Parliamentarism and encyclopaedism: how Parliaments produce and elaborate knowledge

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the tendency for parliaments to produce and organize knowledge according to comprehensive "encyclopaedic" patterns. This feature can be traced back to the origins of modern parliamentarism and can be studied together with the parallel emergence of the great national encyclopaedias as one of the predominant intellectual enterprises of the XIX century bourgeoisie. The paper maintains that the encyclopaedic pattern is still relevant to understand how parliaments operate in contemporary democracies, even if we have to take in due consideration the "paradigm shifts" undergone by parliamentary representation from the XVIII century to the contemporary age. The paper will start from a short consideration of the essential features that have marked the origins of modern encyclopaedism with the pathbreaking work of Diderot and D'Alambert; it will then discuss some analogies between the success of encyclopaedism especially in XIX century Europe and the emergence of parliamentarism as the form of government of the liberal bourgeoisie; subsequently, it will focus on the changes occurred in the "parliamentary encyclopaedia" in the XX century; finally, the paper will address the radical challenges posed to the parliamentary encyclopaedia in contemporary societies.

1. Political representation and knowledge

The question of the relationship between institutions and knowledge has been extensively discussed by the sociology of knowledge. Starting from the distinction between "information" and "knowledge"[1] some seminal works[2] have emphasized how human institutions are normally responsible not only for processing knowledge already available, but also for *generating new knowledge*. From this perspective, institutions can be aptly described as "machines for thinking"[3], in the sense that they help produce knowledge to the benefit of the community and the individuals[4]. Institutions can thus be seen as an example of "artificial intelligence" as they provide constraints and opportunities to shape the human comprehension of the world [5]. Representative institutions, in particular, play a crucial role in supporting the reflexive knowledge of the community about itself[6]. It has been rightly observed that the capacity to elaborate political knowledge is central to the success of representative democracy[7].

This theoretical framework can be applied also to parliamentary institutions. Knowledge is vital to discharge most of the parliamentary functions[8]. In contemporary democracies, in order to legislate or to exercise their oversight function over the executives, parliaments need to process a huge amount of information. In doing so, parliaments not only incorporate knowledge from outside, but produce "raw" data[9] and new knowledge for other institutions and the citizens at large. The patterns which underpin

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[1] "Borrowing a famous metaphor from (…) Claude Lévi-Strauss, it may be useful to think about information as something 'raw', while knowledge has been 'cooked'. Of course, information is only relatively raw, since the "data" are not "objectively" given at all, but perceived by human minds that are full of assumptions and prejudices. However, knowledge is 'cooked' in the sense of being processed. The processes (…) include verification, criticism, measurement, comparison and systematization": P. Burke, A Social History of Knowledge. From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012, 5.

[2] The modern foundations of the sociology of knowledge can be found in the works of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961). For an analysis of the contribution of these two scholars, see M. Douglas, How Institutions Think, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1986, 9-19. For an influential application of these theories to the history of science, see T. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962.

[3] M. Douglas, How Institutions Think, cit., 111.

[4] Widespread interest in the topic of knowledge management arose as recently as the mid-1990s with reference to the private sector: this "knowledge turn" asserted we have moved into an Information Age wherein knowledge has become the organization's principal asset. For a synthesis, see D. Hislop, Knowledge Management in Organizations. A Critical introduction, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009. See also M. Koenig, Knowledge Management: Where is it Going?' in S. McCallum, L. Bultrini, J. Sempéré, W. Newman, (eds.) 'Knowledge Management in Libraries and Organizations, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016. For an interesting study of a great international organization from this point of view, see N. Svenson, The United Nations as a Knowledge System, London and New York, Routledge, 2016.

[5] C. Donolo, L'intelligenza delle istituzioni, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1997, 55. For a very interesting study of the Athenian democratic institutions from a cognitive perspective, see. J. Ober, Democracy and Knowledge. Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008: According to Ober "Cleisthenes created institutions that employed the principles of incentives for knowledge sharing, lowering communications costs, and context-sensitive information sorting" (139).

[6] On the reflexive nature of democratic representation, see N. Urbinati, Representative Democracy. Principles and Genealogy, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2006, 102-105. Urbinati maintains that the Kantian doctrine of judgment can offer an adequate basis for the theoretical foundation of representative democracy: "It is autonomy of judgment that makes indirectness legitimate, the fact that the ruler and the ruled can make an "as if" judgment and imagine themselves in the place of the other. Acting in the place of is a transitive mode of action that is predicative of a normative relationship of reciprocity; it designates that the law, not the will, is the site of power (and sovereignty)" (103, italics in the original text).

[7] W.P. Jaeger, J. Lyons J, J. Wolak, Political Knowledge and Policy Representation in the States, in "American Politics Research", 2017, 45(6), 907-938.

