



Parliament  
Austria

# **Programme and Abstracts**

## **Day of Parliamentary Research 2026**

16 June 2026 | Elise Richter, Lokal 2 | Theophil Hansen, Lokal 3

## Schedule and Programme

## Location

08:00 am **Doors open and coffee**

09:00 am **Welcome remarks**

Walter Rosenkranz (President of the National Council)

Harald Dossi (Secretary General of the Austrian Parliament)

Elise

Richter

**Lokal 2**

09:20 am **Keynote speech: Parliament as an emotional space:  
Historical reflections**

Ute Frevert (Max Planck Institute for Human Development)

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09:40 am    **Keynote speech: Emotions in the mechanics of politics and law: Between parliamentary lawmaking and judicial judgment**  
Sabine Müller-Mall (Goethe University Frankfurt)

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10:00 am    **Discussion with Ute Frevert and Sabine Müller-Mall**  
Moderation: Christoph Konrath  
(Parliamentary Administration)

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10:30 am    **Coffee break**

Elise  
Richter  
**Lokal 2**

10:50 am

**Panel I: Why does democracy need emotions?**

Discussant: Aron Buzogany (BOKU University, Vienna)

Chair: Anna Rathmair

Presentations:

**Emotions as privileges: On anger, hope,  
and democratic discourse**

Amani Abuzahra (CUAS Carinthia University of Applied  
Sciences)

**Can't we just all get along? Preferences  
regarding consensus, conflict and violence among  
German citizens**

Calixte Bloquet | Danny Schindler | Oliver Kannenberg  
(Institute for Parliamentary Research, Berlin)

Elise  
Richter  
**Lokal 2**

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**The flavor of politics**

Arno Böhrer | Susanne Valerie Granzer (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna | University of Vienna)

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**The sentimental value of parliaments:**

**How to take care for it**

Giovanni Rizzoni (Italian Chamber of Deputies Research Service | LUISS University, Rome)

Elise  
Richter  
Lokal 2

10:50 pm

**Panel II: How do we perceive differences  
in representation?**

Discussant: Jakob-Moritz Eberl (University of Vienna)

Chair: Julia Heiss

Presentations:

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**Feeling under-represented? Intersectional differences in emotions toward the Austrian Parliament and (mis)perceived representation**

Matilde Ceron | Ermela Gianna | Zoe Lefkofridi  
(University of Salzburg)

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**How MPs understand representation:  
Reasoning, emotion, and responsiveness  
in the German Bundestag**

Theophil  
Hansen  
**Lokal 3**

Christian Ignorek | Alexander Kühne  
(Institute for Parliamentary Research, Berlin)

**Who participates? Demographic patterns in legislative crowdsourcing**

Sofia Serra-Silva (Université Libre de Bruxelles |  
University of Lisbon)

**“Experiencing Democracy” - The effectiveness of participatory spaces (Demokratiewerkstatt) in fostering democratic competence among children and young people**

Roland Trabe (University College of Teacher Education  
Vienna | Demokratiewerkstatt, Austrian Parliament)

Theophil  
Hansen  
Lokal 3

12:05 pm

**Lunch break**

**Säulenhalle**

01:00 pm

**Panel III: Evidence, rationality, knowledge and reasoning versus emotions?**

Discussant: Zoe Lefkofridi (University of Salzburg)

Chair: Christoph Konrath

Presentations:

**Trust beyond evidence: Affective dynamics at the science-policy nexus**

Floortje Moes (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

**Why political behaviour is always logical, but rarely rational**

Greg Power (Global Partners Governance, London)

Elise  
Richter  
**Lokal 2**

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**Disentangling the sophistication-emotion link:  
Political interest and confidence-in-knowledge, but  
not knowledge, drive emotional responses**

Isabella Rebaso (University of Vienna) | Gijs Schumacher |  
Matthijs Rooduijn (University of Amsterdam)

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**Performative reasoning: The strategic use of  
epistemic authority in parliamentary debates**

Daniel Wiesner | Jakob-Moritz Eberl |  
Sophie Lecheler (University of Vienna)

Elise  
Richter  
Lokal 2

01:00 pm

**Panel IV: Why is it so difficult for institutions to deal with emotions?**

Discussant: Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik (University of Vienna)

Chair: Franziska Bereuter

Presentations:

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**Collective control of artificial intelligence: A social choice approach to democratic AI governance**

Paul Anton Bachmann (Vienna University of Technology) |

Nicolas Böhmer (University of Potsdam) | Lukas Daniel

Klausner | Martin Lackner (University of Applied Sciences

St. Pölten)

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**Do legislators fear judicial invalidation of their legislation? An empirical study on how the anticipation of judicial review impacts legislative**

Theophil  
Hansen  
**Lokal 3**

## **debates on omnibus legislation**

Ittai Bar-Siman-Tov (Bar-Ilan University, Tel Aviv)

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## **From emotion to norm: Expert scrutiny as a rationalising scrutiny mechanism in parliamentary lawmaking in the context of European integration (the cases of Ukraine and Armenia)**

Anna Khvorostiankina (Eurasia International University, Armenia | UNESCO Chair Holder in Justice and Good Governance for Sustainable Peace and Development) | Khrystyna Bidonko (National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy)

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## **From minority protection to performative conflict? Emotionalised obstruction and social-media incentives in the Czech Chamber of Deputies**

Marie Zámečnicková (Masaryk University, Brno)

Theophil  
Hansen  
**Lokal 3**

02:15 pm **Coffee break**

02:30 pm **Poster session**

Posters:

**Emotionalisation of political discourse: Sentiment and topic analysis of public comments on Austrian political parties**

Dmitry Erokhin (IIASA International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Laxenburg)

**Coalition mood in times of crisis: Cooperation and conflict in contemporary governments**

Michael Imre (University of Vienna)

Elise  
Richter  
Lokal 2

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**Sporting emotions and values? Parliamentary debates on sport, gender, and education in the Nationalrat**

Jörg-Uwe Nieland | Thomas Neumann  
(University of Klagenfurt)

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**ParIAT: Accessing open data of the Austrian Parliament in R**

Roland Schmidt (werk.statt.codes)

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**Trust issues: When participation builds trust – and why it sometimes doesn't**

Kevin W. Settles (Institute for Parliamentary Research, Berlin)

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**Who refers to science? Understanding the salience of scientific evidence in parliamentary debates**

Daniel Wiesner (University of Vienna)

Elise  
Richter  
Lokal 2

03:00 pm **“Research Year in Parliament”**

**Presentation of the initiative “Research Year in Parliament”**

Susanne Janistyn-Novák

(Head of the Scientific Advisory Board)

**Resonance spaces of democracy: The changing architecture of parliament in the 21st century**

Julia Rüdiger (independent researcher, affiliated with Catholic Private University Linz)

**Announcement of the newly selected project 2026**

Susanne Janistyn-Novák

(Head of the Scientific Advisory Board)

