

HORIZON

Call: ERC-2023-STG

(Call for Proposals for ERC Starting Grant)

Topic: ERC-2023-STG

Type of Action: HORIZON-ERC

Proposal number: 101115613

Proposal acronym: SPARK

Type of Model Grant Agreement: HORIZON Action Grant Budget-Based

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Proposal ID **101115613**

Acronym **SPARK**

1 - General information

Fields marked * are mandatory to fill.

Topic	ERC-2023-STG	Type of Action	HORIZON-ERC
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Acronym SPARK

Proposal title

Note that for technical reasons, the following characters are not accepted in the Proposal Title and will be removed: < > " &

Duration in months*

Primary ERC Review Panel*

Secondary ERC Review Panel

(if applicable)

ERC Keyword 1*

Please select, if applicable, the ERC keyword(s) that best characterise the subject of your proposal in order of priority.

ERC Keyword 2

ERC Keyword 3

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Free keywords

Application forms

Proposal ID **101115613**

Acronym **SPARK**

Abstract *

How is knowledge used in parliaments? What are the values that underpin knowledge use in those institutions? And what are the effects of knowledge production, acceptance and contestation on democratic governance? These are pivotal questions at a time when democratic decision-making has never been more scrutinised and contested. And while there have been many longstanding debates across philosophy, humanities and social sciences about the role of knowledge in decision-making, we still know comparatively little about the role of parliaments, and their impact on democratic governance, within such debates.

In this project, I undertake the first systematic and comparative study of parliaments – and the representatives and officials therein – as consumers, producers and mediators of knowledge. In doing so, I transform how we understand these democratic institutions as knowledge institutions. This is a necessary intervention to inform wider debates about the health of democracies given that knowledge and information have become ever more accessible and yet more contested for politicians and the public to navigate and use effectively. I adopt an ambitious research design, focusing on 7 European parliaments and 3 policy areas (health, environment, and welfare), and an innovative mix of methods to: interrogate how knowledge is gathered, circulated and exchanged; examine values and motivations underpinning the use of knowledge; and explore the impact of parliaments' knowledge use on democratic governance.

SPARK pushes the boundaries of political science by drawing on STS, sociology and social anthropology to offer new answers to essential questions about representation, law-making and accountability. In rethinking parliaments as knowledge institutions, SPARK will have a deep impact on how we conceive of these democratic institutions and address urgent social problems and challenges including environmental degradation, healthcare crises and continuing social inequalities.

Remaining characters

4

Has this proposal (or a very similar one) been submitted in the past 2 years in response to a call for proposals under any EU programme, including the current call?

Yes No

Please give the proposal reference or contract number.

Application forms

Proposal ID **101115613**

Acronym **SPARK**

Declarations

Field(s) marked * are mandatory to fill.

- 1) We declare to have the explicit consent of all applicants on their participation and on the content of this proposal. *
- 2) We confirm that the information contained in this proposal is correct and complete and that none of the project activities have started before the proposal was submitted (unless explicitly authorised in the call conditions). *
- 3) We declare:
- to be fully compliant with the eligibility criteria set out in the call
 - not to be subject to any exclusion grounds under the [EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046](#)
 - to have the financial and operational capacity to carry out the proposed project. *
- 4) We acknowledge that all communication will be made through the Funding & Tenders Portal electronic exchange system and that access and use of this system is subject to the [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#). *
- 5) We have read, understood and accepted the [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms & Conditions](#) and [Privacy Statement](#) that set out the conditions of use of the Portal and the scope, purposes, retention periods, etc. for the processing of personal data of all data subjects whose data we communicate for the purpose of the application, evaluation, award and subsequent management of our grant, prizes and contracts (including financial transactions and audits). *
- 6) We declare that the proposal complies with ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity as set out in the [ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#), as well as applicable international and national law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols. [Appropriate procedures, policies and structures](#) are in place to foster responsible research practices, to prevent questionable research practices and research misconduct, and to handle allegations of breaches of the principles and standards in the Code of Conduct. *
- 7) We declare that the proposal has an exclusive focus on civil applications (activities intended to be used in military application or aiming to serve military purposes cannot be funded). If the project involves dual-use items in the sense of [Regulation 428/2009](#), or other items for which authorisation is required, we confirm that we will comply with the applicable regulatory framework (e.g. obtain export/import licences before these items are used). *
- 8) We confirm that the activities proposed do not
- aim at human cloning for reproductive purposes;
 - intend to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed), or
 - intend to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.
 - lead to the destruction of human embryos (for example, for obtaining stem cells)
- These activities are excluded from funding. *
- 9) We confirm that for activities carried out outside the Union, the same activities would have been allowed in at least one EU Member State. *

The coordinator is only responsible for the information relating to their own organisation. Each applicant remains responsible for the information declared for their organisation. If the proposal is retained for EU funding, they will all be required to sign a declaration of honour.

False statements or incorrect information may lead to administrative sanctions under the EU Financial Regulation.

ERC Starting Grant 2023
Research proposal [Part B1]¹
(Part B1 is evaluated both in Step 1 and Step 2,
Part B2 is evaluated in Step 2 only)

Studying Parliaments and the Role of Knowledge

SPARK

PI	Marc Geddes
Host Institution	University of Edinburgh
Duration	60 months (5 years)

How is knowledge used in parliaments? What are the values that underpin knowledge use in those institutions? And what are the effects of knowledge production, acceptance and contestation on democratic governance? These are pivotal questions at a time when democratic decision-making has never been more scrutinised and contested. And while there have been many longstanding debates across philosophy, humanities and social sciences about the role of knowledge in decision-making, we still know comparatively little about the role of parliaments, and their impact on democratic governance, within such debates.

In this project, I undertake the first systematic and comparative study of parliaments – and the representatives and officials therein – as consumers, producers and mediators of knowledge. In doing so, I transform how we understand these *democratic institutions* as *knowledge institutions*. This is a necessary intervention to inform wider debates about the health of democracies given that knowledge and information have become ever more accessible and yet more contested for politicians and the public to navigate and use effectively. I adopt an ambitious research design, focusing on 7 European parliaments and 3 policy areas (health, environment, and welfare), and an innovative mix of methods to: interrogate how knowledge is gathered, circulated and exchanged; examine values and motivations underpinning the use of knowledge; and explore the impact of parliaments' knowledge use on democratic governance.

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Explain and justify the cross-panel or cross domain nature of your proposal, if a secondary panel is indicated in the online proposal submission forms. There is a limit of 1000 characters, spaces and line breaks included.

¹ Instructions for completing Part B1 can be found in the 'Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2023 Calls'.

Section a: Extended Synopsis of the scientific proposal (max. 5 pages, references do not count towards the page limits)

1. Overview

Parliaments are foundational political institutions across advanced democratic political systems, even as they exist in wider institutional decision-making ecosystems, particularly governments and executives. As sites of political representation, they are home to the articulation, contestation and creation of social and political interests, the development and legitimisation of legislation, and are tasked with holding governments to account. Though often overlooked and at times disputed (e.g. Richardson and Jordan, 1979), the importance of these institutions should not be understated: parliaments – and the elected representatives and officials therein – are the crucibles of democracies, who continuously influence and shape political decisions to fulfil important representative, law-making and accountability functions (Bräuninger et al., 2017; Russell and Gover, 2017). To function effectively, parliaments need to make political judgements by juxtaposing, contrasting or bringing together the opinions, beliefs and values of different groups alongside knowledge from think tanks, universities and beyond. In this sense, parliaments are not only *political* and *democratic institutions* but also *knowledge institutions*. They must gather, synthesise, accept or reject, and mediate knowledge, and use a variety of different claims to realise their functions. Academic researchers, policymakers and citizens rarely think of parliaments in this way, despite the fact that knowledge is a significant basis for political action. This body of knowledge may encompass *expert knowledge* (e.g. scientific research), *experiential knowledge* (e.g. lived experience), *political and legal knowledge* (e.g. partisan dimensions, insider knowledge), and *local knowledge* (e.g. know-how of procedures).² We do not know how these different forms of knowledge affect parliaments. This matters because knowledge, in being a vital dimension to give actors ‘the capacity to act’ (Grundmann and Stehr, 2012), affects the quality of democratic decision-making.

I propose a ground-breaking research programme: delivering the first systematic and comparative study of parliaments as *knowledge institutions*, which will transform how we understand these organisations, and thereby make a new contribution to wider debates about democratic decision-making and the health of democracies. This is an important and necessary intervention given ongoing diagnoses of a ‘crisis’ (Eyal, 2019) or ‘death’ (Nichols, 2017) of, *inter alia*, expert-based knowledge within wider trends of mis- and dis-information (Freelon and Wells, 2020; Southwell et al., 2018; Tenove, 2020) post-truth politics (Ball, 2017), ‘anti-politics’ (Fawcett et al., 2017) and de-democratising forces (Boese et al., 2022). Such trends have exposed social problems about the way that elites handle and use information, the quality of public debate and policy decisions, and even the legitimacy of political institutions. This is entangled with normative questions about what it means to be a ‘good’ representative (Clarke et al., 2018; Dovi, 2007) and how to design resilient democratic institutions (Celis and Childs, 2020; Saward, 2010, 2021). In short, the old question of the appropriate relationship between democratic decision-making and knowledge remains an ever important one that requires attention at a time of significant challenges including healthcare crises, environmental degradation and continuing social inequalities. **I will demonstrate how – by gaining insight into what, how and with what effect parliaments ‘know’ – scholars and practitioners can make critical progress on a set of enduring and important set of social problems facing contemporary democracies.** Through my project, SPARK, I will advance academic debates and questions on the relationship between parliaments and knowledge, and address wider social problems and normative questions about how political elites engage with knowledge in democratic governance. To successfully deliver this ambitious research agenda, my project pushes the boundaries of political science by creatively drawing on and engaging with social anthropology, sociology and science and technology studies (STS), conceptually and methodologically. I will analyse seven parliamentary settings in Europe at national, sub-national and supra-national level using a distinctively comparative and interpretive approach that places meanings, values and interpretations of actors (principally MPs, officials and stakeholders such as expert advisers and interest groups) at its heart.

2. Research objectives

My vision for SPARK is to re-draw the boundaries of political science by bringing together two pools of literature, about parliaments (usually studied by political scientists) and about the role of knowledge in society (usually studied by science and technology studies (STS) scholars and sociologists). This will enable me to address three core objectives to collectively re-position parliaments empirically and theoretically as producers, consumers and mediators of knowledge, and to reshape academic, practitioner and public understandings of parliaments and their place within wider relationships of knowledge and democracy.

² This starting definition of knowledge will be subjected to analysis through the research programme itself to understand parliaments’ and parliamentary actors’ interpretations of knowledge.

Objective 1: To examine and compare patterns of knowledge use in and by parliaments

SPARK provides a systematic and comparative account of knowledge use in a diversity of parliaments and across different policy areas. Remarkably little research has looked at this, nor considered different types of knowledge. One pool of studies focuses on institutional factors that shape interest group access to the legislative arena, finding that better-resourced groups with economic power, notably private sector or well-funded think tanks, play a disproportionate role compared to others (Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Chaqués-Bonafont and Márquez, 2016; Eising and Spohr, 2017; Pedersen et al., 2015). Meanwhile, a second pool focuses on descriptive representation of parliamentary knowledge providers, often finding that elite men dominate legislative arenas (Bochel and Berthier, 2019; Geddes, 2018a; Rumbul, 2016). **While we know that certain groups have more and better access to parliaments, we do not know what happens within these institutions and what actors – notably MPs and officials – do with the knowledge they are given.** There are tantalising hints of the transformative potential that this focus can bring: Emma Crewe (2017) identifies entanglements of politics and ‘evidence’ in the UK’s House of Commons using a clause of a bill, while Carolyn Hendriks et al. (2017) indicate how committees in the Australian House of Representatives use public engagement as a form of ‘evidence’ for policy scrutiny. Other authors have suggested the need to study what they term ‘legislative science advice’ (Akerlof et al., 2019; Kenny et al., 2017); calls which have, as yet, gone unheeded. SPARK easily exceeds such untapped potential by going much further than ‘evidence’ or ‘science’ to broadly look at how parliaments use different types of knowledge to inform their work. This important step-change permits us to address questions of how different kinds of knowledge are linked to decision-making and, in doing so, contributes to wider debates about democratic governance and institutional resilience.

In Objective 1, I will identify what kinds of knowledge are used in parliamentary work, by whom and under what circumstances. By ‘use’, I mean the ways in which knowledge is identified and gathered, quoted in speeches, cited in reports, circulated in briefings, exchanged between groups, accepted or rejected by MPs and officials in meetings, and more. This will be done through a comparative case study approach and draw on insights from STS. Specifically, SPARK makes use of the significant concept of ‘boundary work’ by Thomas Gieryn (1983), in which he demonstrates how scientists distinguish between scientific knowledge from other types of work in order to construct and enforce boundaries between science and politics. As applied to other contexts (Grek, 2020; Guston, 1999, 2001), this will be a fruitful avenue to examine the knowledge practices of parliaments. In particular, a comparative angle will give opportunities to compare and contrast different parliamentary settings and the means through which they seek to establish boundaries for different types of knowledge. This will drive forward our understandings of how knowledge manifests itself in practice, and how different kinds travel across different sites within and across parliaments.

