prompt engineering' as a contemporary extension of classical legislative drafting technique.

These articles offer case studies and conceptual and methodological proposals that advance our understanding of how legislatures enhance transparency, strengthen citizen participation, adapt to emerging technologies and modernise digitally.

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