[8] J. Krueper, Das Wissen des Parlament, in M. Morlok, U. Schliesky, D. Wiefelspuetz (eds.), Parlamentsrecht. Praxishandbuch, Baden Baden, Nomos, 2016, 1141. For the application of an informational perspective to the study of the U.S. Congress organization see K. Krehbiel, Information and Legislative Organization, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1991. According to this theory a well-designed legislature is a producer, consumer, and repository for policy expertise, where "expertise" is the reduction of uncertainty associated with legislative policies.

[9] Parliaments have recently become providers of sizable sets of open data about their activity. Open data is defined as structured data that is machine-readable, freely shared, used and built on without restrictions.

this activity can heavily affect not only the inner functioning of parliaments, but also their role in the constitutional system, and, more generally, the democratic quality of a society.

This paper will focus on one of these patterns that I consider particularly crucial: the "encyclopaedic pattern". By this I mean the tendency for parliaments to produce and organize knowledge according to comprehensive circular structures. This feature can be traced back to the origins of modern parliamentarism[10] and can be studied together with the parallel emergence of the great national encyclopaedias as one of the predominant intellectual enterprises of the XIX century bourgeoisie. I maintain that the encyclopaedic pattern is still relevant to understand how parliaments operate in contemporary democracies, even if we have to take in due consideration the "paradigm shifts" undergone by parliamentary representation from the XVIII century to the contemporary age. The paper will start from a short consideration of the essential features that have marked the origins of modern encyclopaedism with the pathbreaking work of Diderot and D'Alambert; it will then discuss some analogies between the success of encyclopaedism especially in XIX century Europe and the emergence of parliamentarism as the form of government of the liberal bourgeoisie; subsequently, it will focus on the changes occurred in the "parliamentary encyclopaedia" in the XX century; finally, the paper will address the radical challenges posed to the parliamentary encyclopaedia in contemporary societies.

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[10] I use this term to indicate a very broad concept, regarding a form of government that had and still has a wide range of variants over the time and in the different countries. For a general definition, see A.W. Bradley and C. Pinelli, Parliamentarism in M. Rosenfeld and A. Sajo, The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Constitutional Law, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, 651: "The essence of parliamentarism in modern constitutions is that the executive power is exercised by the Prime Ministers and other ministers, who have the confidence of the legislature".

2. The origins of modern encyclopaedism.

The encyclopaedic model certainly does not emerge in modern times, but is rooted in antiquity. The term encyclopaedia derives from the Greek enkyklios paideia, "general education," and it originally meant a complete system of learning—that is, an all-round education[11].

In reality, if we analyse the great 'encyclopedical' works of antiquity — the most notable example of which is perhaps Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* – they are vast collections of all sorts of facts, observations and myths, with a good deal of anecdotal information[12]. This type of approach also prevails during the Middle Ages: it should also be pointed out that the encyclopaedias of this period often announce already in their title their claim to be a comprehensive representation of the knowledge available at their time[13]. This 'representative' claim of encyclopaedias is certainly a feature of great interest because it marks a long-term qualification of the encyclopaedic undertaking, which will be confirmed in modern ages.

Compared to this long historical tradition, the Diderot and D'Alambert's *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772) is certainly a great novelty[14]. Even if it started as a simple translation into French of the *Cyclopaedia* of Ephraim Chambers[15], the final outcome of the project resulted in an entirely different type of work, which marked a radical break with the established notions of knowledge implying that traditional learning amounted to nothing but prejudice and superstition[16]. In doing so, the *Encyclopédie* "operated an epistemological shift that transformed the topography of everything known by man"[17]. Diderot and D'Alambert abandoned the pansophic projects that had been the basis of many encyclopaedic works between Renaissance and the seventeenth century[18]. The French encyclopaedists rejected the 'esprit de système" of the tradition which preceded them, in order to carry out a work which refrained from providing a comprehensive and harmonious picture of the entire human knowledge. Rather, the *Encyclopédie* assumes that human knowledge is limited, but is subject to continuous expansion and

[11] W. E. Preece, R.L. Collison, Encyclopaedia in Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/encyclopaedia

[12] R. Collison, Encyclopaedias: their History throughout the Ages, New York and London, Hafner, 1966, 25.

[13] See, for example, the Speculum majus ("The Greater Mirror"; completed 1244), one of the most important of mediaeval encyclopedias, which we owe to French scholar Vincent of Beauvais: W. E. Preece, R.L. Collison, Encyclopaedia, cit.

[14] The literature on the Encyclopédie is immense: see, at least, R. Venturi, Le origini dell'Enciclopedia, Roma, 1946, J. Proust, Diderot et l'Encyclopédie, Paris, Albin Michel, 1962, R. Darnton, The Business of Enlightenment. A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979, L. Delia, Droit et philosophie à la lumière de l'Encyclopédie, Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2015.

[15] E. Chambers, Cyclopædia: or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, 1 ed. London, James & John Knapton; John Darby; and others, 1728. On this work see L. E. Bradshaw, Ephraim Chambers' Cyclopedia in Frank Kafker (ed) Notable Encyclopedias of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Nine Predecessors of the Encyclopédie, Oxford, The Voltaire Foundation, 1981, 123–137; R. Yeo, A Solution to the Multitude of Books: Ephraim Chambers's Cyclopaedia (1728) as "the Best Book in the Universe." In "Journal of the History of Ideas", v. 64 (1), 2003. pp. 61–72.