Objective 2: To understand how parliaments and parliamentary actors interpret the role of knowledge

Building on the first objective, Objective 2 will turn attention to the underlying *values* that shape knowledge use in parliaments to recast parliaments as knowledge institutions. Although one key author has previously suggested the importance of considering the ‘informational role’ of parliaments and legislatures (Krehbiel, 1991), this analysis does not interrogate the mechanisms, values and beliefs of parliamentary actors in producing and using knowledge; instead, it relies on a rational choice logic that *assumes* that information plays a role because it is in politicians’ self-interest. This has been applied in various contexts (e.g. Battaglini et al., 2019) but **academic research has largely failed to critically investigate the types of knowledge that actors in parliaments value, and why.** This is despite significant advances in debate in other social science research that has offered key insights into the nature of knowledge and policy. For example, policy scholars have drawn attention to how executive actors – specifically government ministers and civil servants – leverage scientific and expert knowledge in policy processes (C. Boswell, 2009; Cairney, 2015). Elsewhere, STS scholars have shown how scientific knowledge is the product of discourses, social interests and heterogenous social practices (Jasanoff, 2005; Latour and Woolgar, 1986). This literature raises significant questions about the underlying nature of knowledge used in societies, which can make an important contribution to understanding parliaments but which, as yet, remains stuck in disciplinary siloes (Farley-Ripple et al., 2020). Parliamentary studies, specifically, have contributed little to drive forward debates about the role of knowledge despite these institutions consuming, producing and mediating a vast array of different kinds of information.

In Objective 2, I address the above disciplinary complacency by generating new data on the ways that parliamentary actors – especially MPs and their staff, officials, and stakeholders that provide knowledge – interpret ‘knowledge’, what kinds of knowledge they perceive as useful and authoritative, and why. Not only will this give a new dimension to existing research in political science on the everyday lives of political elites (Rhodes et al., 2007) and how they select information (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017), it will do so from a comparative angle to take a critical step in examining what actors see as the essential roles

of knowledge in parliamentary work. It builds, then, on Objective 1's focus to in order to theoretically re-position parliaments as knowledge institutions; from this, it becomes possible to investigate the wider embeddedness of parliaments vis-à-vis the relationship between knowledge and democracy.

Objective 3: To evaluate the impact of knowledge use on parliamentary democracy

Combining insights from Objective 1 (focusing on the *practices* of knowledge use) and Objective 2 (focusing on the underlying *values* of knowledge use), Objective 3 assesses the *impacts* of different kinds of knowledge on democratic governance. I will first focus on the direct impact on parliamentary work, i.e. the ways in which knowledge affects the construction, articulation and representation of different interests, the work done by parliaments to hold governments and governing bodies to account for their decisions, and the development and legitimisation of legislation and policy through legislative processes. **We currently do not know how these parliamentary functions are affected – made better or made worse – by different kinds of knowledge, whether it is scientific research shaping debate about legislation, how lived experience of constituents is used as evidence to scrutinise government policy, or how different claims of knowing are juxtaposed with democratic claims to legitimise decision-making.** This matters because the selective use of knowledge will affect the quality of democratic decision-making. Objective 3 will contribute to this through a comparative lens that will identify good practice in different parliamentary settings.

Second, and on the basis of the above, I contribute to broader debates about the relationship between knowledge and democracy. On the one hand, existing research shows trends of de-democratisation across the world, including through lower satisfaction with democracies (Boese et al., 2022; Ercan and Gagnon, 2014; Foa and Mounk, 2016; Inglehart, 2016; Keane, 2009) and lower engagement with political institutions such as parliaments (Leston-Bandeira, 2012; Mair, 2013). These trends have begun to chip away at the legitimacy of democratic governance and raise critical questions about the nature of 'good' political representation (Clarke et al., 2018; Dovi, 2007). On the other hand, democratic decision-making has also been put into the spotlight given the rise of misinformation across advanced societies and profound challenges such as the Covid-19 health pandemic or the climate crisis, both of which ask the question of the appropriate role of, *inter alia*, expert-based knowledge in democratic decision-making (Bryson et al., 2021; Weinberg, 2022; Willis, 2020). Furthermore, as STS scholar Sheila Jasanoff (2005) points out, knowledge and democracy are closely intertwined, given the basis of modern democratic states as 'knowledge societies'. However, the specific role of the foundational institution in democratic societies – parliaments – has been under-theorised and under-explored. Making use of specific policy case studies (see below), **this study will contribute to broader debates about the health of democratic governance by explaining how democracy and knowledge are intertwined, and situating the role of parliaments as *knowledge institutions* within these entanglements.** While this will radically change the way we approach democracy from an academic lens, this objective will also embed continuing dialogue with parliaments to ensure that findings from across SPARK permit practitioners to reflect on, and improve, their production and use of knowledge in democratic decision-making.

3. Research programme

While the chief novelty of SPARK lies in its innovation to re-think parliaments as knowledge institutions in democratic societies, one of the high risks (but also significant pay-offs) lies in the ambition of the research programme to successfully realise these goals. To this end, my project pushes at the boundaries of existing interpretive research through its comparative design and methodological pluralism.

3a. Parliamentary settings and policy case studies

My project focuses on seven parliaments across multi-level Europe, which provides the most extensive study of knowledge practices in parliaments to date and offers a template for future inquiry in this area. I focus on European settings for two reasons. First, European governance is characterised by unique multi-level complexity (Bache and Flinders, 2004; Hooghe and Marks, 2001), making it possible to explore relationships between democracy and knowledge at different political levels. This is distinctive; multi-level parliamentary analyses are rare. Second, there are several inter-cultural and historical linkages between European polities, including their relationships to European-level policy-making but also with respect to the design of institutions, common legal frameworks, shared geographical histories, and patterns of distrust in political institutions and elites. These commonalities make a complex project more viable. Based on these principles, **SPARK focuses on federal and/or devolved states in Europe, and specifically: three national parliaments of the UK, Germany and Spain; three sub-national parliaments within each of these national settings (respectively the Scottish Parliament, the Bavarian *Landtag* and the Parliament of Catalonia); and, the European Parliament as a supra-national parliament.** They represent a range of political systems (majoritarian, consensus, consociational), institutional structures, and different levels of governance (Lijphart, 2012;

Schmidt, 2006; Siefken and Rommetvedt, 2021). I have also built contacts across several European parliaments and research communities as part of my academic scholarship and leadership to date, and have fluency in German and English, which puts me in an ideal position to lead this research programme.

Across these multiple parliamentary settings, I will focus on three thematic policy areas to act as the main gateway to understanding different types of knowledge used in parliaments. They include: **healthcare**, which has a rich tradition of scholarship linked to ‘evidence-based medicine’, out of which ‘evidence-based policy’ arose (Smith, 2013), and often focuses on medical knowledge; **environment**, which has become increasingly salient given the existential challenge of climate change and consistent tension in democracies of being able to deal with the problem (Willis, 2020); and **welfare**, which is often an emotive policy area based on social science research, and can offer a useful contrast to debates in healthcare and environment that are dominated by natural sciences. These themes are particularly valuable given the wider social problems with which they are associated, including the consequences of Covid-19, the existential challenges of climate change, and significant new pressures for how welfare states are organised amid economic stresses. **Within each of these policy domains, the project team will identify specific case studies, such as key events, pieces of legislation or other political phenomena and debates, which take place during the programme of study.**

3b. Methodological approach and tools

SPARK adopts an interpretive approach alongside a comparative research design with mixed methods.

My project’s analytical framework is informed by a bottom-up, interpretive approach, which has grown in maturity across the arts, humanities and social sciences (Bevir and Blakely, 2018; Geertz, 2017; Wagenaar, 2011; Yanow, 2000). This approach centralises the role of actors’ interpretations of their world, including their values and beliefs, and situates them within their institutions to explain political strategies, behaviour and outcomes. It relies on an abductive logic of inquiry, i.e., one where a puzzle, derived from previous knowledge, is investigated and which may challenge the basis of existing knowledge. I have a strong track record of adopting this approach for award-winning empirical research (Geddes, 2020), have built on its theories and ideas to make conceptual advances (Geddes, 2018b), and contributed to opening parliamentary studies to new theoretical and methodological positions (Geddes and Rhodes, 2018; see also Crewe, 2021a).

Interpretive approaches – though they have gained traction in political science recently, especially with its links to ethnographic methods (J. Boswell et al., 2019; Schatz, 2009; Wedeen, 2010) – continue to push at the limits of the political science mainstream. This is especially the case with comparative political science (Simmons and Rush Smith, 2019, 2021), where interpretive research has made even fewer inroads despite empirical studies in other disciplines (Candea, 2018). I combine comparative and interpretive approaches for two key reasons. First, it throws into sharp relief how practices and interpretations around similar problems or challenges – in SPARK’s case, the production and use of knowledge in parliaments – are approached similarly or in different ways. Second, it identifies dynamics that might otherwise be missed by looking only at one case and enhance the nuances of particular parliamentary settings. By adopting a more complex comparative approach through interpretive research that embraces the ‘messiness’ of social science research (Crewe, 2021b; Law, 2004), SPARK has the potential to advance traditional comparative political science.

It is only through pushing existing research methods that SPARK’s objectives can be achieved. In doing so, I will lead a future research agenda by building capacity and insight that other scholars – including but not limited to legislative studies – can adopt. In my project, I will adopt not only qualitative methods (with which interpretive research is often associated), but also – unconventionally – quantitative tools:

- *Quantitative tools* are especially important for Objective 1 in order to identify broader patterns of knowledge use. The project team will make use of three specific tools. First, innovatively, a **citation analysis** of parliamentary outputs, such as briefing papers and committee reports, to document and categorise sources of knowledge and the prevalence of different claims. Second, a **corpus analysis of speeches**, to identify similarities and differences between MPs (and institutions) on the types of knowledge used in speeches in the chamber. And third, **an open-access database of knowledge providers** involved in parliamentary activities, such as committee inquiries (e.g., witnesses to public hearings).
- *Qualitative tools* will be used to add depth to the findings from quantitative patterns, and become the key way to pursue Objective 2. Inspired by ethnographic approaches, with which I have extensive expertise, three key tools will be used. First, **semi-structured interviews** with key actors (including MPs and their staff, government and parliamentary officials, and key stakeholders and knowledge providers) to understand their motivations, values and beliefs. Second, **non-participant observation**, to understand how different types of knowledge are used, including through public interactions in committee and chamber debates, observing events such as launches of reports or public discussions of policy issues, etc. And third, **qualitative analysis of key texts** identified through interviews or observation to supplement and extend the data and findings of those methods.

3c. Research phases

SPARK undertakes the project over five phases in five years. In **Phase 1**, I begin with setting up the project team, comprising of myself as PI, two post-doctoral research fellows for 3.5 years and one PhD studentship (funded for 3 years) (plus a research assistant in Phase 2).³ I will also establish the infrastructure to support the project, including SPARK's website to bring together resources for researchers, practitioners and the public, and to create a new Global Network on Parliaments and Knowledge to bring together academics and practitioners, which will meet at least three times and situates SPARK in global debates about the relationship of parliaments and knowledge. In **Phase 2**, the project team focuses on Objective 1 through quantitative data-gathering of patterns of knowledge use. In **Phase 3**, the team addresses Objective 2 by building a picture of the values around knowledge use using the aforementioned qualitative tools. All data gathered during the previous two phases will be reviewed, synthesised, analysed in **Phase 4**. This will be done on the basis of the interpretive framework to identify commonalities and differences between parliamentary sites, including open and thematic coding in NVivo. This crucial phase will address Objective 3 and bring out the core impacts of different kinds of knowledge on parliaments and wider democratic decision-making. Finally, **Phase 5** will focus on writing up and disseminating research for both scholarly and practitioner audiences. This will take place throughout the second half of the project (through ongoing dialogue with practitioners established during qualitative research), but especially in the final 12 months.

Figure 1. Overview of research phases.