**Presentation of the project 2026**

Elise  
Richter  
**Lokal 2**

03:40 pm **Introducing the interactive exhibition**  
**“Democracy of the Senses” by MUELLER-DIVJAK**  
Christina Hainzl (University of Krems)

03:45 pm Panel Discussion:  
**How can we make democracy feel good?**

Panellists:

**Olga Kosanović** (director, screenwriter and teacher)

**Georg Renner** (journalist at Datum, Wiener Zeitung,  
Missing Link)

**Maria Stopfner** (senior researcher at University  
of Innsbruck)

**Moderation:** Daniela Ingruber

05:00 pm **Closing remarks**

Elise  
Richter  
**Lokal 2**

**Interactive exhibition**

**“Democracy of the Senses” by MUELLER-DIVJAK**

Jeanette Müller | Paul Divjak

(University of Applied Arts Vienna)

**Option of a special tour through the Parliament Building**

How spaces shape emotions –

and how tour guides navigate them

Alternatively: **Drinks** in the Säulenhalle

06:45 pm

**End**



# Panel I: Why does democracy need emotions?

Discussant: Aron Buzogany (BOKU University, Vienna)

Chair: Anna Rathmair

Day of Parliamentary Research | 16 June 2026

## Presentations:

- ♦ **Emotions as privileges: On anger, hope, and democratic discourse**
- ♦ **Can't we just all get along? Preferences regarding consensus, conflict and violence among German citizens**
- ♦ **The flavor of politics**
- ♦ **The sentimental value of parliaments: How to take care for it**

# Emotions as privileges: On anger, hope, and democratic discourse

Amani Abuzahra

Emotions are part of political negotiation processes and can shape which forms of participation become possible. This contribution examines the role of emotions in democratic discourse and argues that they cannot be adequately understood through a binary opposition of emotion and rationality. Alongside anger, emotions such as courage and hope are also brought into view as forces that can sustain political agency. From this perspective, the paper explores how emotions are socially structured and differently legitimised, and whose emotional expressions – particularly anger – are recognised as legitimate in public discourse. These dynamics become visible in parliamentary contexts

but are not limited to them. Parliamentary arenas are part of a broader political public in which it is continuously negotiated which emotions count as legitimate contributions.

The central argument is that emotions function as privileges. Not all subjects are equally entitled to articulate their feelings as rational, relevant, or politically legitimate. While certain forms of anger are recognised as expressions of authority or leadership, others are dismissed as “subjective” or “emotional” and are thus excluded from the sphere of legitimate political reasoning. This asymmetry structures democratic discourse by determining whose perspectives are

heard and whose are marginalised. Drawing on contemporary debates on migration and belonging, the paper shows how emotional expressions are differently evaluated and framed.

Theoretically, the contribution engages with the work of Dominique Moïsi and Megan Boler, and connects these perspectives to concepts of epistemic injustice. Methodologically, it follows a qualitative – theoretical approach that combines discourse – analytical perspectives with practice – based reflections. The argument builds on ongoing work on emotions, recognition, and democratic participation.

Such a perspective reframes how we understand emotions in democratic discourse: not primarily as disturbances of political rationality, but as constitutive elements of democratic practice. It invites reflection on forms of political communication that are not based on dismissal or delegitimation, but on resonance and responsibility, including affective orientations such as hope and courage.

# Can't we just all get along? Preferences regarding consensus, conflict and violence among German citizens

Calixte Bloquet,  
Danny Schindler,  
Oliver Kannenberg

How much conflict is enough conflict? Democratic parliamentary proceedings are meant to find solutions to the diversity of needs, opinions and interests found in society, but they can sometimes take on a distinctly emotional and even venomous tone. For members of Parliament especially, who must both carry the demands of their voters and navigate emotionally charged interactions while finding quick and painless compromises with other parties, it can be especially difficult to identify whether citizens want them to choose conflict or consensus – and with what degree of intensity.

We ask these questions in the context of Germany as a typical example of consensus democracy. Drawing on a representative population survey conducted in February of 2026 (N = 1958), this research identifies several groups within the German population based on their preferences regarding various measures of democratic conflict – from consensus supporters to conflict supporters. It explains the composition of these groups and how they differ, both socially and politically. Going further, the research looks into how these clusters of preferences translate to other attitudes related to the felt

degradation of political climate, by analysing citizens' support for tense exchanges, incivilities and even acts of political violence, as well as their expectations for their representatives and their levels of satisfaction with parliamentary performance.

Rather than painting the portrait of two conflicting and irreconcilable ideas of democracy, the results show a nuanced and coherent spectrum of positions, highlighting both their specificities as well as the ways through which they share common ground. As such, the research provides valuable insights into

the emotional dynamics involved in how different voters evaluate parliamentary politics, which yields valuable knowledge to both practitioners and academics.

# The flavor of politics

Arno Böhler,  
Susanne Valerie Granzer

“Is it possible to think rationally without a taste of how it feels, what one is thinking?”  
Our research investigates the role of the \*heart\* in influencing processes of thinking, sensing and decision-making.

In many traditions of European modernities the rational image-of-thought tried to separate the act of thinking entirely from the act of sensing (taste) and feeling. Thinking, they say, ought to be an autonomous action, not at all influenced by sensual experiences (*aisthesis*).

But can one really distinguish clearly between performances of thinking, sensing and

feeling? Are they indeed entirely independent territories, which reason can distinguish and separate neatly (Kant)? Or do they not resonate with one another, if not consciously, at least in secret? Under the table, often displaced?

Spinoza already claimed against Descartes that every thought inhabits a particular taste, which allows one to sense, how a thought feels; how it tastes and affects us sensually.

In this talk we argue that accepting such a sensible Spinozist image-of-thought would trigger major changes in politics. First, one's style of speaking would change because one

would have to accept beforehand that one's parliamentary praxis addresses sensual beings. Whatever one performs in the vibrant space of one's parliamentary debates is necessarily accompanied by a sensual taste with a particular emotional flavor. And this flavor is not just an individual, subjective feeling of a singular person, but rather a disclosure of a shared atmosphere (*koinē aisthēsis*) that circulates in space. When Sigmund Freud, e.g. titled his book "Das Unbehagen in der Kultur" (1930), he precisely expressed his discomfort of what he feels to approach in his times. His well-cultivated aesthetic sense gave him a clear feeling of the overall cultural and political atmosphere to which he was

bodily exposed between World War One and the rise of World War Two in Vienna.

Therefore, our research appeals to reintroduce the ancient Greek concept of *koinē aisthēsis* into parliamentary practice. The term was later translated as “common sense,” but in its Greek origins, it literally meant a mode of sensing, specifically the sensing of a commonly shared atmosphere that affects our hearts and minds in an embodied, sensual, and emotional manner. In a telling way, the Sanskrit term for the aesthete is *sahṛdaya*, which literally means, “somebody, with a heart”. “Somebody, with a sublime, refined heart”.