[16] R. Darnton, The Business of Enlightenment, cit., 7.

[17] Ibid.

[18] W. Tega, Unità del sapere e ideale enciclopedico, Bologna, il Mulino, 1983, 77.

correction, according to the progressive outlook typical of the Enlightenment[19]. This is achieved through the rejection of the principle of authority and the adoption of a spirit of critical research. In this perspective, discovering errors is almost as important as the acquisition of new knowledge. The falsification of the presumed truths, the admission of ignorance are fundamental components of the vision of encyclopaedists[20].

Furthermore, Diderot and his fellows accepted a certain degree of relativism: if the encyclopaedia is a map to navigate the maze of knowledge, they acknowledged that this map can offer very different representations of the land depending on the vantage points chosen for its description[21].

A significant role in this new approach to knowledge is the recognition of the importance of "implicit knowledge" as a precondition for the exercise of arts and trades. Professions and crafts have a very important place in the *Encyclopédie*: their valorisation was tantamount to the discovery of an area of knowledge hitherto ignored by official science and the academy.

Compared to the models of the past, another original aspect of D'Alambert's and Diderot's work were the contributions to the 22-volume encyclopaedia from a very large number of personalities from culture, science and philosophy[22]. The work resulting from this cooperation was an intellectual undertaking characterised by a remarkable pluralism in approaches. It was the vivid confirmation of the existence of a 'Republic of Letters' claiming broad autonomy and freedom in relation to the establishment. The purely alphabetical order of the articles also helped to underline this spirit of intellectual freedom and the refusal of a hierarchical organisation of knowledge. The rejection of the *esprit de système*, however, did not mean that encyclopaedists refused a systematic approach to knowledge. On the contrary, they were focussed on carrying out a work based on a precise organisation of knowledge, inspired by the model of the Baconian *arbor scientiarum*[23]. The *Encyclopédie* was not therefore intended to be a mere repertoire of juxtaposed dictionary entries without any relationship with each other, but proposed a specific plan to organise knowledge. The knowledge tree was divided into three large faculties: Memory, Reason and Imagination.

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[19] It can be interesting to note how the « virtue of auto-correction » is identified by the Encyclopédie (at the entry "Parliament d'Angleterre" written by Louis de Jaucourt) as the main feature of the English parliamentary institutions: "La chambre de, pairs & celle des communes sont les arbitres de la nation, & le roi est le surarbitre. Cette balance manquoit aux Romain; les grands & le peuple étoient toujours en division, san, qu'il y eut une puissance mitoyenne pour les accorder. Le gouvernement d'Angleterre est plus sage, parce qu'il y a un corps qui l'examine continuellement.& qui s'examine continuellement lui-même ; telles sont ses erreurs qu'elles ne sont jamais langues ; & que par l'esprit d'attention qu'elles donnent à la nation, elles sont souvent utiles. Un etat libre, c'est-à-dire, toujours agité, ne sauroit se maintenir, s'il n'est par ses propres lois, capable de correction; & tel est l'avantage du corps legislatif qui s'assemble de tems en tems pour establir ou revoquer des lois », Encyclopédie, Vol. XII (1765), 40.

[20] «Arrêtons - nous un moment ici, & jetons les yeux sur l'espace que nous venons de parcourir. Nous y remarquerons deux limites où se trouvent, pour ainsi dire, concentrées presque toutes les connaissances certaines accordées à nos lumières naturelles. L'une de ces limites, celle d'où nous sommes partis, est l'idée de nous - mêmes, qui conduit à celle de l'Etre tout - puissant, & de nos principaux devoirs. L'autre est cette partie des Mathématiques qui a pour objet les propriétés générales des corps, de l'étendue & de la grandeur. Entre ces deux termes est un intervalle immense, où l'Intelligence suprême semble avoir voulu se joüer de la curiosité humaine, tant par les nuages qu'elle y a répandus sans nombre, que par quelques traits de lumière qui semblent s'échapper de distance en distance pour nous attirer. On pourrait comparer l'Univers à certains ouvrages d'une obscurité sublime, dont les Auteurs en s'abaissant quelquefois à la portée de celui qui les lit, cherchent à lui persuader qu'il entend tout à - peu - près. Heureux donc, si nous nous engageons dans ce labyrinthe, de ne point quitter la véritable route; autrement les éclairs destinés à nous y conduire, ne serviraient souvent qu'à nous en écarter davantage » : J.B. D'Alambert, Discours Préliminaire , (1751), vii.