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5		
Phase 1 (project start-up)	■	■													
Phase 2 (quant. data-gathering)		■	■	■	■	■									
Phase 3 (qual. data-gathering)					■	■	■	■	■						
Phase 4 (synthesis and analysis)								■	■	■	■	■			
Phase 5 (writing up and outputs)				■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

4. Project contributions, outputs and dissemination

SPARK will reshape and rethink parliaments as both democratic *and* knowledge institutions. This will have an impact on scholarship, practitioners and society in at least three distinct ways. *Theoretically and normatively*, I will re-think the very basis of parliaments within democratic political systems, and the appropriate role between knowledge and democracy. It will give us new analytical tools to analyse parliaments in a distinctive way, and re-think them in relation to parliamentary functions of political representation, law-making and accountability. In doing so, I will help address broader and urgent questions about the health of democracies and their relationship to different kinds of knowledge. For example, it will give us insights into when particular types of knowledge clash with democratic claims, and when they complement each other to address key policy issues, whether in healthcare, environment or welfare. *Empirically*, my project will provide significant new knowledge comparing the practices of knowledge production and use. For example, I will compare and contrast between institutional settings and the distinctive elements within them, exploring how MPs and officials use knowledge differently in the chamber, in committees, or across institutions. I will identify under what circumstances different types of knowledge are deemed particularly valuable, and when they are not. *Methodologically*, SPARK will push forward new trends in using text-as-data through the project's comparative research design and showcase the strengths of mixed-methods research for interpretive approaches. This will be a key academic outcome to pave the way for further research.

To make these contributions, I will draw together findings from across the project in a landmark, agenda-setting book-length account of parliaments' knowledge (re-)production and use. The team will also produce at least one edited collection, a PhD thesis, and 8 peer-reviewed articles (single- or co-authored). Finally, wider debate will also be facilitated through the website's online hub of information and open-access data. The project's long-term legacy will be guaranteed through the establishment and maintenance of a new global network on parliaments and knowledge that will bring long-lasting infrastructure to the study of this topic beyond the confines of SPARK. **In sum, my vision is for SPARK to carve out a permanent new avenue of research based on different disciplines in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and contribute to wider public debate about the relationship between parliaments, knowledge and democracy.**

³ Research fellows will each lead on one country setting, while the PI and PhD student will share one setting (owing to the wider responsibilities of the PI and training needs of the PhD student). The team will share data collection of the EP.

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Section b: Curriculum vitae (max. 2 pages)

- **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Family name, first name: Geddes, Marc
 ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8040-7059
 Date of birth: 29 August 1990
 Nationality: British and German (dual citizen)
 URL for website: marcgeddes.uk

- **EDUCATION**

2012-2016 PhD in Politics: *Interpreting Parliamentary Scrutiny: An enquiry concerning everyday practices of parliamentary actors in select committees of the House of Commons*
 Department of Politics, University of Sheffield, UK
 Supervisors: Professor Matthew Flinders and Dr Felicity Matthews
 ⇒ Awarded the Andrew Gamble Prize for an Outstanding Thesis, University of Sheffield

2011-2012 MA Politics with Research Methods
 Department of Politics, University of Sheffield, UK

2008-2011 BA (Hons.) History and Politics
 Department of History, University of Sheffield, UK

- **CURRENT POSITION**

2020-present Senior Lecturer in Politics (permanent position), Politics and International Relations, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK

- **PREVIOUS POSITIONS**

2016-2020 Lecturer in British Politics (permanent position), Politics and International Relations, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK

- **FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS**

2022 **Prize:** Outstanding Course Award for ‘Parliamentary Studies’, a specialist course delivering teaching to final-year undergraduate students about the UK and Scottish parliaments.

2021-22 **Fellowship:** Parliamentary Academic Fellowship (12 months), Environmental Audit Committee, House of Commons, UK; funded by Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Account (ESRC IAA) to review evidence processes by committees

2014-present **Fellowship:** Associate Fellow, Sir Bernard Crick Centre for the Public Understanding of Politics, Department of Politics, University of Sheffield, UK

2021 **Prize:** WJM Mackenzie Prize for Best Book Published in Political Science (for *Dramas at Westminster*), Political Studies Association (PSA), UK

2019-20 **Grant:** ESRC IAA to evaluate academic engagement strategies by four UK legislatures (UK, Scottish and Welsh parliaments, and Northern Ireland Assembly)

2018 **Prize:** Award for the ‘Specialist Group of the Year’, for the Political Studies Association’s Parliaments Group (specialist section of the learned society, for which I was co-convener).

2017 **Grant:** Strategic Research Support Fund, University of Edinburgh, UK, to organise workshop on ‘Ethnographies of Legislatures’ with 20 participants.

2016 **Prize:** Andrew Gamble Prize for outstanding PhD thesis, Department of Politics, University of Sheffield, UK

2012-15 **Studentship:** ESRC Competitive Studentship for a PhD at Department of Politics, University of Sheffield, UK

- **TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

2016-present Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in Politics – topics: Introduction to Politics/IR (500 students annually), British politics (250 students annually) and parliamentary studies (35 students annually); MSc supervision (11 students); PhD supervision (1 student). Politics and International Relations, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK

2014-16 Graduate Teaching Assistant – topics: western political theory, introduction to political analysis, and British politics. Department of Politics, University of Sheffield, UK

- **ORGANISATION OF SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS**

- 2014-20 Communications Officer (2014-17) then Co-Convener (2017-20) of PSA Parliaments Group. Organised annual UK-based conference in 2017, 2018 and 2019, with 40-70 participants at each event. Co-organiser of all Parliaments Group panels at the UK-based PSA International Annual Conference every year between 2014 and 2020. The Group won Group of the Year from the PSA in 2018.
- 2018-19 Steering Group member for the House of Commons Liaison Committee and Study of Parliament Group Anniversary Conference on 40 Years of Departmental Select Committees, with over 100 participants.
- 2017 Organiser for two-day international workshop on ‘Ethnographies of Legislatures’, University of Edinburgh, UK, with 20 participants.

- **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 2020-22 Deputy Director for Research (Knowledge Exchange and Impact) (oversee strategic direction of research dissemination activities across School of 300 academic staff), School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK
- 2017-22 Co-Director (2019-22), and Associate Director (2017-19), Centre for Science, Knowledge and Policy (130+ members), School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK
- 2016-17/19-20 International Exchange Coordinator (departmental coordinator for Erasmus+), Politics and International Relations, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK
- 2018-20 Organiser of Distinguished Scholar Series (School-wide events with globally renowned scholars), School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK
- 2018-19 Member of People+ School Committee (responsibility for diversity/inclusion/HR), School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK
- 2018-19 Organiser and chair of weekly, departmental seminar, Politics and International Relations, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK

- **REVIEWING ACTIVITIES**

Journals: Editorial Board memberships of *The Journal of Legislative Studies* (2016-present) and *British Politics* (2022-present). General reviewing activities for these journals, as well as for: *British Journal of Politics and IR*, *Evidence & Policy*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Political Studies*, *Public Administration*, *Politics & Gender*, *JCMS: Journal of Commons Market Studies*, *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, *British Politics*, *H&SSC*, *International Journal of Public Leadership*, *International Review of Public Policy*, *Palgrave Communications*, *Political Studies Review*, *Social Policy and Society*, *International Journal of Parliamentary Studies*, *Representation*

Publishers: Oxford University Press, Palgrave

Research Councils and Funders: British Academy, Independent Research Fund Denmark

- **MEMBERSHIPS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES**

Memberships of: American Political Science Association (2019-20), Study of the Scottish Parliament Group (2016-present); European Consortium for Political Research (and sub-groups) (2016-present); UK Study of Parliament Group (2015-present); UK Political Studies Association (and sub-groups) (2013-present)

- **COVID-19 IMPACT TO SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTIVITY (if applicable)**

Please specify which of the following situations apply to you:

- No access to field work;
- Adaptation to online teaching;
- Physical and/or mental health issues;

I held significant service roles (International Exchange Coordinator, Deputy Director for Research, Co-Director of SKAPE) and redesigned three courses (800 student places combined). Emotional stress from physical detachment from family in 2020-21. I undertook minimal research between 2020 and 2022.

**Appendix: All current grants and on-going / submitted grant applications of the PI
(Funding ID)**

Mandatory information (does not count towards page limits)

Current research grants (Please indicate "No funding" when applicable):

<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Funding source</i>	<i>Amount (Euros)</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Role of the PI</i>	<i>Relation to current ERC proposal⁴</i>
No funding					

On-going / submitted grant applications (Please indicate "None" when applicable):

<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Funding source</i>	<i>Amount (Euros)</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Role of the PI</i>	<i>Relation to current ERC proposal²</i>
No funding					

⁴ Describe clearly any scientific overlap between your ERC application and the current research grant or on-going grant application.

Section c: Early achievements track-record (max. 2 pages)⁵**Scientific leadership profile**

In the six years since completing my PhD in 2016 (recognised with the prize for the best PhD in Politics at my university), my research has made considerable scholarly and practitioner impacts. This is exemplified through my book published in 2020, *Dramas at Westminster*, being awarded the UK Political Studies Association's prestigious WJM Mackenzie Book Prize for best book published in political science in 2021 (one of the most important accolades in UK political science, with the majority of winning books written by professors and more senior academics). My book focused on how MPs and officials interpret 'accountability' in committees and is based on ethnographic fieldwork, mostly interviews and (non-)participant observation, which I will adopt in SPARK. The book is at the forefront of new empirical research and methodological innovation and, alongside other positive reviews in academic journals, the judging panel concluded that the book will be a 'key reference point' in the sub-field of parliamentary studies. **The book, and its empirical and methodological insights, epitomises my commitment as a problem-driven researcher to try new approaches and blur disciplinary boundaries, and my curiosity to push boundaries of established research both conceptually and methodologically. I will adopt the same ambition and enthusiasm in pursuing SPARK, going much further in offering a step change in how we study parliaments altogether.**

Beyond my book, I have demonstrated academic leadership across my field. I have contributed to an edited collection in 2018 on methodological and theoretical innovations in studying parliaments, bringing together sociologists, STS scholars, and many others. My co-authored book chapter was the basis for two international workshops on interpreting legislatures (in October 2017, at the University of Edinburgh, UK; and in September 2022, at UC Berkeley, USA). Further previous research on the role of 'evidence' in and by legislatures (see CV) has been a benchmark for further scholarly activity by others (e.g. Beswick and Elstub, 2019; Bochel and Berthier, 2019), indicating that I am at the forefront of this research topic. As a direct result of my research profile, the UK Parliament's Knowledge Exchange Unit approached me to undertake a joint research project to evaluate knowledge exchange initiatives undertaken by the UK's four legislatures (funded by the ESRC IAA). **My vision is to reshape the research landscape of my field and capitalise on my potential for thought leadership; SPARK will enable me to do so by offering a path-breaking study to examine the relationship of parliaments, knowledge and democracy.**

My scientific research profile has resulted in invitations to present my research at esteemed international events, including at the American Political Science Association (Washington, DC, USA), seen as the globally leading learned society for political science, as well as invitations at the Centre for Science, Knowledge and Policy (Edinburgh, UK), Institute for Parliamentary Research (Berlin, Germany), Leiden University (Netherlands) and Center for British Studies (UC Berkeley, USA). Furthermore, my research is respected amongst practitioners, having been cited in reports for and by the UK House of Commons and Scottish Parliament, and repeatedly invited to share my insights with officials at private and public seminars. On the basis of my research, I was awarded a prestigious Parliamentary Academic Fellowship in autumn 2021 to write a review of the evidence-gathering practices of committees in the House of Commons. The value of my research has reached public audiences, too, in that I was a consultant for a play in London based on the 'drama' of parliamentary committees (titled '[Committee... \(A New Musical\)](#)'), and through blogs published online.

My research profile is respected internationally and domestically, and across academic, practitioner and public audiences. It is with this profile that I will pursue SPARK to ensure that the project will be truly ground-breaking for how we think about parliaments.

Experience and skills

I have developed a strong set of technical and managerial skills that enable me to take on the leadership of this ambitious project. First, I was a **leading member of the UK Political Studies Association Parliaments Group**, first as Communications Officer (2014-17) and then as Co-Convener (2017-20), coordinating a network of over 300 academics and practitioners. The Group became a model for how research sections at learned societies can excel, and was invited several times to advise other groups. The Group was awarded PSA Group of the Year in 2019. Second, between 2019 and 2022, I was the **Co-Director of the Centre for Science, Knowledge and Policy (SKAPE)**, based at the University of Edinburgh. SKAPE is a key thought-centre on the relationships between science and policy, which runs an agenda-setting seminar series and engages with scholars from across Europe. SKAPE membership grew more than 33% during my tenure as Co-Director to almost 150 members, and has enabled me to build key links with a range of researchers across a range of

⁵ Please list the order of authors as indicated in the original publication.

disciplines, something which I will mobilise to benefit SPARK. Third, I was appointed **Deputy Director for Research for my School** of 300 academics across the social sciences. In this role, which I held for two years, I reviewed the governance structures and institutional incentives for how the University of Edinburgh supports academic-policy relationships, created a range of new resources for colleagues, and supported the establishment of the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange, a non-profit knowledge-brokering organisation.