# The sentimental value of parliaments: How to take care for it

Giovanni Rizzoni

My research adopts the interdisciplinary methodology of parliamentary studies (Benoît & Rozenberg, 2020): it aims to explore the interaction between parliaments and the emotional sphere to help shape possible strategies for a positive approach to the “sentimental value” of parliamentary institutions. To this end, I identify three fundamental categories in the relationship between emotions and parliamentary institutions:

## **Parliaments as antidotes to passions**

Modern parliamentarism arose as an antidote to the irrational component of politics. Parliaments counter the violent passions of

political struggle with the rational discussion: they are deliberative assemblies that debate pro et contra according to certain procedures and rules for agenda-setting (Palonen, 2018). Through “arguing and bargaining” (Elster, 1998), parliamentarism contributed to the stabilization of social conflict using the calm passions of interests as tamers of the wild passions potentially destructive of civil coexistence (Hirschman, 1977).

### **Parliaments as theatres of passions**

Parliaments are however also “theatres of passions”. Elsewhere (Rizzoni, 2024), I sought to demonstrate how modern parlia-

mentarism combines the three fundamental elements of encyclopedism as theorized by Bacon and Diderot: reason, memory, and imagination. Two of these components – memory and imagination – are intensely linked to the emotional sphere: on the one hand, parliaments are living monuments to the great moments of national political history; on the other hand, their legislative function inevitably projects these institutions toward an imagination of the future.

### **Parliaments as catalysts of passions**

Parliaments are also catalysts of collective political passions: even in recent times, when

the masses want to express anger, yearning for freedom, or fear, it is towards parliaments that they turn. From this perspective, it is enough to consider the events – of opposite emotional slant – of the pro-Trump militants storming U.S. Congress and of the citizens of Seoul courageously surrounding their parliament to protect it from an attempted coup.

### **Sentimental strategies**

Full acknowledgement of all these different – and often conflicting – dimensions is crucial for contemporary democracies. The conclusions of my research propose some

possible innovations in the public engagement activities, procedures, and architecture of parliamentary institutions to allow the full deployment of their “sentimental value” in the contemporary era.

# Panel II: How do we perceive differences in representation?

Discussant: Jakob-Moritz Eberl (University of Vienna)

Chair: Julia Heiss

## **Presentations:**

- ♦ **Feeling under-represented? Intersectional differences in emotions toward the Austrian parliament and (mis)perceived representation**
- ♦ **How MPs understand representation: Reasoning, emotion, and responsiveness in the German Bundestag**
- ♦ **Who participates? Demographic patterns in legislative crowdsourcing**
- ♦ **“Experiencing Democracy” – The effectiveness of participatory spaces (Demokratiewerkstatt) in fostering democratic competence among children and young people**

# Feeling under-represented? Intersectional differences in emotions toward the Austrian Parliament and (mis)perceived representation

Matilde Ceron,  
Ermela Gianna,  
Zoe Lefkofridi

How do Austrian citizens feel about their parliament, and what drives those emotions? We explore this question by connecting citizens' subjective sense of representation – whether they feel seen, heard, and served – with objective measures of who sits in parliament and what policies are pursued. Drawing on new survey data from the ActEU project, we examine three distinct dimensions of perceived representation: descriptive (do legislators look like me?), agenda-setting (do they prioritize issues I care about?), and policy outcomes (do parliamentary decisions actually benefit people like me?). Crucially, we also measure the emotions – both positive and negative – that

parliament evokes in citizens, treating affect as a vital signal of how representation is experienced in practice.

Our study makes three key contributions. First, we map the emotional landscape of parliamentary representation in unprecedented detail, revealing how citizens across different social groups respond to their legislature. Second, we bridge the gap between perception and reality by comparing subjective feelings of exclusion with objective data on the demographic makeup of Austrian MPs and patterns of policy responsiveness, identifying where feelings of neglect reflect genuine under-representation, and where

they do not. Third, we adopt an intersectional approach, examining how experiences of representation vary not just by single identities like gender, LGBTIQ+ status, disability, migration background, or socio-economic position, but across the complex intersections of these categories, while also accounting for partisan divides.

Our findings highlight the lived experience of inequality in Austrian parliamentary democracy, pinpointing which groups feel systematically left out and whether those perceptions align with measurable representation gaps. The results offer actionable insights for parliamentary practice: where objective

under-representation exists, they call for more inclusive policy processes and intersectional reforms; where negative emotions arise despite fair representation, they signal a communication challenge requiring better outreach and engagement. Ultimately, this study reveals that representation is not just about numbers or policies – it is about whether citizens feel their democracy truly works for them.

# How MPs understand representation: Reasoning, emotion, and responsiveness in the German Bundestag

Christian Ignorek,  
Alexander Kühne

Parliamentary representation is shaped not only by institutional rules and political norms, but also by emotional dynamics that influence how Members of Parliament (MPs) perceive their role and interact with citizens. Our project ReParl – Researching MPs’ Views on Parliamentary Representation – investigates how MPs of the 20<sup>th</sup> German Bundestag conceptualise representation and enact it in their daily work. Drawing on Hanna Pitkin’s concept of formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation, we analyse how these dimensions shape MPs’ self-understanding, their modes of responsiveness, and their strategies for processing societal demands.

Guided interviews were conducted with a total of 71 members of all parliamentary political parties and groups between July 2024 and February 2025. The interview design systematically operationalises Pitkin's categories and captures how MPs identify, prioritise and interpret the interests and needs of citizens. Particular attention is paid to the communicative practices MPs employ when interacting with the public – ranging from constituency meetings to digital channels – and the emotional expectations, tensions and pressures embedded in these encounters.

A central theme of the project concerns the emotional dynamics of representation: MPs describe how empathy, conflict, frustration and moral conviction shape their judgement, constrain their room for manoeuvre, or facilitate trust-building. These findings suggest that representative practice is not solely grounded in rational deliberation but unfolds in a space where reasoning and emotion intersect, often in response to heightened public expectations or polarised political climates.

By connecting theoretical perspectives on democratic representation with qualitative empirical insights, ReParl contributes to an interdisciplinary debate on the interplay of reasoning, sensing and emotion in parliamentary practice.

# Who participates? Demographic patterns in legislative crowd- sourcing

This paper examines who participates in legislative crowdsourcing, focusing on Austria's Erweitertes Begutachtungsverfahren (Extended Review Procedure), the parliamentary platform introduced in 2017 that allows citizens and organizations to comment directly on legislative drafts. The central question is not simply whether participation deviates from population baselines – in voluntary mechanisms, some degree of deviation is structurally inevitable – but rather by how much, and with what consequences for democratic representativeness.

## **Methodology and progress**

The analysis draws on original data collected from the Austrian parliamentary platform covering the full period of its operation.