[21]"Mais comme dans les cartes générales du globe que nous habitons, les objets sont plus ou moins rapprochés, & présentent un coup d'oeil différent selon le point de vûe où l'oeil est placé par le Géographe qui construit la carte, de même la forme de l'arbre encyclopédique dépendra du point de vûe où l'on se mettra pour envisager l'univers littéraire. On peut donc imaginer autant de systèmes différens de la connoissance humaine, que de Mappemondes de différentes projections; & chacun de ces systèmes pourra même avoir, à l'exclusion des autres, quelque avantage particulier » : J.B. D'Alambert, Discours Préliminaire , xv

[22] « C'est à l'exécution de ce projet étendu, non seulement aux différents objets de nos académies, mais à toutes les branches de la connoissance humaine, qu'une Encyclopédie doit suppléer ; Ouvrage qui ne s'exécutera que par une société de gens de lettres & d'artistes, épars, occupés chacun de sa partie, & liés seulement par l'intérêt général du genre humain, & par un sentiment de bienveillance réciproque », D. Diderot, Encyclopedie (Philosophie), in Encyclopédie, Vol. VII (1755), 636.

[23] W. Tega, Unità del sapere e ideale enciclopedico, cit., 94-97.

In this tri-partition, I would like to stress the importance of memory. A work such as the *Encyclopédie*, based on a progressive ideal of knowledge, nevertheless reserved a key role for memory and historical sciences in the building of new knowledge. It is important to keep in mind this aspect, as we shall see, also to understand some of the original features of modern parliamentarism.

In addition to the reference to the Baconian tree, what gave unity and circularity to D'Alambert's and Diderot's work was the dense system of internal cross-references among the almost 72 thousand articles of the work[24]. It has been said that the *Encyclopédie* can be regarded as the ancestor of the hypertext[25]. Diderot considered these links not only as a mere reference tool, but as a means of representing the circularity of human knowledge as a continuum. It is thanks to this internal architecture that his work acquires its proper encyclopaedic character[26].

The publication of the French encyclopaedia paved the way for subsequent large national encyclopaedias[27]. These works had characteristics which differed significantly from the French example, but shared some basic preconditions with it. At the basis of the great success of the encyclopaedic model in the XIX century there was the need to provide an intellectual response to two contradictory needs: on the one hand, the necessity to accept the growing specialization of knowledge; on the other hand, the will to preserve the cultural unity of the *Bildung* reserved to the ruling class. The somehow paradoxical character of this cultural program was acutely noticed by some intellectuals of the age[28].It is precisely those preconditions that provide the basis for drawing a parallel between the emergence of parliamentarism and modern encyclopaedias.

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[24]« Ainsi trois choses forment l'ordre encyclopédique; le nom de la Science à laquelle l'article appartient; le rang de cette Science dans l'Arbre; la liaison de l'article avec d'autres dans la même Science ou dans une Science différente; liaison indiquée par les renvois, ou facile à sentir au moyen des termes techniques expliqués suivant leur ordre alphabétique » : J .B. D'Alambert, Discours Préliminaire , xviii-xix.

[25] E. Brian, L'ancêtre de l'hypertexte, in « Les Cahiers de Science et Vie », 47 (oct. 1998), 28-38

[26] G. Blanchard and M. Olsen, Le système de renvois dans l'Encyclopédie : Une cartographie des structures de connaissances au XVIIIe siècle , in «Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie », 31-32, 2002, 45.

[27]On some of these works subsequent to the Encyclopédie, see F. Kafker, Notable Encyclopedias of the Late Eighteenth Century: Eleven Successors of the Encyclopédie, Oxford , Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1994.

[28] G. Leopardi, Zibaldone di pensieri , n. 1922 (15 October 1821), in Opere Complete, Firenze, Sansoni, 1969, Vol II, 521: "Non può nessuno vantarsi di essere perfetto in nessuna umana disciplina, s'egli non è anche perfetto in tutte le possibili discipline e cognizioni umane. Tanta è la forza e l'importanza dei rapporti che esistono fra le cose le più disparate, non conoscendo i quali, nessuna cosa si conosce perfettamente. Ora,   poiché ciò che ho detto è impossibile all'individuo, perciò lo spirito umano non fa quegl'immensi progressi che potrebbe fare. È però certo che se non perfettamente, almeno quanto è possibile, è realmente necessario di esser uomo enciclopedico, non per darsi a tutte le discipline e non perfezionarsi e distinguersi in nessuna, ma per esser quanto è possibile perfetto in una sola. In ciò l'opinione del tempo è ragionevole. Chi almeno nella superficie non è uomo enciclopedico, non può veramente considerarsi (e oggi non si considera) come gran letterato o insigne in veruna disciplina intellettuale" : "Nobody can claim to be perfect in any human discipline, if he is not perfect in all possible disciplines included in human knowledge. So great is the strength and importance of the relationships among the most disparate things, that, if you don't know them, you can't say to know anything perfectly. Since what I have said is impossible to achieve by any individual, the human spirit does not make the great progress that could be done. But it is certain that, if not perfectly, at least as much as possible, it is really necessary to be an encyclopaedic man not in order to cultivate all disciplines, with the result of reaching the perfection in none, but in order to be as perfect as possible in just one. The common opinion of our time is therefore reasonable on this. Who at least on the surface is not an encyclopaedic man, he cannot really be considered (and today we do not consider) a valuable scholar in any intellectual discipline".