Throughout my roles, I have managed budgets, resources and people. I have led teams that included PhD students, whose academic development I mentored (two of whom now have lectureships), as well as senior academics (e.g. as SKAPE Co-Director and Deputy Director for Research) and, through my teaching experience, led teams of 6 PhD students and 4-8 academics to annually deliver a 250-student course (Introduction to British Politics and, previously, Introduction to Politics/IR for 500 students). **In short, I have developed a range of managerial and leadership skills, and have successfully worked with a range of academics at various career stages, from PhD students to professors (including on academic and non-academic publications). A large and ambitious research project such as SPARK will be confidently delivered by me as PI.**

Publications and presentations (selected)

For further information, please see <http://marcgeddes.uk>. I am main author on all below publications, leading the research and write-up. None of the co-authors listed here were part of my PhD supervisory team.

Monograph

- 1) Geddes, M. (2020) [*Dramas at Westminster: Select committees and the quest for accountability*](#). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
 ⇒ Awarded the WJM Mackenzie Book Prize for best book published in political science by the UK Political Studies Association in 2021

Journal articles

- 2) Geddes, M. (2021) '[The Webs of Belief around 'Evidence' in Legislatures: The case of select committees in the UK House of Commons](#)'. *Public Administration* 99(1), pp.40-54. *Open Access*.
- 3) Geddes, M. (2018) '[Committee Hearings of the UK Parliament: Who gives Evidence and does this Matter?](#)'. *Parliamentary Affairs* 71(2): 283-304.
- 4) Geddes, M., Dommett, K. and Prosser, B. (2018) '[A Recipe for Impact? Exploring knowledge requirements in the UK Parliament and beyond](#)'. *Evidence and Policy* 14(2): 259-76.

Contributions to edited volumes

- 5) Geddes, M. and Rhodes, R.A.W. (2018) 'Towards and Interpretive Parliamentary Studies', in J. Brichzin et al. (eds.) [*The Sociology of Parliaments*](#). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Invited presentations

- February 2023 [*Forthcoming*]. Invited presentation to workshop on 'The organization of the science-policy relationship – how does it matter?'. **Leiden University**. To be held in Brussels, Belgium.
- September 2022. Invited presentation on 'Traditions and Dilemmas in the UK Parliament' for the Center for British Studies/Institute for European Studies, **UC Berkeley**, California, USA.
- May 2022. Invited presentation on 'Effective Evidence' for the House of Commons Select Committee Team at the **UK Parliament**, delivered online via MS Teams.
- March 2022. Invited presentation on 'Dramas at Westminster' for the Institute of Legal and Constitutional Research, **University of St Andrews**, UK, delivered online via Zoom.
- April 2021. Invited presentation on 'Evaluating Academic Engagement' for the **UK Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN)**, delivered online via Zoom.
- Aug 2019. Invited panel member, 'Brexit: What's Next?' roundtable for the British Politics Group at the **American Political Science Association** Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, USA.
- March 2019. Invited presentation on 'The effectiveness and influence of the select committee system' for the House of Commons Liaison Committee, **UK Parliament**, London, UK.
- June 2017. Invited panel member on 'Experts and Expertise in a Post-Truth Era' for the **Centre on Science, Knowledge and Policy (SKAPE)**, Edinburgh, UK.
- April 2017. Invited presentation on 'Committee Hearings of the UK Parliament' to the **Scottish Parliament**, Edinburgh, UK.
- February 2017. Invited presentation on 'Enhancing Scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament', for the **Commission on Parliamentary Reform**, Edinburgh, UK.

ERC Starting Grant 2023
Part B2¹
(not evaluated in Step 1)

Sections (a) and (b) of Part B2 should not exceed 14 pages. References do not count towards the page limits.

Section a. State-of-the-art and objectives

The health of our democracies has been, and continues to be, under significant pressure. Public satisfaction with, and trust in, political institutions – parliaments, governments, executive bodies, public sector organisations – has been in steep decline (Boese et al., 2022; Fawcett et al., 2017; Hay, 2007). This has begun to chip away at the legitimacy of democratic governance, with some scholars warning that the future of our political systems is at stake (Keane, 2009; Foa and Mounk, 2016; cf. Inglehart, 2016). At the same time, long-lasting questions over the appropriate role of different kinds of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, in democratic decision-making have been renewed in recent years (Eyal, 2019). Such questions emerge due to multiplying concerns over mis- and dis-information across democratic societies (Freelon and Wells, 2020; Nichols, 2017; Southwell et al., 2018; Tenove, 2020) and the rise of what some have termed ‘post-truth politics’ (Ball, 2017). We have seen this with a range of policy challenges, whether it is the global health pandemic shining a spotlight on the complex nature of relationships between politics, democracy, expertise and trust (Jørgensen et al., 2021; Weinberg, 2022), debates over the extent to which democratic societies are able to implement radical changes in the face of climate disaster (Willis, 2020), through to fundamental challenges over social and economic inequalities (Piketty, 2022). Such debates have also, in recent times, exposed wider social problems and questions about the way that elites handle and use information, and the quality of public debate and policy decisions.

Pressures on democratic governance raise difficult questions for political institutions, not least core institutions tasked with upholding the essence of representative democratic governance: parliaments.² Parliaments play a fundamental democratic function through the aggregation, construction and articulation of a diversity of societal interests and groups (Celis and Childs, 2020), often via political parties (Cowley, 2002; Cox and McCubbins, 1993; Kam, 2009; Müller, 2000) but also increasingly through public engagement strategies (Leston-Bandeira, 2012, 2016). Furthermore, parliaments perform unique tasks in democratic governance, including through influencing, shaping and legitimising the decision-making of governments via the legislative process (Bräuninger et al., 2017; Russell and Gover, 2017), and by exercising degrees of control and accountability of government through various formal and informal mechanisms (Strøm et al., 2003), such as scrutiny committees (Geddes, 2020), plenary debates (Bäck et al., 2021) and parliamentary questions (Martin, 2011). **In short, parliaments have vital democratic functions across political representation, law-making and accountability. Importantly, these institutions are also at the heart of the relationship between knowledge and democracy.** Parliaments are ubiquitous (if not unique) producers, consumers and users of knowledge, which make judgements on the basis of not only the political opinions, beliefs and values of MPs and different constituent groups, but often do so alongside – juxtaposing, contrasting, complementing, contesting, accepting or rejecting, privileging – knowledge from a variety of other actors, including think tanks, universities, members of the public and beyond. It therefore matters how parliaments relate to, produce, and use knowledge. However, existing research has not examined this pivotal relationship.

It is in this context that I offer a step-change to how we understand contemporary democratic institutions and contribute to wider debates and questions about the health of democratic governance through my project: Studying Parliaments and the Role of Knowledge (SPARK). It offers a necessary intervention by providing a clear and systematic analysis of parliaments as institutions of knowledge. The vast majority of existing research on parliaments has explored their political and democratic functions, and therefore conceives of them primarily, if not exclusively, as *political institutions*. I will fundamentally re-think the nature of these organisations as *knowledge institutions*; i.e., they are institutions where knowledge is produced, consumed and mediated within wider democratic decision-making. While there is a vast literature

¹ Instructions for completing Part B2 can be found in the ‘*Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2023 Calls*’.

² For the purposes of this project, I use the term ‘parliaments’ interchangeably with ‘assembly’ and ‘legislature’ (for a discussion, see Rozenberg, 2020; cf. Kreppel, 2014).

on the nature of knowledge and knowing, as a starting point (to be critically reflected upon during the project),³ knowledge can be summarised as the ‘capacity to act’ (Grundmann and Stehr, 2012) and come in different forms: *expert knowledge* (e.g. scientific research) (C. Boswell, 2009), *experiential knowledge* (e.g. lived experience) (Smith-Merry, 2020), *political and legal knowledge* (e.g. partisan dimensions, insider knowledge) (Head, 2010), and *local knowledge* (e.g. know-how of procedures) (Yanow, 2004). These different types of knowledge will be investigated as part of an interpretive approach to the study of politics and society that places values, beliefs, meanings at the centre of social inquiry (Bevir and Blakely, 2018; Wagenaar, 2011; Yanow, 2000). **Through this approach, I will offer an ambitious cross-comparative research project informed by insights from across multiple disciplines including political science, science and technology studies (STS), sociology and social anthropology. SPARK pursues three overarching objectives:**

1. **To compare and contrast the production and use of different kinds of knowledge by parliaments overall and parliamentary actors (MPs and their staff, officials, stakeholders, etc.) therein.**
2. **To interrogate the values that underpin the role of knowledge for parliaments and parliamentary actors in different national, sub-national and supra-national contexts.**
3. **To evaluate the impact of knowledge on functions exercised by parliaments (representation, law-making, accountability) to understand wider trends in democratic governance and inform practice.**

These objectives form the bedrock of this project. I will focus on seven parliaments across Europe: at national level, the **parliaments of the UK, Germany and Spain**; at sub-national level, **the parliaments of Scotland, Bavaria and Catalonia**; and at supra-national level, **the parliament of the European Union**. I will examine the relationships between knowledge and democracy using three case study policy arenas within **healthcare, environment and welfare**. I will do so using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

This high-risk/high-gain, multi-disciplinary research will deliver the first systematic and comparative analysis of parliaments as knowledge institutions. Critically, this engages with pressing questions about the design of democratic institutions (Celis and Childs, 2020; Saward, 2010, 2021) and what it means to be a ‘good’ representative (Clarke et al., 2018; Dovi, 2007) at a time of significant democratic pressure.

a1. Research objectives

In my project, I am redrawing the boundaries of political science by bringing at least two pools of literature into conversation. The **first area of scholarship** is on parliaments by political scientists. This has been a topic of various academic and non-academic interest over the years, shifting from an old institutionalist approach in the nineteenth century, through to a behaviouralist neglect of political institutions in the 1960s, and finally to ‘new institutionalism’ from the 1980s, which became a dominant force in contemporary political science (Martin et al., 2014, pp. 5–6). The range of research has yielded significant research across parliaments functions in democratic societies, including on (i) the articulation and construction of political representation, (ii) law-making and the legislative process, and (iii) mechanisms to hold government to account. Meanwhile, the **second area of scholarship** focuses around knowledge in society, primarily as developed in sociology and science and technology studies (STS). Studies in this vein have advanced our discussions about the relationship between knowledge and democracy (Grundmann and Stehr, 2012; Jasanoff, 2005), but have often overlooked the distinctive role of parliaments as part of that relationship.

The distinctive appeal of SPARK is to bring together these two pools of research to push forward our understanding of the unique role of parliaments as consumers, producers, and mediators of knowledge in democratic governance. Doing so offers an exciting step-change in the way that we understand parliaments and the crucial ways in which knowledge is used to underpin a whole range of parliamentary and political processes, including three core parliamentary functions identified above, from ways in which committees hold executives to account for policy decisions to ways in which legislators seek to represent the views of the public in plenary debates. **This matters: how parliaments use knowledge affects not only their capacity to make decisions, but also raises significant issues about the wider democratic quality and legitimacy of decision-making, and the resilience of democratic institutions given aforementioned pressures on democracies. This novel and potentially transformative insight is the starting point for SPARK.** Insights from across

³ As Richard Freeman and Steve Sturdy (2014, pp. 7–8) have pointed out: ‘[t]hose who wish to understand the place of knowledge in policy are faced not just with a multiplicity of methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives, but also with a confusing diversity of ideas about what knowledge is and how it might be characterised and classified’. SPARK will critically interrogate meanings of knowledge as part of its core analysis.

the social and political sciences is the basis on which I re-orient the study of parliaments and contribute to debates about the health and status of democratic governance more generally.

a1.1. Objective 1: To examine and compare patterns of knowledge use in and by parliaments

Research on parliaments has generally overlooked the way that parliaments handle knowledge. One area of research has sought to explore the institutional factors that affect informational access to parliaments, usually (but not exclusively) interest groups (Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Chaqués-Bonafont and Márquez, 2016; Eising and Spohr, 2017; Pedersen et al., 2015). This research often finds that better-resourced groups often have disproportionate access. A smaller pool has focused on the descriptive representation of groups involved in providing information and knowledge to parliaments, often finding that parliaments remain gendered settings that facilitate access for men (Bochel and Berthier, 2019; Geddes, 2018a; Green, 2016; Rumbul, 2016). However, and crucially, **this research talks about *who has access to parliaments rather than what kinds of knowledge underpin their access, nor how parliaments gather, synthesise, accept or reject, or otherwise use different forms of knowledge. The first objective will offer a systematic analysis of parliaments and their practices of gathering, producing and using knowledge***, bridging links between access and descriptive representation with substantive use and representation of knowledge.⁴

This objective will build on and radically re-think another small body of research that has looked at the idea of ‘legislative science advice’ (Akerlof et al., 2019; Kenny, Washbourne, et al., 2017). This literature is often technical and descriptive, in an attempt to identify institutional structures within parliaments that exist to support and facilitate the use of predominantly expert knowledge, such as technology assessment offices or mechanisms (Bütschi and Almeida, 2016); only limited studies have gone on to examine what ‘legislative science advice’ is valued by legislators (Kenny, Rose, et al., 2017) or the way that actors use ‘evidence’ (Crewe, 2017; Hendriks et al., 2017; Russel et al., 2013). Although this has provided some useful insights into how parliaments circulate knowledge between different institutional structures, the literature is mostly also narrowly focused on the study of traditionally understood, expert knowledge and ‘evidence’. While this has brought us lots of insights about relationships and institutions, these studies also make a number of assumptions – that SPARK will critically interrogate – including the basis of ‘research evidence’ as the main starting point for knowledge, and assuming a normative goal for greater use of scientific research for decision-making. **In Objective 1, SPARK will focus on identifying comparative insights about what kinds of knowledge are used in parliamentary work, by whom, and under what circumstances. By ‘use’, SPARK will focus on the ways in which knowledge is handled, gathered, quoted in speeches, cited in reports, circulated in briefings, exchanged, adopted, rejected, etc.** This will draw on specific case study policy areas, summarised below. I will explore these issues through two research questions:

RQ1a. What are the different types of knowledge that are used in parliamentary work and by whom?