The dataset comprises 135,808 registered user accounts and over 500,000 submitted statements across hundreds of legislative initiatives. Because the platform collects no demographic information from users, gender is inferred from participant names using the `genderizeR` package in R, cross-referenced against Statistik Austria population baselines. Geographic distribution is assessed through postal codes provided during registration and compared to national census

data to identify the magnitude and direction of demographic deviations.

## **Research findings**

Three patterns emerge consistently. Male participants are substantially overrepresented across the platform's full operational period, with male participation ranging from 57 % to 95 % across years, and female participation reaching a relative high of approximately 43 % between 2020 and 2022 before declining sharply. Geographic concentration is persistent: participation clusters in urban areas at rates that diverge significantly from national population distribution and show no

tendency to self-correct over time. Finally, participation is episodic and highly concentrated: a single initiative – the COVID-19 vaccination mandate consultation of December 2021 – mobilized 55,687 unique participants, accounting for 41 % of all unique users ever recorded on the platform. The ten most-participated initiatives, representing approximately one percent of all legislative items open for consultation, attracted roughly forty percent of all recorded participation.

### **Innovative potential and relevance to parliamentary practice**

These findings matter for how parliaments assess their participatory instruments. Aggregate figures (i.e. total statements submitted, total registered users) can obscure patterns of systematic exclusion that only become visible when participants are measured against the populations they nominally represent. For the Austrian Parliament,

the data offer an empirical basis for asking whether the Erweitertes Begutachtungsverfahren functions as a genuinely inclusive channel or as a procedurally open mechanism that in practice amplifies the voices of already-engaged demographic groups. The answer has direct implications for the design and evaluation of digital participation tools in contemporary democratic institutions.

# “Experiencing Democracy” – The effectiveness of participatory spaces (Demokratiewerkstatt) in fostering democratic competence among children and young people

Roland Trabe

## Research question/research interest

At the intersection of civic education and the embodied experience of democratic institutions, the central research interest of this study lies in whether the methodological, didactical, spatial and experiential dimensions of the Demokratiewerkstatt, a dedicated participatory learning space housed within the Austrian Parliament, translate into lasting shifts in democratic understanding and civic engagement across all school levels.

## **Methodology and progress**

The methodologic basis consists of a multi-phase effectiveness study designed to empirically assess the impact of attending the Demokratiewerkstatt's hands-on workshops. The design follows a pre-post-follow-up structure. A first survey is conducted before the workshop visit, a second immediately after, and a third approximately three months later to capture whether experiential gains endure over time. Standardised quantitative questionnaires are complemented by qualitative expert interviews with educators from all Austrian federal states, school types, and levels, exploring the perceived role of

the didactical workshop design and physical parliamentary environment as a facilitator of democratic learning. Teachers across Austria serve as key coordinating partners throughout the data collection process.

## **Expected research findings**

The study is expected to generate evidence on how direct encounters with democratic institutions, specifically its participatory formats, produce stronger and more durable civic competencies. Anticipated findings will illuminate which age groups respond most strongly to the experiential format, how the physical setting of parliament shapes emo-

tional and cognitive engagement with democracy.

### **Innovative potential and interdisciplinary links**

The study contributes to a growing interdisciplinary conversation between educational research and political science regarding how physical spaces shape political perception and emotional attachment to democratic institutions. In particular, the target group under study (children and young people from grade 3 through to the final year of schooling) represents distinctive feature of this research and enables new

insights into early and long-term civic formation. By treating the parliament building and its workshop infrastructure as an active variable in civic formation, rather than a mere backdrop, the research opens new methodological territory. It connects directly to conference questions about which physical elements, assembly spaces, and participatory architectures enable citizens to experience democracy.

### **Relevance to parliamentary practice**

The direct institutional partnership with the Austrian Parliament lends this study exceptional applied value. The Demokratie-

werkstatt aims to convey the significance of democracy, participation, and diversity through immersive, place-based learning. The study's findings will provide Parliament with evidence-based guidance for evaluating and developing its physical outreach and education infrastructure.

# **Panel III: Evidence, rationality, knowledge and reasoning versus emotions?**

Discussant: Zoe Lefkofridi (University of Salzburg)

Chair: Christoph Konrath

## Presentations:

- ♦ **Trust beyond evidence: Affective dynamics at the science-policy nexus**
- ♦ **Why political behaviour is always logical, but rarely rational**
- ♦ **Disentangling the sophistication-emotion link: Political interest and confidence-in-knowledge, but not knowledge, drive emotional responses**
- ♦ **Performative reasoning: The strategic use of epistemic authority in parliamentary debates**

# Trust beyond evidence: Affective dynamics at the science-policy nexus

Floortje Moes

Scholars such as Theodore Porter have long shown that modern governance relies heavily on quantified evidence and standardized procedures as “mechanisms of trust.” Policymakers are expected to justify decisions through scientific evidence as a marker of objectivity, impartiality, and fairness. Yet the relationship between science and policy has become increasingly paradoxical: science has become indispensable in governance yet deeply contested. Our study examines how emotional dynamics are entangled with the credibility attributed to scientific evidence in policymaking. The research shows that trust emerges not only from evidence and procedures, but also from the affective practices

through which actors engage with evidence and policy procedures.

Empirically, the study draws on interviews and ethnographic observations from UNITY, a Dutch interdisciplinary consortium on pandemic science advice, as well as earlier research on public health controversies surrounding mobile phone technologies in the Netherlands. Across these settings, we find that affective practices shape credibility and trust both within expert communities and in interactions between experts, policymakers, and publics.

Preliminary findings indicate that experts and publics rely on affect as much as cognition and values when navigating complex issues at the science-policy interface. Experts use feelings such as urgency, resonance, or discomfort to judge what is actionable under conditions of limited information. In public controversies, mistrust between scientists, policymakers and citizens stems not only from differences in understanding or values, but also from unproductive affective dynamics, like epistemic misrecognition.

Trust, in this sense, is not simply a rational evaluation of evidence but an affective process through which actors calibrate rational,

emotional, and normative dimensions toward what counts as credible and actionable knowledge. By connecting these insights, the paper contributes to debates in Science and Technology Studies and Public Understanding of Science on the role of emotions in shaping trust at the science-policy nexus. It does so by showing that neither more data nor more participation is sufficient to build trust. We conceptualize trust as emerging from the alignment of cognitive (knowledge), affective (emotion), and normative (values) dimensions within the science-policy interface.

This has direct relevance for parliamentary practice. Strengthening trust in science

advice requires attending not only to evidence quality and participatory design, but also to the emotional dynamics through which credibility is negotiated, and how citizens, experts, and policymakers come to recognize one another as meaningful partners in decision-making.

# Why political behaviour is always logical, but rarely rational

Greg Power

The study of parliaments, and their reform, has tended traditionally to focus either on the structure of the institutions, or on the impact of party politics on policy and progress. There has been almost no study of the human dynamics and how the personal preferences of politicians within them, shape both the effectiveness of the institution and the policies that emerge from it.