3. Encyclopaedical Parliamentarism in the Nineteenth century

Modern parliaments emerge between the XVIII and the XIX century as the political encyclopaedias of the nascent liberal bourgeoisie[29]. They are based on the dual paradigm of free mandate and national representation of parliamentarians[30]: two principles which distinguish these institutions from class-based medieval parliaments. Modern parliaments, on the other hand, assert their separation from the society they want to represent. This peculiar representative claim[31] is based on a status of autonomy which renders legislative assemblies circular and self-sufficient institutions[32]. An important role in asserting this paradigm was played by the physical structure of parliamentary plenary halls prevailing in Europe: the hemicycle originally introduced to host the French revolutionary assemblies. This architectural solution made parliaments genuine theatres of politics, intended to vividly represent national political life in front of an ideal public made up of citizens[33]. Perhaps the highest example of this format was achieved at the beginning of the twentieth century in Rome with the new plenary hall designed for the Italian Chamber of Deputies by the great Sicilian architect Ernesto Basile, the author of Teatro Massimo in Palermo[34].

However, parliamentary premises did not perform a representative function only in a "theatrical" sense: Their shape was also instrumental in providing *a cognitive map of politics*, facilitated by the seating arrangement of Members according to the right-left orientation adopted for the first time when the Estates General rebelled against Louis XVI by breaking loose from bloc voting. This left-right spatial framework has become the basic metaphor for organizing modern political ideology[35]. In the nineteenth century, the political parties were still fluid and lacked rigid organizational structures: However, parliaments were in a position to provide a complete picture, indeed an encyclopaedic one,

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[29] On representative government as peculiar form of the political organization of the European bourgeoisie see E. J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975, 55.

[30] H.F. Pitkin, The Concept of Representation, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1967, 170.

[31] M. Saward, The Representative Claim, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.

[32] "The circle, by its convexity, creates a closure toward its exterior. There is an autonomy, a self-sufficiency of the circle, This leads to the question of the status of the circle of the National Assembly in regard to the location of sovereignty (....) The public parliamentary space is indeed this space of closeness and togetherness. (....) This is an essential moment: it is in this very operation that the nation keeps its distance from itself and by which, in the same distance, it achieves self-awareness and it is constituted reflexively as a "complete nation": J.-P. Heurtin, The Circle of Discussion and the Semicircle of Criticism, in B. Latour and P. Weibel (eds.), Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy, ZKM, Karlsruhe, Mit press, Cambridge Mass., 2005, 754-770.

[33] On the "theatralisation" of the parliamentary assemblies during the French revolution, see J.-H. Heurtin, L'espace public parlementaire. Essai sur les raisons du législateur, Paris, PUF, 1999. 108-159; see also G. Rizzoni, Political Architecture and the Seduction of Space: the Form of Parliaments and European Identity, in L. Rorato and A. Saunders (eds.), The Essence and the Margin: National Identities and Collective Memories in Contemporary European Culture, Amsterdam - New York, 2009, 183-198.

[34] See now the contributions included in the volume The New Plenary Hall of the Chamber of Deputies on the 1918-2028 Centenary, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 2018.

[35] C.T. Goodsell, The Architecture of Parliaments: Legislative Houses and Political Culture, "British Journal of Political Science", Vol. 18, No. 3 (July 1988), 296.

of the country's political forces and their different orientations, at least with regard to the political actors admitted to the rather restricted parliamentary club[36].

Parliamentary institutions also immediately acquired another of the key functions assigned to modern encyclopaedias, since Diderot's and D'Alambert's work: that of being the living memory of the national political identity. Parliamentary theatres became 'theatres of memory' in the sense of presenting themselves as institutions symbolising the memory of the nation, particularly in countries where the nation state was still in the making[37].

The common reference to nation-building processes is a further link between encyclopaedism and parliamentarism in the nineteenth century. Almost all the great encyclopaedic enterprises between the XVIII and the XIX century share the ambition to reflect an established national identity: In practice, they were a factor of national unification from a cultural point of view. In many countries, the realisation of encyclopaedias was thus directly linked to the nation-building process, as is the case for example in Norway[38]. In other situations, especially where national unification was still in the making, as in Germany, this link was more indirect, but clearly felt by contemporaries[39]. Also in Great Britain, the great *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was set up to provide Britain with an instrument for the specific needs of the national public. Compared to the *Encyclopédie*, what is particularly striking in the British work is the absence of any anti-establishment attitude: the main purpose of *Britannica* was to provide an authoritative and easily accessible reference work for the benefit of the new middle-class public[40]. Italy is a self-standing case: Among the big European countries, it was the one that had its own national encyclopaedia at a later stage, with the publication of the *Enciclopedia italiana* only in the XX century. However, the Italian example confirms the strong link between the encyclopaedic enterprise and national spirit, which was then expressed by the fascist regime[41].