RQ1b. Where, when and under what circumstances are different kinds of knowledge used, and by whom?

Both questions will be examined comparatively, i.e. looking across parliaments to identify patterns and trends.

To undertake this analysis, SPARK will draw on lessons from other literatures, notably science and technology studies (STS). One concept that will be invaluable for this project is the idea of ‘boundary work’ developed by Thomas Gieryn (1983). He draws attention to this concept to show how scientists distinguish between scientific knowledge from other types of work and knowledge, which other scholars have since adopted to explore how different organisations, including political institutions, act and behave as ‘boundary organisations’ to construct and enforce boundaries between science and politics (Grek, 2020; Guston, 1999, 2001). This insight has considerable relevance for the idea of parliaments as knowledge institutions, indicating the potential value of inter-disciplinary dialogue between STS and political science. I will explore how different sites (committee rooms, plenary debates, offices) and actors (MPs and their staff, officials, stakeholders) within parliaments seek to undertake boundary work, and their similarities and differences in approach. This will be a critical mechanism through which I will build on the idea of parliaments as knowledge institutions.

a1.2. Objective 2: To understand how parliaments and parliamentary actors interpret ‘knowledge’

While the first objective will explicitly identify and analyse the *practices* of gathering, producing and using knowledge, the second objective seeks to focus on the underlying *values and beliefs* that motivate, underpin and explain the role(s) of knowledge in parliamentary work. This is pivotal in order to theoretically situate and explain the way that parliaments function as knowledge institutions.

⁴ This project will be sensitive to intersectional questions about descriptive/substantive representation, and how this impacts the production and use of knowledge (Celis et al., 2008; Mügge and Erzeel, 2016; Severs et al., 2016).

Academic literature on parliaments, despite having grown rich, vibrant and increasingly inter-disciplinary (Benoît and Rozenberg, 2020), has remained focused on functionalist debates about the primarily *political* roles that parliaments fulfil, their purpose in the political system, and how they should be classified or typologised (Judge and Leston-Bandeira, 2021). This debate has continued without agreement or consensus (Kreppel, 2014; Mezey, 1979; Strøm et al., 2003). In focusing on functionalist themes, the literature on parliaments has somewhat neglected theoretical and conceptual advances in other social sciences research, specifically debates about the role of knowledge in democratic governance. The limited literature that has alluded to the informational or knowledge-based role of parliaments is almost always framed within traditional political science and rational choice foci. For example, political scientists have identified an informational theory of legislatures (Krehbiel, 1991). This idea suggests that it is in the rational self-interest of legislatures to create incentives for members to specialise in aspects of policy in order to minimise informational asymmetries between legislatures and executives. This has been applied to a range of settings, especially committees (Gilligan and Krehbiel, 1987), and tested against other rationales for behaviour such as distributive or partisan ones (Battaglini et al., 2019). However, this research does not critically engage with questions about what types of information or knowledge parliamentary actors use or value, nor the purpose and motivations for using different types of knowledge; the guiding assumption remains self-interest.

SPARK challenges this basic premise and draws on insights from sociology and STS to open a debate about the underlying values of knowledge practices in parliaments. The key insight from this latter body of research is that knowledge – including but not limited to scientific knowledge – is the product of discourses, social interests and heterogenous social practices (Law, 2016; Rohracher, 2015). This has come to the fore in a range of ways, including through clusters of research on the sociology of scientific knowledge (MacKenzie, 1978; Shapin and Schaffer, 2017 [1985]), as well as along a more ethnographically-inspired line of inquiry through ‘laboratory studies’ and localised practices (Latour and Woolgar, 1986). Some of this research, especially Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Callon, 1984; Law, 1992), has even begun to touch on the role of parliaments (Dányi, 2018, 2020), even if it does not address questions about the institution’s relationship to the production and use of knowledge (as my project will do).

Elsewhere, SPARK will also draw on policy-focused literatures. Carol Weiss (1979) identified seven types of ways that research can be used in policy, which scholars have since criticised, amended and/or built upon to broadly encompass research in policy-making (e.g. using research for instrumental reasons, to help policy-makers think about problems, or as a strategic resource) (C. Boswell, 2009; Monaghan, 2011). Others have examined policy-focused research to examine the barriers and facilitators between worlds of policy and of research (Oliver et al., 2014; for a discussion, see Newman, 2017), practical guides for improving evidence use by policy-makers (Cairney and Oliver, 2017) or how political elites select information (Walgrave and Dejaeghere, 2017). Still others have sought to categorise, classify or study the nature of academic-policy engagement or identify models of research-policy engagement (Ingold and Monaghan, 2016; Pielke, 2007). Notably, almost all of this literature focuses on the roles of governments, executives and the civil service.

SPARK will not only challenge the underlying approaches to the study of parliaments by political scientists but re-think the nature of parliaments as *knowledge institutions*, supplementing the existing focus on parliaments as *political institutions*, and demonstrate that parliaments are an overlooked policy actor. It is therefore necessary to ask two further research questions:

RQ2a. How do parliamentary actors interpret the value of different kinds of ‘knowledge’?

RQ2b. What types of knowledge are perceived as ‘authoritative’ or ‘useful’?

Once again, both of these questions will be examined comparatively, i.e. looking across different parliaments to identify values and meanings.

The second objective of SPARK is, then, to investigate how parliaments interpret knowledge and, significantly, what parliamentary actors regard as authoritative types of knowledge that may support their work. I will use these insights to offer an inter-disciplinary reading of parliaments as knowledge institutions and therefore examine how these institutions are shaped by scientific knowledge, lived experience, tacit knowledge and know-how, local knowledge, etc. This will bridge disciplinary siloes that have been prevalent on research regarding the production and use of knowledge (Farley-Ripple et al., 2020). SPARK will be a key mechanism through which I broaden the debate about knowledge in political decision-making. And while we may expect expert knowledges to be especially valued, the dynamics of democratic representation, the growth of public participation initiatives by parliaments (Judge and Leston-Bandeira, 2018), and prominence of ‘lived experience’ as evidence (Smith-Merry, 2020) is likely to throw up significant dilemmas

about the relationships of different kinds of knowledge in and beyond parliaments that will make this programme especially worthwhile.

a1.2. Objective 3: To evaluate the impact of knowledge use on parliamentary democracy

It is only through the above two intertwined objectives that the third will be possible. As part of Objective 3, SPARK takes a much wider lens to provide a step-change with how we think about the relationship between knowledge and democracy – which has been under the spotlight from across the social sciences, not least political science and STS, given the critical concerns over the health of democratic governance.

Turning first to political science, researchers have chartered the trends of political freedoms and levels of democracy (Boese et al., 2022), the attitudes and beliefs of the public with respect to political institutions and elites (Fieldhouse et al., 2019), and examined the causes of public dissatisfaction with representative democracy (Ercan and Gagnon, 2014; Foa and Mounk, 2016; Inglehart, 2016; Keane, 2009; Norris, 2011), making use of a variety of datasets including World Values Surveys, European Values Surveys, European Social Surveys, British Social Attitudes Surveys, etc. The research across political science has given us important new findings and insights into the nature of democracy, which has been linked to the growth of populist strategies (Kantola and Miller, 2021; Mudde, 2004, 2007) and eroding the capacity for political actors to govern (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). In line with the broader issue about the health of democracy are questions and debates about ‘anti-politics’ (Fawcett et al., 2017), the nature of ‘good’ representation (Clarke et al., 2018; Dovi, 2007) and democratic design (Saward, 2010, 2021). To address the challenges of dissatisfaction with political institutions, including parliaments, some scholars have suggested the greater use of deliberative democratic systems (Elstub and Escobar, 2019), to re-think the nature and structures of representation and representative institutions (Celis and Childs, 2020), and to strengthen and enhance parliaments’ relationships with citizens (Leston-Bandeira, 2012, 2016). However, **my argument and theoretical insight is that the role of knowledge is a key factor in debates about parliamentary functions and democratic governance, and cannot be overlooked.** This brings me to the relevant insights from STS.

Scholars within STS and sociology have begun to think about and answer questions regarding the nature of politics and the health of democracy. For example, Bruno Latour has sought to raise significant questions regarding modernity, democracy and science, and called for an agenda that directly addresses democratic disaffection (Latour, 1993; Latour and Weibel, 2005). Elsewhere, Sheila Jasanoff (2005) has made the critically important insight that societies cannot grapple with questions about democracy without looking in detail at the politics of science and technology, given the way that contemporary societies are constituted as knowledge societies. She has gone on to develop the concept of ‘civic epistemology’ to highlight the way that science-policy interactions are interwoven with political culture. Although this has been a crucial insight that has since been adopted and studied by others (Donovan and Oppenheimer, 2016), the specific role of parliaments and political elites is under-theorised and under-explored with respect to democratic disaffection (J. Boswell et al., 2019), and will be an avenue that I explore in SPARK to make a wider contribution.

In re-thinking and re-conceptualising parliaments as knowledge institutions, it places them in the centre of the web of relationships between knowledge and democracy. It is this novel, exciting and potentially transformative insight that will allow SPARK to contribute to wider issues about the health of democratic governance in contemporary society, and engage with normative questions about the nature of ‘good’ democratic governance. SPARK brings focus to this objective with two final research questions:

RQ3a. In what ways does the use of knowledge affect key parliamentary functions?

RQ3b. What is the impact of parliaments on the wider relationship between knowledge and democracy?

These questions will be examined comparatively, i.e. looking across parliaments to identify the differential impact of knowledge use on parliaments and wider societal relationships between knowledge and democracy.

To fulfil this objective, I will synthesise the data gathered from the first two objectives to identify ways in which different knowledge claims affect parliamentary work. Parliaments perform a range of functions in a democratic political system, including: (i) the construction, articulation and representation of different interests; (ii) the development and legitimisation of legislation and policy through legislative processes; and (iii) the holding of governments and governing bodies to account for their decisions. We do not know how these functions are affected by different kinds of knowledge, whether it is scientific research shaping debate about legislation, how lived experience of constituents is used as evidence to scrutinise government policy, or how different claims of knowing are juxtaposed with democratic claims to legitimise decision-making. Understanding who is listened to and included, what knowledge they represent, and how it is validated, sanctioned, or even silenced, is a fundamental democratic concern for the represented as well as for

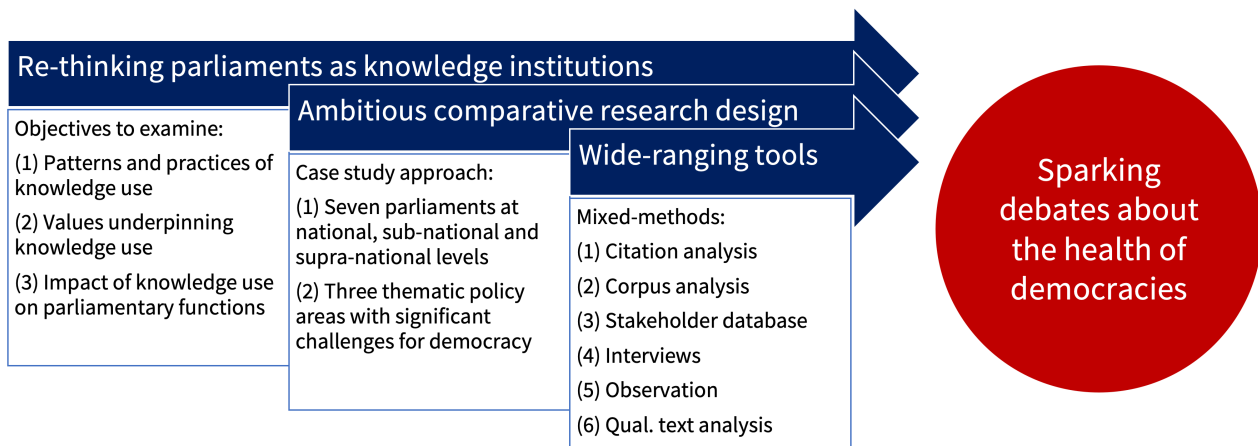
representatives. In line with Jasanoff's (2005) insight described earlier, then, we cannot answer questions about the quality of democracy without exploring the basis of knowledge as part of this. Objective 3 will explore these issues and place them in a comparative context, i.e. to identify the similarities and differences between settings (within and between parliaments), types of knowledge, and different policy issues.