In research work that draws on the author's experience of working with hundreds of politicians in more than sixty countries, the presentation will argue that politicians are influenced principally by emotional calculations as much as party political ones, specifically

whether their actions will be a) politically advantageous, b) personally rewarding and c) socially acceptable. It will explore the role of social norms, institutionalised working practices, peer pressure and internal rewards on the way that politicians behave and how that subsequently shapes the performance of the parliament.

This has direct implications for the way that parliamentary institutions evolve, and the quality of oversight, legislation and representation. The design of procedure is based on the assumption that politicians are “rational actors” – the political equivalent of the homo economicus that populates clas-

sical economic textbooks. However, whilst behavioural economics has brought new perspectives to our understanding of how humans behave in the real world, there has been almost no application of such insights to parliaments or politics. Politicians are often criticised for not performing their formal parliamentary roles adequately. But there has been little analysis of why they give such roles such a low value, or for prioritising their constituency work over the work in parliament.

As the research will show, there is always a tight logic to the work that MPs undertake, but it rarely conforms to the rational princi-

ples around which parliaments are designed. The presentation will make three main arguments that flow from this. First, that parliaments only get stronger when politicians want to make them stronger. Second, whilst a stronger parliament might be a rational objective, it is not necessarily a logical one – and in many places MPs are not interested in strengthening parliaments for sensible reasons. Third, the history of successful parliamentary reform is that which aligns the personal interests of politicians with a higher parliamentary principle – and that this is the key to future success and the evolution of representative politics.

## **Research context and methodology**

The research will build on the book *Inside the Political Mind: The human side of politics and how it shapes development*. That research draws on the parliamentary strengthening work that the author has undertaken over the last 25 years. He is due to take up a Visiting Professor role at Kings College London, School of Government, in April 2026 to develop strands of research examining a) the application of behavioural science to the study of politicians, ministers and parliaments, b) the role that personal preference and loss aversion play in the development of policy and c) the connection between

constituency casework and policymaking in  
government and parliament.

**Disentangling  
the sophistication-  
emotion link:  
Political interest and  
confidence-in-know-  
ledge, but not know-  
ledge, drive emotional  
responses**

**Isabella Rebasso,  
Gijs Schumacher,  
Matthijs Rooduijn**

Why do some people feel stronger emotions about politics than others? Past work suggests that political sophistication, consisting of knowledge and interest, is related to feeling strong emotions about politics, as learning about politics strengthens both cognitive and affective ties with political objects. Drawing on appraisal theories of emotions, we argue why political interest and confidence-in-knowledge, rather than factual political knowledge, are primary drivers of emotional engagement. Using three waves of the ANES and two pre-registered studies (conducted in the Netherlands and the U.S.) we show that political interest and confidence-in-knowledge increase emotional

responses to politics. Knowledge, however, is unrelated to or even suppresses feelings about politics. We experimentally test the causal effect of confidence-in-knowledge and find a direct effect on feeling anger. Our findings have implications for civic education and political engagement, as fostering political interest and confidence – rather than merely increasing factual knowledge – may better promote active citizenship, albeit with potential risks if confidence is not rooted in accurate knowledge. We also demonstrate the necessity to theoretically and empirically disentangle the different components of political sophistication.

# Performative reasoning: The strategic use of epistemic authority in parliamentary debates

Daniel Wiesner,  
Jakob-Moritz Eberl,  
Sophie Lecheler

Formulating persuasive arguments is a core objective of political debate. Politicians must convince the electorate that their policy proposals will solve the problems at hand and that their opinions reflect reality. However, persuasion is difficult: arguments may be complex, the audience may lack time to process technical details, and the communicator's own credibility may be in doubt. To compensate, politicians often draw on external sources of epistemic authority such as experts, scientific reports, or statistical evidence, attempting to enhance the perceived legitimacy of their arguments and to shift evaluation away from the speaker's personal traits toward the reliability of the evidence

presented. Drawing on social epistemology, this paper conceptualises epistemic authority as an entity whose judgment leads others to form beliefs, and evaluates the degree to which politicians strategically deploy such authority as a rhetorical tool in their argumentation.

To systematically investigate these dynamics, this study introduces a taxonomy that differentiates three forms of epistemic authority in parliamentary communication: personal authority (individual scientists or experts), collective authority (institutions, universities, or abstract invocations of scientific consensus), and non-personal authority

(specific studies, findings, or empirical data). Building on this framework and an inductive analysis of parliamentary debates, we further identify a range of rhetorical strategies through which epistemic authority is deployed, including legitimising strategies (e.g., justifying past decisions or issuing calls to action), conditional strategies (e.g., weighing epistemic authority against other considerations), accusatory strategies (e.g., accusing opponents of misrepresenting or ignoring epistemic authority), or even direct challenges to the credibility of cited sources.

To analyse these aspects empirically, we draw on a large corpus of parliamentary

speeches in Austria, combining automated and manual content analysis. In the first stage, we classify each speech by primary policy issue and screen for references to epistemic authority using large language models. In the second stage, all flagged speeches are manually coded to capture the specific source of epistemic authority cited and how it is embedded in the argumentative structure of the speech. This classification enables us to answer our research questions: (1) which forms of epistemic authority are most commonly used in parliamentary debates, (2) what rhetorical strategies are most prevalent when politicians invoke epistemic authority, and (3) what are the

interactions between these two dimensions. We further test hypotheses concerning how the invocation of epistemic authority differs across policy fields and between parties.

# Panel IV: Why is it so difficult for institutions to deal with emotions?

Discussant: Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik (University of Vienna)

Chair: Franziska Bereuter

## **Presentations:**

- ♦ **Collective control of artificial intelligence: A social choice approach to democratic AI governance**
- ♦ **Do legislators fear judicial invalidation of their legislation? An empirical study on how the anticipation of judicial review impacts legislative debates on omnibus legislation**
- ♦ **From emotion to norm: Expert scrutiny as a rationalising scrutiny mechanism in parliamentary lawmaking in the context of European integration (the cases of Ukraine and Armenia)**
- ♦ **From minority protection to performative conflict? Emotionalised obstruction and social-media incentives in the Czech Chamber of Deputies**

# Collective control of artificial intel- ligence: A social choice approach to democratic AI governance

Paul Anton Bachmann,  
Niclas Böhmer,  
Lukas Daniel Klausner,  
Martin Lackner

With the growing adoption of AI systems, reasoning about how society can exert control over AI becomes an increasingly urgent problem. Public discourse around AI is often emotionally charged: Fears about surveillance, job displacement and loss of human autonomy shape political debates, while the actual design choices that determine AI system behaviour remain concentrated among a small number of technical decision-makers. Emotions surrounding AI signal real stakes, yet there is no legitimate channel to influence the decisions that shape these systems. This disconnect between public concern and opaque technical control raises fundamental questions about democratic legitimacy.