The connection with nation-building processes finds its privileged expression, both for parliaments and encyclopaedias, in their relationship with the emerging bourgeois public sphere. The voters of the eighteenth-century parliaments were also the readers of the contemporary encyclopaedias. They became the core of the emerging public opinion. A class who expressed a new need: Obtaining rapid and reliable information on the issues underlying the political debate through different channels more easily accessible than those offered by specialist and academic scholarship. Of course, one of the

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[36] The semicircle fuses the members of parliament into a single entity: "the newly formed European nation states used the semi-circular architecture to foster consensus among a representative elite": XML, Parliament, Amsterdam, XML, 2016 (the book provides a worldwide comparison of the architectural structure of the plenary halls of 193 parliaments).

[37] The new parliamentary premises built after the French revolution were modelled after the idea of Parliament as Monument, a building that, with its very structure, expresses the values and the history of the civic traditions of the Nation: H. Trapp, Orte der Versammlung, in Oesterreichische Gesellschaft fuer Architektur (ed.), Umbau 27 – Plenum. Orte der Macht. Sonderausgabe Biennale Venedig 2014, Basel, Birkhaeuser, 2014, 100-116. According to Goodsell, the "preservation function" is among the typical functions of modern parliamentary architecture: This function is illustrated by the building's occupancy of sacred sites, its symbolization of new constitutional orders, its celebration of nationhood, and its expression of the stability of the state and the continuity of legislative traditions (C.T. Goodsell, The Architecture of Parliaments: Legislative Houses and Political Culture, cit., 301).

[38] E. Bolstad, S. A. Pettersen, How to Build an Encyclopaedia for the 21st Century: Lessons Learned from The Great Norwegian Encyclopaedia in "Studia lexicographica", 13(2019) 24, 154.

[39] The first popular encyclopaedia in Germany (Conversations-Lexikon) was published by Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus in 1808. The most important German encyclopedia in the XIX century is Das Grosse Conversations-Lexikon für die gebildeten Stände founded by Joseph Mayer in 1839. For an interesting comparison between the popular encyclopaedias in Germany and Great Britain in the XIX century, see U. Spree Das Streben nach Wissen: Eine vergleichende Gattungsgeschichte der populären Enzyklopädie in Deutschland und Großbritannien im 19. Jahrhundert. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2000. The author emphasizes a significant shift in the major German encyclopaedias from a liberal stance prevailing at the origin of these works to a more nationalistic approach after 1870.

[40] On the Encyclopaedia Britannica, see H. Kogan, The Great EB: the story of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1958 and R. Collison, Encyclopaedias: their History throughout the Ages, cit., 137-155.

[41] "The supreme example of an encyclopaedia that set out to present the best possible image of its people and the wealth and stature of their culture is undoubtedly the Enciclopedia italiana (1929–36)", W. E. Preece, R.L. Collison, Encyclopaedia, cit. On the history of the Enciclopedia italiana, see G. Turi, Il fascismo e il consenso degli intellettuali, Bologna, il Mulino, 1980, 22 ss.

preferred means of meeting this new demand was offered by the production of newspapers, gazettes and periodicals with a more or less direct political content. This kind of new media became predominant in shaping public opinion between the XVII and the XIX centuries[42]. And it is known that liberal parliaments immediately entered in a symbiosis with this world of the new *Öffentlichkeit*[43], paving the way to a journalism specialised in parliamentary reporting[44].

National encyclopaedias became one of the key components of this new public sphere. However, compared with the role played by other media, such as the press, nineteenth century encyclopaedias consciously claimed for themselves a specific educational mission. This function is not too different from that performed, at a political level, by the representative assemblies to which the classical XIX century theory of parliamentarism expressly assigned a "teaching function" vis-à-vis the nation[45].

The pedagogic and encyclopaedic features of XIX-century parliamentarism are confirmed by the contemporary emergence of the great parliamentary libraries. These "institutions within the institutions" offered extensive bibliographic collections which tended to cover every field of knowledge with the intent of ensuring an adequate information base for parliamentary work. The most striking example is the Library of the Congress, which gradually became a kind of universal collection of human cultural products of all kinds[46]. But the examples offered by libraries of the British House of Commons[47] or the Italian Chamber of Deputies[48] are no less remarkable.

It should be noted, however, that, especially in Europe, the national pedagogy carried out by encyclopaedias and parliaments was mainly aimed at the elites. The many links between parliamentarism and encyclopaedism in the construction of the new public sphere had their common assumption in the very narrow nature of that sphere. For most of the nineteenth century, in many European countries the liberal bourgeoisie at the helm of the nation-building processes represented a tiny minority compared to the rest of society. This was confirmed by the rules on suffrage, which restricted the electorate to a small fraction of the population. Towards the end of the century, there was an increasing push for the democratisation of parliamentary representation and the admission of new forces coming from outside the liberal monoculture[49]. This paved the way for a profound change in the parliamentary encyclopaedia.

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[42] On the development of the European news market between 1400 and 1800 see A. Pettegree, The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself, London, Yale University Press, 2014.