Taken together, the three overarching research objectives bring together the current state-of-the-art and, crucially, demonstrate ways in which SPARK goes beyond it. It will do so through a multi-disciplinary set of approaches and methodological tools that will (i) bring **empirical** light to how parliamentary actors gather, use, produce and circulate a range of different types of knowledge (Objective 1); (ii) add significant depth and detail to the **theoretical** re-positioning of parliaments as knowledge institutions (Objective 2); and (iii) make a significant **normative** intervention about the status of parliaments within broader debates on the relationship between knowledge and democracy, and questions about democratic design and resilience in the face of profound pressures on existing institutions and the health of democracies (Objective 3).

Section b. Methodology

The ground-breaking empirical, theoretical and normative appeals of SPARK to re-think parliaments as knowledge institutions is matched by the methodological ambitions of this project, brought together through a cohesive and thorough research design (illustrated through Figure 1, below).

Figure 1. Visualisation of SPARK.



b1. Outline of parliaments

SPARK focuses on seven case study parliaments across multi-level Europe, covering national, sub-national and supra-national levels over five years. This is the most extensive study of knowledge practices by parliaments and parliamentary actors to date.

The geographical setting of Europe was chosen for two main reasons. First, European governance is characterised by unique multi-level complexity (Bache and Flinders, 2004; Hooghe and Marks, 2001). The distinctive appeal of this approach is that it will open opportunities to compare and contrast patterns of knowledge use at different levels, and explore the inter-parliamentary relations that have been largely absent from parliamentary studies to date (Benz, 2017; Bolleyer, 2010; Evans, 2019). Second and relatedly, there are several inter-cultural and historical linkages between European polities, including their relationships to European-level policymaking but also sharing some similarities with respect to parliamentary systems, common legal frameworks, shared geographical histories, and shared patterns of distrust in institutions and elites. These commonalities make an already complex and ambitious project more viable, enhance the analysis of possible inter-parliamentary relations, and allow for an analytical focus on the institutional differences between the parliaments. Finally, and logistically, I have fluency in English and German, and several contacts across parliaments and research communities in Europe, which will facilitate access. This, alongside previous research on parliaments, makes me ideally placed to undertake a study of this ambitious scale.

Given the focus on Europe, and the advantages of studying parliaments at different political levels, this limits the choices available to federal and/or devolved states. Of these, SPARK will focus on a diversity of cases. First, it includes the three national parliaments of the **UK, Germany and Spain**. These national parliaments share some similarities (e.g., they are bicameral), but they are also each structured in a unique way and in distinctive political cultures. Second, the study includes three sub-national parliaments in each of the country

settings: respectively, the parliaments of **Scotland, Bavaria and Catalonia**. These parliaments are prominent in their national settings, with strong national/regional identities, considerable powers and similar in institutional size. Finally, the seventh parliament will be the **European Parliament**, distinctive for being a supranational institution in a political setup unlike most others. In sum, the seven parliaments for this study will comprise different political systems and cultures (majoritarian, consensus, consociational), institutional structures, and different levels of governance (Lijphart, 2012; Schmidt, 2006; Siefken and Rommetvedt, 2021). It is this eclectic mix of different factors that will bring to light the distinctive features of knowledge production and use in each setting, and therefore enable SPARK to yield rich insights into how parliamentary settings conceive of themselves, and perform their roles, as *knowledge institutions*.

b1.1. The UK

Much of the literature about the national legislature focuses on executive-legislative relations, particularly the legislature's impact on law-making and policy (Benton and Russell, 2013; Russell and Gover, 2017; Thompson, 2015). In comparative research, Westminster has historically been seen as a weak parliament with particularly weak committees (Mattson and Strøm, 1995; cf. Bates et al., 2021). With some exceptions (Crewe, 2017; Kenny, Rose, et al., 2017; Russel et al., 2013), we know little about patterns of knowledge use within the House of Commons or House of Lords. The legislature relies on select committees as information-gathering tools (Geddes, 2020), and it is also supported by in-house research services (parliamentary libraries in both houses, and the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology). These indicate that there will be rich opportunities to study interactions between different claims of knowledge.

The UK's parliament is situated in a wider, adversarial political system (Lijphart, 2012) with three devolved parliaments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (with limited academic literature from parliamentary studies; on Scotland, see: Cairney and McGarvey (2013)). Decision-making is often presented as having a pragmatic, entrepreneurial bureaucracy in which policy-makers 'muddle through' issues case-by-case (Hennessy, 1996). This is complemented by an approach to the credibility of science through the 'quality and reasonableness of the experts who provide the scientific evaluations' (Halffman, 2005, p. 461) and a significant policy commitment to increase the role of experts in decision-making (Wood, 2019).

The UK will be interesting to study given the way that credibility of science is arguably constructed in a setting that has long promoted 'evidence-based policy' (cf. Boaz et al., 2019) and a national parliament with comparatively strong institutional features for analysing different types of knowledge. Logistically, I also have a strong track record of engagement with the UK's national and devolved parliaments (see CV).

b1.2. Germany

As with the UK, there are frequent debates over the extent of influence of the German parliament on policy and legislation (Marschall, 2016; Schüttemeyer, 2009). In comparative research, it is seen as a 'working' (as opposed to 'talking') parliament, but with some deficiencies. Nevertheless, the parliament has a well-developed committee system and in-house research services, including Wissenschaftliche Dienste (Research Services) and the Büro für Technikfolgenabschätzungen (Office for Technology Assessment) (Marschall, 2013). The German parliament also makes regular use of study commissions, which are made up of experts and lay people to examine cross-cutting policy issues in Germany, too (Krick, 2015; Siefken, 2007).

Germany is often presented as a classic example of a rationalist bureaucracy built on formal, principled rules (Peters, 2018). The credibility of scientific research is established through formal standards of proof (Hellström, 2000; Jasanoff, 2005) and seen as part of a corporatist tradition of bringing together research organisations and the state (Campbell and Pedersen, 2014). Compared to the UK, Germany's political system is federal in nature and is regarded to be part of a more consensual style of democracy (Lijphart, 2012; Schmidt, 2006; for a discussion, see Burkhart and Lehnert, 2008). Bavaria is one of 16 states (*Länder*) with limited parliamentary-focused scholarship, allowing for unexplored and rich research findings.

This case will be interesting to explore given the federal structure of the political system, as well as being a comparatively more powerful parliament that has been productive in bringing different types of knowledge into dialogue (e.g. via study commissions that do not exist in the other case studies).

b1.3. Spain

The Spanish parliament is seen as 'the centre of Spain's constitutional system' (Field, 2020, p. 211). Nevertheless, it is perceived as a comparatively weak parliament, in part due to the strong role of political parties in governing most aspects of parliamentary life, including committees (Oñate and Aldeguer, 2021). Unlike the other parliaments chosen for SPARK, this parliament also has considerably fewer resources at its disposal (García-Escudero, 2021; Oñate and Aldeguer, 2021) and, until very recently, did not have any formal

advice mechanism in place to facilitate the flows of knowledge into parliament (Aiello et al., 2020; Santillán-García et al., 2021). In part due to this reputation, the legislature is generally understudied.

The Spanish parliament is situated in a comparatively young democratic political system (introduced in 1978 following the approval of the Constitution) but also a system that is in flux today. Although Spain's political parties have historically played a crucial role and are seen as comparatively very strong (Field, 2013; Jaime-Castillo and Martínez-Cousinou, 2018), the last 10 years have seen considerable instability in Spanish politics through difficulties in government formation and poor executive-legislative relations (e.g. the first successful no confidence vote in Spain's democratic history took place in 2018). Additional complexity stems from the territorial politics of Spain, including through 17 autonomous communities with regional parliaments and two autonomous cities (León et al., 2018). In particular, the sub-national parliament for my project, Catalonia, has long-standing prominence owing to independence debates (Mueller, 2019).

This setting stands in contrast to Germany and the UK, especially the emergence only very recently of an advisory body for the Spanish parliament to bring expert knowledge into the legislature. This will enable analysis of how deep or shallow formal institutional features affect knowledge flows, and it is likely to suggest that Spain will be different to the UK and Germany.

b1.4. The European Parliament

Unlike the previous three settings and their parliaments, the European Parliament (EP) is distinctive in being a supranational representative body across 27 member states (of which Germany and Spain are members; the UK is not). The EP is part of a set of institutions that span across national polities in what may be termed a consociational system in which traditional ideological and party divisions are disrupted (Ahrens et al., 2022; Bogaards, 2021; Bogaards and Crepaz, 2002). The EP's place within this system has shifted continually over time since the original establishment of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. This evolution is usually characterised by a growth of decision-making powers for the European Parliament, which has made its role stronger and more central to EU decision-making (Rittberger, 2005).

Despite the growth of the EP within the European Union, the institution has suffered from a perceived lack of democratic legitimacy given the absence of a well-developed European-level demos (for a discussion, see Lord, 2018). To counter this, the EP has traditionally promoted a strong relationship with civil society organisations and interest groups (Wessels, 1999). However, the broader role of knowledge in the EP has not been studied. Although it is supported by the European Parliamentary Research Service, which acts as in-house research service and think tank, the closest topics focus on committees (Ringe, 2009; Roger, 2016) and parliamentary staff (Egeberg et al., 2014; Marshall, 2012; Neuhold and Dobbels, 2015; Winzen, 2011) without critically interrogating what knowledge and information underpins parliamentary work.

The EP exhibits a highly unique institutional set up and foundation in European policymaking, and the particularly strong appeal of interest groups, vis-à-vis other parliaments. Furthermore, its international status means that studying this parliament may have capacity for spill-over into other national contexts.

b2. Outline of case study policy areas

To facilitate unprecedented, in-depth inquiry, a case study approach is required. Initially, the project team will base its research around three thematic policy areas and, as detailed in **section b4.**, use the first six months to identify specific case study policies, events and phenomena within these themes. I have chosen three policy arenas that represent significant challenges for parliaments and where knowledge claims, information and evidence are regularly invoked: **healthcare**, **environment**, and **welfare**. Each of these has been subject to significant debate by politicians and policymakers and relate directly to wider questions of democracy at the heart of SPARK. Furthermore, parliaments and parliamentary actors regularly seek advice and involvement from a variety of different stakeholders – not only the public but also experts, scientists, businesses, charities and beyond. Finally, the cases represent a diversity of different types of claims that are regularly used for parliamentary debate and decision-making. The three cases studies:

- **Healthcare.** Research on this policy area is well-developed, which is closely linked to the 'evidence-based medicine' movement from the 1980s and 1990s, and the subsequent focus across Europe for 'evidence-based policy' (Smith, 2013). Furthermore, this case study was chosen because of the complex relationship around medical knowledge and policy debates, raising interesting questions about the role of democratic decision-making for an issue that often has high levels of priority. Specific case studies will be developed around particular health challenges or public initiatives, such as obesity, or high-profile events, such as parliaments' scrutiny of Covid-19 pandemic responses.

- **Environment.** Environmental policy is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, the international nature of many debates allows for meaningful comparisons across Europe (and beyond), meaning a comparative focus is especially possible and achievable. Second, there are a diverse set of knowledge claims around environmental issues from a vibrant and internationalised civil society, allowing analysis of many different types of knowledge in policymaking, complementing the likely complexity of debates around healthcare. Specific case studies will be developed around particular and local environmental challenges, such as flooding, water quality or biodiversity loss, or initiatives to address the climate crisis, such as housing insulation programmes or carbon-capture investment.
- **Welfare.** While environmental and healthcare debates can be dominated by the natural sciences, welfare issues are more often associated with the social sciences. Furthermore, it also strikes at the heart of what the state aims to achieve, linked often to wider economic questions and debates. It is an emotive area, which has also become a significant area of debate following Covid-19, associated with changing patterns of work-life balance, social security, and productivity. Finally, the welfare states across European governance are very differently organised. Specific case studies will be developed and may include unemployment initiatives, dealing with the productivity challenge across Europe, or the ageing population across the parliamentary settings.