We propose a framework grounded in social choice theory, which we term collective control of artificial intelligence [BBKL26]. In contrast to existing work on democratic control that largely focuses on macro-level governance and institutional design, we develop a micro-to-meso level framework that identifies concrete decision points across the machine learning (ML) development pipeline – from data collection and curation through training objectives to fine-tuning and alignment – at which collective input can and should be incorporated.

Our framework operates at two complementary levels. First, we model deployed

AI systems as social choice functions, enabling the application of established axiomatic criteria – such as participation, Pareto efficiency, unanimity and temporal fairness – to evaluate how well systems respect stakeholder preferences in their outputs. Second, we connect each identified decision point to established social choice problems, showing how existing mechanisms can guide the design of fair and principled collective control procedures. In addition, our framework can inform the design of structured consultation and participation processes, provide evaluation criteria for assessing whether AI governance mechanisms genuinely reflect collective preferences and identify specific points in

AI development where collective input is both meaningful and technically feasible.

In future work, we aim to ground this computational social choice framework with expertise from science and technology studies to ensure that the formal models adequately reflect real-world organisational contexts, stakeholder needs and the complexities of democratic decision-making in practice.

**Do legislators fear  
judicial invalidation  
of their legislation?  
An empirical study on  
how the anticipation  
of judicial review  
impacts legislative  
debates on omnibus  
legislation**

**Ittai Bar-Siman-Tov**

Emotions and reasoning play various roles in parliamentary debates. The proposed study focuses on one particularly powerful emotion: legislators' fear of judicial invalidation of their legislation. It explores how this fear from future judicial review shapes MPs reasoning and impacts legislative debates and the legislative process.

The suggested study will present the findings of an extensive empirical study, which includes content analysis of nearly 12,000 pages of legislative debates. It focuses on how the introduction of judicial review of omnibus legislation in Israel, which created the possibility of judicial invalidation of

omnibus legislation due to defects in their legislative process, impacted legislative debates and the legislative process.

It finds ample evidence in the legislative debates that fear from judicial review can impact legislative behavior. In particular, the study reveals two types of influences of judicial review: persuasive influences and deterrent influences. However, it finds that the latter, deterrent impact, is more influential. That is, legislators' fear of future judicial review and their anticipation that the court may invalidate their legislation if they do not improve the legislative process according to the Court's guidance, is the most dominant

factor in shaping their response to judicial review.

The findings show that fear from judicial invalidation can actually have a positive impact, which leads to improved legislative processes. They show however, that the threat of judicial intervention must be credible to be effective, and that the judicial impact can diminish over time, if the Court does not intervene and shows a willingness to invalidate legislation.

In addition to contributing to the question of what roles do emotions and reasoning play in parliamentary debates, this study con-

tributes an important area of parliamentary studies. Omnibus legislation has become a common practice in many countries and has recently been on the rise on the European Union level as well. This led parliamentary scholars and practitioners in various countries to ask how the uses (and abuses) of omnibus legislation can be regulated, and whether courts could play a role in helping to curb excessive uses of this legislative practice. The study also contributes to the burgeoning global debates about procedural judicial review of the legislative process and the debates on whether judicial review can impact legislative behaviour.

# From emotion to norm: Expert scrutiny as a rationalising scrutiny mechanism in parlia- mentary lawmaking in the context of Euro- pean integration (the cases of Ukraine and Armenia)

Anna Khvorostiankina,  
Khrystyna Bidonko

Periods of instability tend to create fertile ground for populist narratives, characterized, inter alia, by appeals to collective sentiment rather than evidence-based data. Ukraine and Armenia are no exceptions: both countries have experienced significant socio-political turbulence – Ukraine under conditions of war, Armenia in the aftermath of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Stable democratic institutions should possess the necessary toolkits to distinguish between political debate and the lawmaking process per se. While political discourse may legitimately contain persuasive rhetoric and emotional appeals, the adoption of

laws must remain grounded in constitutional principles and the rule of law, including legal certainty, respect for human dignity, non-discrimination, and procedural integrity.

One of the mechanisms designed to safeguard these standards is the system of expert examination applied to draft legislation. Many parliaments require draft laws to undergo various forms of scrutiny (constitutional review, regulatory impact assessment, anti-corruption examination, and compatibility checks with EU law). The central research question of this paper is therefore: How do expert examination mechanisms for draft legislation operate in Ukraine and Armenia,

and to what extent do these mechanisms serve as effective mediators between emotionally driven legislative initiatives and rational rules and standards in the context of European integration?

Both states have declared a European integration trajectory: Ukraine as an official EU candidate since 2022, Armenia through the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement and the recent Law on EU membership processes adopted on the people's initiative. Simultaneously, their institutional paths and the nature of the political pressures they face differ substantially. By comparing scrutiny mechanisms

across these two cases and situating them within the wider European context, the paper assesses whether both parliaments are supported by sufficiently robust institutional mechanisms translating emotionally laden proposals into rational and coherent legal norms meeting European standards of legislative quality.

The study combines comparative analysis of the rules of procedure of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the National Assembly of Armenia, alongside the relevant legislative frameworks and the practical application of expert scrutiny procedures. The study maps different categories of expert examinations

and evaluates: (1) the rules for their application; (2) the bodies responsible and their institutional independence; (3) the methodology of assessment; and (4) the legal consequences of expert findings. The paper contributes to discussions on strengthening legislative quality control mechanisms in the context of EU enlargement, democratic resilience, and the institutional capacity of parliaments to resist the pressures of populist, emotionally loaded legislation.

# From minority protection to performative conflict? Emotionalised obstruction and social-media incentives in the Czech Chamber of Deputies

Marie Zámečnicková

The proposed paper explores how parliamentary obstruction in the Czech Chamber of Deputies is being reshaped by emotionalisation and by social-media incentives that extend parliamentary conflict far beyond the chamber itself. It asks whether recent obstruction practices still operate primarily as instruments of minority protection and procedural contestation, or whether they are increasingly used as performative strategies tailored to visibility, mobilisation, and emotional impact in hybrid media environments.

The paper presents research in progress conducted within a broader project on parliamentary law-making and legal stability.

It combines doctrinal analysis with qualitative case studies of selected high-conflict legislative episodes from the 2021–2025 parliamentary term. These include agenda-setting disputes, exceptionally long speeches, fixed voting times, repeated night sittings, and other forms of procedural escalation accompanied by strong performative elements. The analysis draws on parliamentary stenographic records, video recordings of plenary sittings, procedural motions, the timing and sequencing of sittings, and selected public communication by key parliamentary actors on social media. It also considers recent Constitutional Court case law and current debates on reforming the Chamber's

standing orders as two sites where the legitimacy and limits of obstruction are being re-defined. Rather than treating the Czech case as exceptional, the paper approaches it as a particularly revealing example of broader pressures currently affecting parliamentary politics in digitally saturated communication environments.