[43] J. Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, Neuwied, Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1962, 98.

[44] On the story of parliamentary journalism in Britain see A. Sparrow, Obscure scribblers : a history of parliamentary journalism, London, Politico's, 2003; see also I. Harris, I. , What Was Parliamentary Reporting? A Study of Aims and Results in the London Daily Newspapers, 1780–96. In "Parliamentary History", 2020, 39, 255-275

[45] W. Bagehot, The English Constitution (1867), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1928, 127

[46] On the Library of the Congress and its history, see J.Y Cole and J. Aikin (eds.), Encyclopaedia of the Library of the Congress: for Congress, the Nation and the World, Washington, The Library of the Congress, Bernan Press, 2004. Cole and Aikin emphasize the encyclopaedic imprinting given to the Library by its principal founder, Thomas Jefferson. In promoting the foundation of the Library Jefferson was inspired by a "doctrine of completeness and inclusiveness" that was further developed over the two centuries of history of this key Congressional institution. On this basis the library become the de facto National Library of the United states, even if it never lost its original mission of serving the information needs of the Congress. The Library has been defined as "the world's greatest Multi-Media encyclopedia" with a catalog that today includes 18 million records for books, serials, manuscripts, maps, music, recordings, images, and electronic resources (14).

[47] On the history of the library of the House of Commons see D. Menhennet, The House of Commons Library: A History, Westminster, The House of Commons Library, 2 ed. 2000

[48] F. Venturini, Libri, lettori e biblioteche a Montecitorio. Storia della Biblioteca della Camera dei deputati, Milano, Wolters Kluwer, Cedam, 2019. In tracing the history of the Library of the Chamber of Deputies, Venturini points out that the background of the Library's collections was not only the need to provide documentary support for legislative work, but also the desire to build a general culture library which tended to 'represent what Members represented'. At the heart of the establishment of the Library of the Chamber was a pedagogical programme that built on the idea of the Library as an open educational institution, even if it was not directly relevant to the work of the legislator (392).

[49] On this development, see S. Rokkan, *State formation, Nation-building, and Mass Politics in Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.

4. Encyclopaedic parliamentarism in the 20th century

Already in the early decades of the twentieth century, two main factors had a strong impact on the organisation of the parliamentary encyclopaedia. The first was the rise of large mass parties with a strong territorial organisation.

The new parties were very different from the old ones. In liberal times, the parties consisted mainly of local notables, whereas the membership of the mass-based parties was characterized by a new kind of activists, ideologically homogeneous and bound to a strong party discipline[50]. These features had a strong impact on the functioning of legislative assemblies. In particular, they challenged the traditional liberal ideology based on the freedom of mandate of parliamentarians.

According to some observers, this development was equivalent to the death of parliamentarism, given the transformation of parliamentary debates in mere repetitions of the ideological conflicts existing among the political parties. In reality, if these transformations certainly put an end to the nineteenth-century parliamentarism, they in fact opened a new phase, that of party-based parliaments[51]. This development continued for most of the XX century, albeit with phases of resistance and backsliding – sometimes tragic in nature, such as the transformation of some European liberal regimes into dictatorships – but it ultimately resulted in a new type of parliamentarism. The new model recognised the existence of the political parties – originally considered incompatible with the free mandate doctrine – as a necessary precondition for the functioning of parliaments[52]. Legislative assemblies very soon incorporated the changes under way, amending their own rules and formally regulating the existence of parliamentary groups, that is the "projections" of the political parties within the parliaments. Membership of one of these groups became a mandatory requirement for MPs in many parliaments.

The parliamentary geography was profoundly transformed. Parliamentary hemicycles were now divided into various segments, whose breadth varied depending on the size of the different political groups. Parliamentary plenary halls became the visual representation of the political system of each country. Parliaments thus confirmed their 'encyclopaedic' calling not only as the place of democratic political debate, but also as a synthetic and immediate representation of something that would have been otherwise quite elusive, i.e. the national political system.

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[50] M. Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State, New York, Wiley,1954, (originally published in French, 1951).

[51] On the literature about the shift from the "Gentlemen's club Parliament", to the "Representative Parliament" (dominated by the political parties), see N. Lupo, Le metamorfosi del Parlamento, in "Rassegna di diritto pubblico europeo", 1, 2019.

[52] The parliamentarisation of political parties was part of a wider shift in the consideration of political parties by the European constitutional systems from the first half of the XIX century to the second half of the XX century. It is in fact, an aspect of the Inkorporierung of parties, according to the categories introduced by H. Triepel, who distinguished four stages in this development: Bekämpfung, Ignorierung, Anerkennung und Legalisiertung, Inkorporierung (H. Triepel, Die Staatsverfassung und die politischen Parteien, Berlin, 1930. On this theory, see P. Ridola, Democrazia rappresentativa e parlamentarismo, Torino, Giappichelli, 2014, 1-22.

The parliamentarisation of political parties also had another important effect connected with the processing of knowledge.