All three policy areas deal with a variety of knowledge claims and often with cross-cutting, international issues. This makes all three fruitful avenues for understanding the way that parliaments gather, produce, consume or use different kinds of knowledge to support core representative, law-making and accountability functions. Importantly, **all of them raise wider questions over the health of democracies given the profound and sometimes intractable policy challenges. This makes it ideal to study them as part of a research project that explores the embeddedness of parliaments within wider relationships of knowledge and democracy.**

b3. Principles, approach, methods

Today, the subfield of parliamentary studies is arguably divided between a dominant, quantitative and rational-choice grouping of scholars that is influenced by US political science and a more sociologically, interpretive and qualitatively informed grouping of scholars that have drawn from other disciplines including but not limited to sociology and social anthropology (Benoît and Rozenberg, 2020; Bhattacharya et al., 2022; Brichzin et al., 2018; Crewe, 2021b). **In this project, SPARK complements the prevailing focus of rational choice and institutionalist analyses, drawing on a range of social science perspectives to bridge methodological divisions to advance debates about the role of parliaments.** In particular, my starting point for undertaking empirical research (Geddes, 2018b, 2020; Geddes and Rhodes, 2018) stems from an interpretive philosophical outlook, of which there is a rich tradition across the arts, humanities and social sciences (Bevir and Blakely, 2018; Geertz, 2017 [1973]; Taylor, 1976, 1985; Wagenaar, 2011; Yanow, 2000). This perspective places meanings – including values, beliefs, sentiments, etc. – at the heart of social and political inquiry in order to explain political behaviour and outcomes.⁵ For example, how MPs interpret ‘accountability’ affects how they go about holding government to account in practice: a greater/lesser focus on scrutiny by committees; media appearances to voice opposition; or via bilateral exchanges with ministers. Furthermore, their strategies may shift depending on their belief in explanatory v. outcome-focused accountability. In short, interpretations matter (Geddes, 2020). **I adopt an interpretive approach alongside a comparative research design with mixed methods because this approach enables me to go deeper into understanding the underlying values and ideas that drive parliamentary behaviour regarding knowledge use.**

Interpretive approaches have gained traction in recent years in political science, especially ethnographic research methods (J. Boswell et al., 2019; Schatz, 2009; Wedeen, 2010). They have been applied to a range of cases, whether it is political leadership on the Pacific Islands (Corbett, 2015), undertaking political work on the European and international political stage (Mérand, 2021), or examining the everyday life of civil servants and government ministers (Rhodes, 2011). Indeed, even parliaments have been studied using ethnographic tools (Abélès, 2000; Crewe, 2005, 2015; Rai and Spary, 2019), including by myself through an award-winning empirical study of the UK Parliament (Geddes, 2020). Nevertheless, interpretive approaches push against the political science mainstream. This is especially true of comparative political science, where interpretive approaches are uncommon and where the combination of studying parliaments from both a comparative *and* an interpretive approach are sparse. Curiously, comparative research about parliaments only makes up between three to nine percent of legislative studies journals (Rozenberg and Benoît, 2020, p. 216).

⁵ This starting point stems from deeper epistemological and ontological debates for which there is no room in this proposal. For an overview of debate as it pertains to political science, see Hay (2011) and Bevir and Rhodes (2016).

I combine comparative research with an interpretive approach for several reasons. First, it can showcase how findings can be translated into different research contexts, or demonstrate how similar words or concept are interpreted and used in different ways (as Fred Schaffer (1998), for example, found when comparing the language of democracy between French and Wolof speakers in Senegal). Second, comparative insights can identify dynamics that might be missed by looking at only one case, or put into sharper relief the similarities and differences between cases. For example, the authority of one type of knowledge, and the boundary work in parliaments to establish this, is likely to be different in contrasting parliamentary settings, with consequences for how MPs organise their knowledge and use it to fulfil their core representative, law-making and accountability tasks. A comparative, interpretive research design is therefore particularly useful for identifying rich and deep findings. And while there is caution or resistance among some interpretive scholars about comparison, the potential has been explored theoretically, methodologically, and empirically by a number of authors across the social and political sciences (Candea, 2018; Simmons and Rush Smith, 2019, 2021). It requires researchers to embrace the ‘messiness’ of social reality (Law, 2004) and push against traditional comparative research design in political science. One of the biggest challenges for conducting comparative, interpretive research is that it is resource- and time-intensive, which means that this ERC funding stream is one of the few and unique opportunities that would overcome such a practical challenge to pursue groundbreaking research. **In doing so, SPARK will complement dominant rational choice and institutionalist approaches in mainstream comparative political science and showcase the methodological possibilities of interpretive research, bridging persisting (sub-)disciplinary divides.**

b4. Methodological tools

Interpretive research is often associated with qualitative methods given that it produces in-depth and situated knowledge and, using ethnographic tools, through rich and deep immersion in a field (Geertz, 2017 [1985]). They shift the focus away from institutionalist lenses and instead centralise the importance of actors and relationships and the complex entanglements between actors, institutions, processes, practices and events (Crewe, 2021b). **SPARK will adopt rich, qualitative methods but, unconventionally, will also bridge interpretive research with quantitative tools in a systematic and under-explored way.**

b4.1. Quantitative tools

SPARK integrates quantitative tools to understand the nuanced, daily practices of actors in terms of political behaviour and speech. As such, these tools will be especially valuable to contribute to Objective 1. The three quantitative tools include:

(1) *Citation analysis.* This tool involves gathering and coding references in documents followed by analysis of those documents, which can be as simple as counting the numbers and types of sources used in a policy document and as complex as sophisticated network analyses of the importance of different sources. Such techniques are commonly used in the academic community to track research publications, yet comparatively rare in policy studies (Christensen, 2021, 2022; Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2020). Although the use of citations has its flaws, requiring corroboration with other tools (see below), it nevertheless allows us to identify broader trends for large corpus of texts and documents.

Using citation analysis will be a key innovation given the lack of such analysis previously, despite available data. For example, research services of several parliaments under investigation publish research briefings, while committee reports also have analysable citations. From this, it will be possible to understand types of knowledge used, as well as ways that this information travels from officials (in briefings or documents) to MPs (in speeches or reports) to build a bigger picture of networks of knowledge production and use. This is an as yet untapped resources with exciting opportunities for advancing methodological tools to study parliaments and systematically describe and explain how parliaments use different types of knowledge. It will make a direct contribution to RQs on the types of knowledge used (**RQ1a**) and under what circumstances (**RQ1b**).

(2) *Corpus analysis.* In addition to analysing *documents*, I will analyse *speech*, specifically those of MPs in (i) plenary debates and (ii) in public committee hearings. Corpus analysis is an approach that was developed in linguistics to analyse large volumes of text (Paltridge, 2006; Wynne, 2005) and, while it was designed to support analysis of linguistic patterns, has been used in recent years to analyse political discourse, including by not limited to parliamentary debates (Ädel, 2010). For example, Paul Baker (2004) has used it to identify patterns of debate on homosexuality in the House of Lords, while Rebecca Willis (2017) has used this technique to examine how MPs frame climate change debates in the House of Commons. This tool, therefore, has a lot of potential given the significant quantities of data produced by these institutions on a daily basis.

For SPARK, this tool will be used as part of key case study techniques to explore speeches in the realm of healthcare, environment and welfare policy. Specifically, speeches by MPs will be analysed to explore what types of knowledge and information they cite (**RQ1a**), and how and when they cite them (**RQ1b**). This data will be compared with citation analysis, above, indicating similarities or differences between parliamentary briefings and speeches, and once again identifying wider networks and patterns of knowledge use (**RQ1b**). More innovatively, the team will also experiment with text-reuse software to identify the underlying sources for speeches, i.e. analysing and comparing the content of speeches with the content of briefings that MPs receive (Wilkerson et al., 2015), helping us to identify the sources of types of knowledge (**RQ1a**).

(3) *Dataset on stakeholder networks.* In previous research, I have published data on the characteristics of witnesses – usually experts – that gave evidence to parliamentary committees in the UK House of Commons (Geddes, 2018a). Though invaluable to understand committees' evidence base, this kind of research, also conducted by others, is mostly focused on institutional access to parliaments and rarely comparative (for an exception see Pedersen et al., 2015). The ambition of this project is to identify and create a dataset across all parliaments for the duration of the project with respect to the three thematic policy areas to indicate the wider epistemic networks and communities that engage with parliamentary proceedings. This may include, for example, organisations that submit written material to committee inquiries and/or are asked to give evidence to parliaments. Once again, this can be compared with the other new datasets above to track the prevalence and centrality of different networks (**RQ1a**) and to compare how and what types of knowledge are used in different settings and by different groups (**RQ1b**). This dataset (to be made open access and available to academic and practitioner audiences) will yield significant empirical insights, not least in being the first comparative analysis of knowledge networks across parliaments.

All three quantitative methods will be used to identify and analyse a range of types of knowledge used by MPs and officials (**RQ1a**) and the patterns of their use (**RQ1b**), which will be compared across settings and synthesised with qualitative data to examine their impact on parliamentary functions (representation, law-making, accountability) (**RQ3a**) and wider relationships between democracy and knowledge (**RQ3b**).

b4.2. Qualitative tools

The qualitative tools for this project will be especially significant in contributing towards pursuing Objective 2. They include:

(1) *Semi-structured interviews.* An established and frequent tool in political and parliamentary research (Bailer, 2014), interviews are an important way to understand actors' motivations and beliefs directly through 1:1 dialogue in which participants are free to reflect on their values. The approach that I take with interviewing follows interpretive research principles, in which interviews are accepted as two-way experiences between the interviewer and the interviewee to collaboratively create meaning based on exchanges (Miller and Glassner, 2004). This requires reflexivity on the part of the research team. I have undertaken more than 100 research interviews with policy-makers for various projects, and gained considerable experience in eliciting reliable information. This experience will be valuable in overcoming any challenges regarding interview data (Berry, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2007), which I intend to share with the project team through informal workshops to ensure that this knowledge is passed on and supports the professional development of the research team.

For this project, interviews will be predominantly with (i) MPs and their staff, (ii) civil servants and parliamentary officials and (iii) key stakeholder groups involved in transmitting information and evidence, such as academic researchers or staff at think tanks. Relevant interviewees will be identified using purposive sampling, such as drawing on earlier quantitative data analysis as well as involvement in three policy areas. Based on previous research experience, I expect the make-up of interviewees to be evenly split into one-third each (and include approx. 50 participants per parliament). Interviews will focus on their beliefs, attitudes and interpretations associated with knowledge use, and to discuss specific examples of their use (in line with case study selection, above). In this way, interviews will help to establish how MPs interpret the role of knowledge (thereby helping to address **RQ2a**), how they judge their authority (thereby helping to answer **RQ2b**), and supplement analysis of the ways that knowledge is used in practice (supporting **RQ1b**). Interviews are also a key mechanism through which the project team can foster dialogue with participants, and these relationships will be utilised for further knowledge exchange and to impart project findings with stakeholders.

(2) *(Non-)participant observation.* Observation techniques are often seen as the foundation of any ethnographic and interpretive research programme. One of the few political scientists in the UK to have made extended use of this tool, my work has been recognised by a national award for its methodological innovations, and praised by the internationally renowned social anthropologist of parliaments (Crewe, 2021a, p. 388). The inherent value of observation is that it allows researchers to look at political issues from a new vantage point, open what

is ordinarily hidden in documents and in interviews, and understand the experiences of people and how they interact with artefacts – in my case, how MPs and officials confront different types of knowledge.

For this project, the team will observe public interactions at committee hearings and in chamber debates. Specifically, this will focus on what information MPs use and their interpersonal relations with those that give them the information (e.g. in committee hearings, MPs often question people and organisational representatives who are imparting their reflections and evidence to parliaments); or, in plenary, this technique can be used to gauge MPs’ reactions to each other’s use of knowledge and information (e.g. body language, unscripted responses not formally recorded in transcripts and written records, etc.). The team will also observe public but non-televised settings, such as meeting spaces, before/after hearings, think tank reports and functions, etc. On this basis, the project team will gain a detailed understanding and intricate nuances of how MPs and officials handle different types of knowledge (RQ1a, b) but, crucially for Objective 2, also how those practices relate to the underlying beliefs that explain their behaviour by seeing how their interactions inform what they regard as authoritative and persuasive (RQ2a, b).

(3) *Qualitative analysis of documents and texts.* As part of the ethnographic method, the research team will make use of documents and texts to immerse themselves fully in their parliamentary environments. This will include key documents published by officials and MPs (research briefings, statements, committee reports, etc.) and stakeholders (think tank reports, academic insight blogs, NGO briefing papers, etc.). Specific documents and texts will be selected following (and as part of) interview- and observation-based research, and will focus around the three case study policy areas, allowing the team to follow up on specific examples to get a rich and textured account of the role of knowledge in parliaments. For example, an interview participant may identify a particular report as key to shaping their view on a specific issue, which the project team could then follow-up and examine, helping to understand what type of knowledge is seen as authoritative (RQ2b).

Qualitative tools will be used to help understand the experiences, beliefs, values and motivations of MPs and officials in the production and use of knowledge (RQ2a), and how certain forms of knowledge are more or less authoritative (RQ2b). This will be contrasted across different settings to ensure a comparative perspective, and synthesised with quantitative data to examine their impact on parliamentary functions (representation, law-making, accountability) (RQ3a) and wider relationships between democracy and knowledge (RQ3b).