The paper argues that obstruction increasingly performs a dual function. It remains a traditional parliamentary instrument of delay and political pressure, but it also serves as a platform-oriented mode of conflict production in which parliamentary speech is directed not only at fellow deputies, but at

external audiences, media circulation, and partisan identity-building. The Czech case therefore highlights a broader challenge for contemporary parliamentarism: when procedural conflict becomes intertwined with emotionalised communication and the logic of digital visibility, parliamentary rules are exposed to pressures they were not designed to absorb. This may intensify escalation, weaken substantive reason-giving, and encourage increasingly restrictive responses by parliamentary majorities. The paper contributes to current debates by linking parliamentary procedure and constitutional review with political communication, and by showing how changing media environments

affect the boundaries of legitimate conflict in parliament. Its practical relevance lies in informing current debates on reforming the Chamber's standing orders and on how to preserve both minority rights and the decision-making capacity of parliament under conditions of emotionalised and mediatized conflict.

# Poster session

Day of Parliamentary Research | 16 June 2026

Poster presentations:

- ♦ **Emotionalisation of political discourse: Sentiment and topic analysis of public comments on Austrian political parties**
- ♦ **Coalition mood in times of crisis: Cooperation and conflict in contemporary governments**
- ♦ **Sporting emotions and values? Parliamentary debates on sport, gender, and education in the Nationalrat**
- ♦ **ParlAT: Accessing open data of the Austrian Parliament in R**
- ♦ **Trust issues: When participation builds trust - and why it sometimes doesn't**
- ♦ **Who refers to science? Understanding the salience of scientific evidence in parliamentary debates**

# **Emotionalisation of political discourse: Sentiment and topic analysis of public comments on Austrian political parties**

**Dmitry Erokhin**

This study examines the extent to which emotions dominate public discourse in comments on YouTube videos that appear as most relevant results in searches for major Austrian political parties (ÖVP, NEOS, FPÖ, SPÖ, GRÜNE). It explores how emotional tone varies across parties and whether this contributes to societal polarization through digital media, particularly by prioritizing

emotions over facts in politically charged debates.

The research retrieves most relevant YouTube videos as of 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2026 from searches using each party acronym. In total, 436 ÖVP-, 540 FPÖ-, 284 NEOS-, 501 SPÖ-, and 271 GRÜNE-related videos are analyzed. They constitute a mix of content, including news reports, interviews, debates, and commentary on topics such as coalition negotiations, government performance, integration policies, and controversial postings. Comments to these videos are collected via YouTube API and processed using the OpenAI API model gpt 5.4-mini

for multilingual sentiment analysis detecting positive, negative, and neutral tones and specific emotions such as anger, fear, and hope, as well as topic modeling. With 67,415 comments, most frequently, users commented on FPÖ-related videos. In comparison, GRÜNE-related videos received 9,085 comments.

The analysis reveals similarities and differences across the party-related discourses. For example, comments on ÖVP- and FPÖ-related videos were close in terms of comment language used, whereas GRÜNE- and NEOS-related videos had a close level of engagement. Emotions across comments

varied from anger and frustration to joy depending on the topics discussed. The same was true for the level of toxicity, polarization, and average sentiment. Comments under GRÜNE-related videos were more polarizing, comments under NEOS-related videos had a higher level of emotional intensity, and comments under FPÖ-related videos had a higher sentiment. As expected, discussions were mostly emotional rather than factual, but it again varied across parties and topics. For instance, comments on climate, energy, and transport were more factual under ÖVP- and SPÖ-related videos, whereas discussions under FPÖ-related videos were more factual on economy, costs, and taxes.

The findings provide parliaments with empirical evidence on how digital media shapes public perceptions of parties and democratic processes. They support the development of strategies to promote evidence-based discussions in emotionally charged contexts, mitigate polarization, and improve monitoring of emotional dynamics in political communication. This type of research can serve as a complement to traditional surveys and polls, though it should also acknowledge different limitations and ethical aspects.

## **Coalition mood in times of crisis: Cooperation and conflict in contemporary governments**

**Michael Imre**

Several years ago, we (Imre et al. 2023) introduced the concept of “coalition mood”, a time-varying measure capturing the atmosphere between governing parties. Drawing on patterns of applause during parliamentary debates, coalition mood provides a novel behavioral indicator of intra-coalition cooperation and conflict, complementing static measures such as ideological distance that have often been used as a proxy to assess

the risk of tensions within coalitions. We show that the measure aligns closely with key events in a coalition's life cycle, that it is correlated with the standings of the coalition parties in opinion polls, and that legislation is passed quicker when the coalition mood is good.

Our original data collection for Austria covered the period from 2003 to 2018, thereby missing a series of major political and societal shocks that plausibly affected coalition dynamics. These include new coalition patterns, such as the first participation of the Greens and NEOS in federal governments as well as the first three-party coalition in Aus-

tria in many decades; scandals such as the "Ibiza affair" and the subsequent breakdown of the ÖVP-FPÖ government in 2019; and international crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic or Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which created far-reaching policy pressures on governments all over the world. Utilizing recent improvements to the open data structure of the Austrian parliament, I extend the data collection both into the past and to more recent times, from the end of the period of single party governments in 1983 to 2025, to estimate the coalition mood for both older and recent governments. This allows me to examine how coalition dynamics evolve in novel government compositions

and under conditions of heightened uncertainty and unprecedented crises.

This project directly speaks to this year's broader topic of the Day of Parliamentary Research, demonstrating how applause, often understood as an emotive response to, for example, parliamentary speech, can be used to measure a latent concept such as the atmosphere within governments – something often discussed but rarely measured directly. By updating and extending the coalition mood framework, this project contributes to a better understanding of how emotions and interpersonal dynamics shape parliamentary governance in contemporary

democracies. It also demonstrates the potential of behavioral parliamentary data for studying how emotions shape political decision-making.

**Sporting emotions and values?  
Parliamentary debates on sport,  
gender, and education in the  
Nationalrat**

**Jörg-Uwe Nieland, Thomas Neumann**

This paper explores how sport becomes a central arena for emotionally charged negotiations over values, belonging, and social order in the parliamentary communication of Austria's Nationalrat. It focuses on recent debates concerning the construction of a national stadium, the role of physical education in schools, and the participation of trans people in sport. While sports communication

research has primarily examined media reporting, fan cultures, and the self-presentation of athletes and institutions, parliaments as sites of sport-related meaning-making and symbolic politics have received little attention. The paper addresses this gap by understanding the Nationalrat as an arena where sport policy and communication reflect broader conflicts over national identity, gender order, and the intersections of health and education.

Based on a qualitative analysis of plenary and committee transcripts from the last two legislative periods, supplemented by selected written inquiries and statements, the

study identifies frames, narratives, and legitimation strategies through which members of parliament structure sport-related issues and mobilize emotions and values. Using OpenQDA, the analysis traces how emotional arguments, metaphors of competition and unity, and symbolic references to Austrian sport culture are strategically deployed in political debates. These discursive strategies not only reflect political positioning but also indicate how affect and symbolic capital shape perceptions of fairness, inclusion, and civic virtue in Austrian sport.