In sum, **while quantitative data will focus on Objective 1’s focus on the practices and patterns of knowledge production and use (RQ1a, b), qualitative data will be instrumental for Objective 2’s focus on the values of the role of knowledge in parliaments (RQ2a, b). Both are strongly interlinked and will be answered comparatively throughout. Furthermore, their combination is the route through which Objective 3 – and the wider debates between knowledge and democracy – will be pursued (RQ3a, b).** The combination of the proposed methods is unprecedented for research on parliaments. Although it may be possible that not *all* techniques will work – suggesting an element of risk – this can be mitigated through the combination of, and corroboration between, established and assured tools (especially interviews and observation, with which I have longstanding experience) with new ones (especially quantitative methods).

b5. Research programme

SPARK will unfold over five years through five overlapping phases, as summarised in Figure 2, below.

Figure 2. Overview of research phases.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Phase 1 (project start-up)	■				
Phase 2 (quant. data-gathering)		■			
Phase 3 (qual. data-gathering)			■		
Phase 4 (synthesis and analysis)				■	
Phase 5 (outputs and impact)					■

In **Phase 1 (6 months)**, I will focus on the following milestones:

- **Establishing project team.** I will (i) recruit two post-doctoral research fellows (3.5 years) and (ii) establish one PhD studentship (3 years). As PI, I will oversee and monitor all aspects of the project. It is expected that each research fellow will lead data-gathering for one country-setting (a national and sub-national parliament), while the PI and PhD student will share data-gathering for one country-setting (owing

to the wider responsibilities of the PI and training needs of the PhD). The team will, collectively, gather data for the European Parliament. It is expected that at least one research fellow will have a background in STS, and that one will be fluent in Spanish (I am fluent in German and English).

- **Project website.** SPARK's website will bring together a range of resources for academic researchers (e.g. open access papers), and practitioners and the public (blogs and research notes). The website will be a fully open-access and shareable repository of information and insights from across the project team.
- **Global Network on Parliaments and Knowledge.** The project team will identify contacts, advertise, and establish a new global network to bring together a range of perspectives, across disciplines, and from the academy and policy communities. I have built extensive contacts with the UK and devolved parliaments, the Institute for Parliamentary Research (based in Berlin), as well as a wide range of academic scholars and practitioners in other parliaments given my former roles as Co-Director of the Centre for Science, Knowledge and Policy, and Co-Convener of the UK Political Studies Association's Parliaments Specialist Group. The global network will include practitioner representatives from each case study setting, with key members acting as critical friends to the project and supporting dissemination efforts.

During Phase 1, the project team will organise an inaugural, international networking workshop for the GNPK (Month 6). This will allow scholars and practitioners to come together to discuss key trends and issues relating to how parliaments collect and use different types of knowledge. This will also allow SPARK to showcase its research agenda, and invite feedback at a stage in which it can be most beneficial. The workshop will be an opportunity to develop plans to bring the network together for two further planned events in Year 3 (Month 30) and Year 5 (Month 54). Finally, this phase of the project will allow the project team to conduct any supplementary literature reviews before beginning empirical case study research on the next phases.

After project set-up, **Phase 2 (18 months)** will begin. This will focus on **Objective 1** (and **RQ1a, b**) and be the main quantitative data-gathering phase of the project (additional capacity for data entry will come from a part-time research assistant). This will be followed by **Phase 3 (18 months)** to address **Objective 2** (and **RQ2a, b**) and identify and undertake qualitative data-gathering. It will be facilitated through 3-month research visits to each country-setting by SPARK project members. During this phase, the project team will also begin disseminating early findings at conferences, and organise a second workshop with the GNPK. This workshop intends to identify global perspectives on the relationship between knowledge and parliaments and findings will be the basis for an edited volume or special issue (e.g. Palgrave Series on Science, Knowledge and Policy, *Evidence & Policy* or *Journal of Legislative Studies*). While co-edited by the project team, the research fellows will be the lead co-editors to support their professional development.

Phase 4 (18 months) will be dedicated to analysis of findings. The synthesis of data will be led by the PI, and based on the shared methodology and interpretive approach that will have been adopted by the project team across every parliamentary setting, and through a clear focus on **Objective 3** (and **RQ3a, b**). The thematic policy areas will offer key mechanisms through which comparisons can take place, allowing direct comparison of actors' knowledge networks, the sources of types of knowledge, and patterns of knowledge use. Some of the early findings may require follow-up research through supplementary fact-finding interviews or refinement following further analysis of documents, for which time has been allocated here as part of the synthesis.

The final phase, **Phase 5 (18 months)**, will allow me (as PI) the time and space to focus on high-quality academic and non-academic outputs, including the preparation of a landmark and definitive account of parliaments as knowledge institutions. A proposal of the monograph, which will include draft chapters, will be submitted to a leading university press by the end of Phase 5. Alongside this main output, project findings will continue to be disseminated at conferences, on SPARK's website, and elsewhere. Non-academic findings will be shared with policy-makers, including at least one research briefing for each parliament (seven in total). I will also organise the final project-funded GNPK event, an international conference hosted at the University of Edinburgh in the middle of Year 5, which will be used for dissemination and to firmly establish the network's long-term legacy as a permanent feature of parliamentary studies and STS.

b6. Risks and feasibility

SPARK is proposing to do something radically different through its ambitious and comparative research design, namely by re-thinking parliaments as institutions of knowledge, using and extending insights from a range of cognate disciplines. This bold ambition goes against the disciplinary grain of political science that has principally focused on parliaments as political institutions, often from a rational choice analytical perspective. This project's greatest overarching risk stems from the combination of not only (i) being a multi-disciplinary

project – seeking to continue to build bridges and links between political science, sociology, STS, and social anthropology – as well as in (ii) having an epistemological underpinning in a sub-field of political science that is dominated by quantitative rational choice political science. However, SPARK brings about a necessary reconceptualisation of parliaments to understand their place in contemporary debates and challenges regarding the relationship to knowledge and wider democratic health. Furthermore, risks are minimised in several key ways: first, I am well-placed to conduct this study with my extensive links to parliaments; second, through my previous research on the role of academic research in policy (Beswick and Geddes, 2020; Geddes et al., 2018); third, acknowledging my success in using interpretive approaches and ethnographic tools (Geddes, 2018b, 2020; Geddes and Rhodes, 2018); and fourth, given my language skills in German and English.

b7. Dissemination, outputs and impact

SPARK’s core insight will have a transformative impact on the study of parliaments and encourage reflection among practitioners – MPs and officials – about their production and use of knowledge. *Theoretically and normatively*, it will advance debate about what is regarded as authoritative knowledge in political settings, allowing SPARK to contribute to a range of STS literatures noted throughout the proposal. It will also re-think the basis of our analysis of parliamentary institutions, and especially the relationship between parliamentary functions (such as accountability, representation and law-making) and different types of knowledge. This will significantly contribute to political scientists’ approaches to parliaments. *Empirically*, this project will yield significant new data about parliaments. It will, for example, show the differences and similarities in multiple settings within parliaments, such as plenary chambers versus committees. It will tell us more about the conditions under which certain types of knowledge are used, and – crucially for democratic governance – by whom and to what effect. This will benefit scholarly research on representation, parliaments, democratic theory, STS, policy studies, and beyond. *Methodologically*, this project will push forward the new trends in using text-as-data (Taylor-Robinson et al., 2022, p. 10) through the project’s ambitious research design, and showcase how interpretive research, traditionally associated with qualitative research, can also make use of quantitative tools to support analysis. **Overall, this project will develop a new international research agenda with the potential for transformative ripple effects across the social sciences.**

The project team’s outcomes will be pursued through several (open-access) scholarly outputs, including a **landmark monograph** (a proposal will be submitted to a leading university press before the project’s end) to offer a full theoretical and empirical re-appraisal of parliaments in democratic governance; at least eight **peer-reviewed research articles**, based on insights from Year 2 onwards through single-authored and co-authored papers to be submitted to specialist and generalist journals; **an edited volume or special issue** (e.g. Palgrave Studies on Science, Knowledge and Policy or *Evidence & Policy, Journal of Legislative Studies*) arising out of the new global network on parliaments and knowledge and based on insights from a range of academics and practitioners, co-edited by the research fellows; **a free-to-use database**, to allow scholars and practitioners to use quantitative data from SPARK; and a **PhD thesis** through the funded studentship.

Alongside scholarly outcomes, I will pursue ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange with practitioners to ensure a key outcome of SPARK to promote and enhance the health of democracies (especially in line with Objective 3). These activities will be encompassed through:

- **Rapid insights and briefing papers.** The team will regularly encourage reflection from research to feed into policy debates and proposals through shorter, non-academic papers, including submissions of evidence to parliamentary inquiries, and publishing standalone briefing papers for public use.
- **Bespoke research briefing.** For each parliament, the project team will produce one research briefing that will highlight comparative findings and identify specific issues regarding knowledge use.
- **Podcasts.** From Year 3, the project team will introduce a quarterly 30min podcast to give academics and practitioners the opportunity to discuss the relationship between knowledge and parliaments. Team members will contribute to other podcasts where appropriate, such as SAPEA’s Science for Policy podcast.
- **Blogs, non-academic writing and public engagement events.** The project team will regularly identify opportunities to feed interim and emerging findings into public debate via blogs, essays, magazines, and newspaper articles, as well as organising, and participating in, events.

To achieve these profound changes on scholarly, practitioner and public perspectives on parliaments, SPARK’s project team will be supported by two aforementioned infrastructures that will ensure that the key insights and findings are widely disseminated: the **Global Network on Parliaments and Knowledge**, and a **dedicated website on the study of science, knowledge and parliaments**.

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Commitment of the host institution for ERC Calls 2023

The University of Edinburgh, which is the applicant legal entity, confirms its intention to sign a supplementary agreement with Dr Marc Geddes in which the obligations listed below will be addressed should their proposal be retained.

Performance obligations of the applicant legal entity (Host Institution) that will become the coordinator of the HE ERC Grant Agreement (hereafter referred to as the Agreement), should the proposal be retained and the preparation of the Agreement be successfully concluded:

The applicant legal entity (Host Institution) commits itself to ensure that the action tasks described in Annex 1 of the Agreement are performed under the guidance of the principal investigator who is expected to devote:

- in the case of a Starting Grant at least 50% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country;
- in the case of a Consolidator Grant at least 40% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country;
- in the case of an Advanced Grant at least 30% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

The applicant legal entity (Host Institution) commits itself to respect the following conditions for the principal investigator and their team:

- a) host and engage the principal investigator for the whole duration of the action;
- b) take all measures to implement the principles set out in the Commission recommendation on the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers — in particular regarding working conditions, transparent recruitment processes based on merit and career development — and ensure that the principal investigator, researchers and third parties involved in the action are aware of them;
- c) enter — before grant signature— into a Supplementary Agreement with the principal investigator, that specifies the obligation of the applicant legal entity to meet its obligations under the Agreement;
- d) provide the principal investigator with a copy of the signed Agreement;
- e) guarantee the principal investigator scientific independence, in particular for the:
 - i. use of the budget to achieve the scientific objectives;
 - ii. authority to publish as senior author and invite as co-authors those who have contributed substantially to the work;
 - iii. preparation of scientific reports for the action;
 - iv. selection and supervision of the other team members, in line with the profiles needed to conduct the research and in accordance with the beneficiary's usual management practices;
 - v. possibility to apply independently for funding;
 - vi. access to appropriate space and facilities for conducting the research;

- f) provide — during the implementation of the action — research support to the principal investigator and the team members (regarding infrastructure, equipment, access rights, products and other services necessary for conducting the research);
- g) support the principal investigator and provide administrative assistance, in particular for the:
 - i. general management of the work and their team;
 - ii. scientific reporting, especially ensuring that the team members send their scientific results to the principal investigator;
 - iii. financial reporting, especially providing timely and clear financial information;
 - iv. application of the beneficiary's usual management practices;
 - v. general logistics of the action;
 - vi. access to the electronic exchange system;
- h) inform the principal investigator immediately (in writing) of any events or circumstances likely to affect the Agreement;
- i) ensure that the principal investigator enjoys adequate:
 - i. conditions for annual, sickness and parental leave;
 - ii. occupational health and safety standards;
 - iii. insurance under the general social security scheme, such as pension rights;
- j) allow the transfer of the Agreement to a new beneficiary, if requested by the principal investigator and provided that the objectives of the action remain achievable (portability; see Article 41 of the Agreement);
- k) respect the fundamental principle of research integrity and ensure that persons carrying out research tasks under the action follow the good research practices and refrain from the research integrity violations described in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity . If any such violations or allegations occur, verify and pursue them and bring them to the attention of the Agency.

For the applicant legal entity (Host Institution):

Date

11 October 2022

Name and Function

David Dougal Senior Research Funding Specialist (EU & International)

Email and Signature (blue ink or digital) of legal representative



David.Dougal@ed.ac.uk

Stamp of the applicant legal entity (Host Institution)

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