In discussions about the national stadium, dominant frames include “modernization

and international competitiveness,” “criticism and responsibility,” “regional development and locational competition,” and “fiscal prudence.” For both the ÖVP and FPÖ, the project functions less as an infrastructure investment than as a symbolically charged nation-building enterprise. Debates about trans participation foreground questions of “the body,” “fairness,” and “gender order,” while arguments on school sport highlight “health promotion,” “performance norms,” and “social integration.”

The paper shows, first, how emotions and sporting values are strategically used to legitimize or delegitimize political positions;

second, how sport-related framing reinforces or bridges partisan divides; and third, how parliamentary sport debates resonate with broader media and civic controversies. Overall, the study conceptualizes parliamentary debates on sport as a revealing site for examining the interplay between emotion, sporting values, and symbolic representation in Austrian democracy, thereby contributing to current debates in political communication and the sociology of emotion.

## **ParIAT: Accessing open data of the Austrian Parliament in R**

**Roland Schmidt**

This contribution presents ParIAT, an open-source R package that aims to strengthen empirical research on the Austrian Parliament by making parliamentary open data easier to access, structure and analyse. The package is intended for researchers, students and practitioners alike who want to work with parliamentary data in a reproducible way without first having to build their own interface to the Parliament's API.

R is widely used in statistical computing and data analysis and has a strong user base in the social sciences. ParlAT builds on this environment and provides a consistent interface to the Open Data API of the Austrian Parliament. Through the package, users can retrieve and combine information on plenary meetings, transcripts, speeches, members of parliament, mandates, committees, legislative proposals, committee reports, parliamentary questions, events and other datasets made available by Parliament. Some functions closely mirror the structure of the API, while others help render the raw output more useful for analysis.

The purpose of ParlAT is not to replace the official open data infrastructure, but to lower the practical threshold for using it. By returning structured data directly in R, the package can support analyses of parliamentary activity across time, actors, institutions and policy fields. Possible applications include research on representation, party competition, agenda setting, committee work, legislative processes, political discourse and deliberation. It may also help connect parliamentary studies with text analysis, network analysis and other computational approaches.

ParlAT is still in development, and it should be understood as an initial but already func-

tional research tool. Its modest aim is to provide a reliable foundation on which more specialised research workflows can be built. The package is openly developed on GitHub, and bug reports and suggestions from the political science, parliamentary studies and data science communities are welcome. This collaborative model should allow the package to grow in response to actual research needs.

Beyond academic research, ParlAT may also be useful for transparency-oriented work, teaching and parliamentary practice. Easier access to structured parliamentary data can support exploratory analysis, public com-

munication and new forms of engagement with democratic institutions. The project is independent and not affiliated with the Austrian Parliament, but it seeks to make the Parliament's open data more accessible and practically usable.

Website of the package:

<https://werkstattcodes.github.io/ParlAT/>

GitHub:

<https://github.com/werkstattcodes/ParlAT>

## **Trust issues: When participation builds trust – and why it sometimes doesn't**

**Kevin W. Settles**

Political trust is frequently treated as a barometer of democratic legitimacy, yet deliberative formats, despite proliferating across Germany and beyond, do not reliably rebuild it. Data from the IParl Parlamentarismus-Studie 2026 (n = 2,050) illustrates the stakes: while ~80 % of Germans endorse democracy in principle, only about 15 % are satisfied with the Bundestag's work, and just

11.6 % feel that citizens' interests are adequately represented.

Drawing on 25 qualitative interviews with participation-experienced citizens (R:PART, University of Kassel), this contribution investigates the conditions under which deliberative formats like citizens' assemblies (Bürgerräte) contribute to the formation, stabilisation, or erosion of political trust. Building on Levi and Stoker's (2000) conception of trust as a relational, experience-based judgment, it argues that trust is not an output of participation as such, but a sequential evaluation shaped by the alignment of empiri-

cally grounded “Schlüsselmomente”: critical junctures at the micro-level of individual participatory experience. These range from the initial invitation and the experience of being heard within the process, to the institutional acknowledgement of results, the response of political representatives, and the provision of follow-up feedback.

Initial findings indicate four empirical patterns, from deepening trust to active cynicism. The critical variable is not format design but institutional responsiveness. Institutions that commission deliberative processes bear an obligation that does not

end when the process concludes: the absence of structured follow-up is experienced by participants as dismissal, retroactively reframing the entire participatory investment as symbolic. Where the chain of critical moments is intact, trust deepens. Where it breaks, the earlier the break, the deeper the erosion. For parliamentary research, this shifts attention from participation design toward responsiveness practices: how representative institutions handle, communicate, and justify what citizens have contributed – and whether the promise that participation implies is ultimately kept.

## **Who refers to science? Understanding the salience of scientific evidence in parliamentary debates**

**Daniel Wiesner**

Effective politics relies on the availability and use of factual information. Consequently, scientific evidence is widely regarded as a key ingredient in rational, informed political decisions. However, while theoretical and normative discussions often stress the importance of evidence-informed politics, empirical studies of how often and under what conditions politicians refer to scientific evidence in their argumentation remain

limited. In particular, comparative, large-scale analyses across countries are scarce. This study aims to fill this gap by systematically analysing references to scientific evidence in one important arena of policy-making: parliamentary debates. Our dataset covers 30,000 speeches delivered in the main legislative chambers across six European democracies (Austria, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, and Italy) from 2018 to 2021, offering both a sufficient pre-pandemic baseline and the opportunity to assess whether a global crisis with high scientific relevance altered the role of scientific evidence in political discourse.

Using large language models (LLMs), we identify two key features in each speech: (1) the presence or absence of references to scientific evidence, and (2) the primary policy issue, coded using the 21-category Comparative Agendas Project framework. We then apply multi-level logistic regression models to evaluate which factors are associated with higher or lower likelihoods of references to scientific evidence and examine potential changes over time. We distinguish between three sets of predictors: (a) macro-level country variables (national R&D investment, public science trust), (b) meso-level party and issue factors (left-right ideology, populism, vote share, government vs. opposition

status, policy field, and party issue ownership), and (c) micro-level speaker characteristics (role, gender, seniority).

The results showed a time effect, which was mainly driven by health-related speeches: after the COVID-19 outbreak, references to scientific evidence increased sharply when discussing health issues, but remained constant for other policy areas. Furthermore, findings showed that institutional roles, policy contexts, and organisational routines were most decisive. These findings carry direct implications for parliamentary practice: the use of scientific evidence in parliament is not primarily a matter of ideology or national

culture, but rather one of institutional design and support structures. Concrete measures such as dedicated scientific advisory boards, in-house research services, and systematic training for parliamentary staff can meaningfully increase the integration of scientific evidence into day-to-day political work.

The respective authors are responsible for the content of their own texts.

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