Parties are not only machines for participation in electoral competitions. In order to win the voters' support they propose political programs shaped by comprehensive ideological visions. But ideologies are not only a matter of values, they are rooted in interpretations of the world aimed to give responses to the main political issues of the age. In order to do so, party ideologies must be able to produce politically qualified knowledge reusable by the members of the organization. This is anyway the function of the XX century party as "collective intellectual"[53].

The prevalence of the new political parties led to another major development: professionalization in politics. The parliamentarian ceased to be an 'amateur' and became a 'specialist' in politics on the basis of knowledge acquired in the course of an often long political career. On the other hand, this new type of politician had to acquire an increasingly detailed 'technical' knowledge on specific areas of intervention by the public authorities.

The institutional environment in which these new politicians developed their skills was offered by the standing parliamentary committees. The twentieth century, especially after the first world conflict, almost everywhere saw the emergence of the "big government" and the shaping of executive powers in the form of large specialised administrations. In order to keep abreast of these transformations, parliaments also had to adapt, introducing the innovation of permanent committees able to follow and 'mirror' the work of state bureaucracies. This implied almost everywhere abandoning the traditional organisation of legislative work under which draft laws were examined by ad hoc committees prior to the debate in the plenary. A way of working that prevented the concentration of parliamentary expertise in specialised sectorial committees. Many of the European legislative assemblies in the course of the twentieth century decided to establish such committees. This development was accurately described by Max Weber, who emphasized its importance for a well-functioning parliamentary form of government. For him the professionalization of politics through the day-by-day work of parliamentarians in the standing committees was crucial in order to offset the enormous power accumulated by ministerial burocracies[54]. Expertise and knowledge were the crucial resources at stake in this new division of powers.

The parliamentary encyclopaedia was thus enriched by a dual analytical grid. On the one hand, the organisational structure of the political groups; on the other hand, the specialised standing committees. The coincidence, even in time, between these two developments was anything but casual: Only the emergence of political parties and their projection in the elected assemblies – the parliamentary groups – made it possible for parliaments to entrust the preparatory stages of their decisions to permanent committees with a stable allocation of competence[55]. The premise on which that solution was based was the representativeness of the committees, the fact that they reflected, to a

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[53] See on this subject the classical considerations of A. Gramsci, Quaderno 13. Noterelle sulla politica di Machiavelli, in Quaderni del Carcere, a cura di V. Gerratana, Torino, Einaudi, 1977, vol. III.

[54] See M. Weber, Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland. Zur politischen Kritik des Beamtentums und Parteiwesens (1918), Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 2011, 23 ss. Of course, on the professionalization of politics and its consequences see also the famous lecture Politik als Beruf (1919), Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 2009. For the debate about the role of parliaments in the new German State, see. C. Senigaglia, The debate on democratization and parliament in Germany from 1871 to 1918, in "Parliaments, Estates and Representation", 2020, 40,3, 290-307.

[55] K von Beyme, Die parlamentarische Demokratie. Entstehung und Funktionsweise 1789-1999, 4. Aufl., Wiesbaden, Springer, 2014, 182-183.

smaller extent, the political composition of the plenum and the relative power relations between majority and opposition.

The link between party and committee organization in parliaments is therefore very strong: "It is in relation to the formation of standing committees that the modern party is recognised by Parliament"[56]. The new committees, composed on the basis of the strength of the parliamentary groups, formed a 'system'[57]. It was precisely in order to form a 'system' that the committees had to become permanent bodies with a stable remit of competence. The new systemic organisation of committees is central to understanding the encyclopaedic pattern of modern parliaments. This major transformation occurred first in the US Congress in the first half of the nineteenth century, whereas in continental European Parliaments it took place in the first decades of the following century[58].

Parliamentary committees constitute an integrated system capable to deal with any subject of legislation. This system allows a vertical integration between the competent ministry, the corresponding parliamentary committee and the social or professional groups referring to that sector. This model was, for example, evident in Italy during the first decades of the Republic, not least on the basis of the power, granted to committees by the constitution, to directly approve legislative measures without the need for a vote of the plenary. This possibility has been used intensively in practice and encouraged the expansion of micro-legislation aimed at circumscribed social or economic groups.

The committee system is at the heart of Parliament's cognitive machine[59]. This fundamental cognitive function finds its ideal environment in the parliamentary committees for a variety of reasons. The first of them has a bearing on the stability of these bodies, which enables their members to acquire considerable expertise over time on the matters falling within the committees' remit. Expertise which, of course, often accumulates with the scientific and professional expertise already independently held by parliamentarians, which are normally assigned to a given committee precisely because of their background. This synergy creates a virtuous circle which strengthens, on the one hand, the political professionalism of members of Parliament and, on the other hand, the cognitive depth of parliamentary procedures. However, the committee environment does not only contribute to the formation of individual experienced parliamentarians. In particular, it encourages the socialisation of

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[56] L. Elia, Commissioni parlamentari, in Enciclopedia del diritto, Vol. VII, Milano, Giuffré, 1960, 896.

[57] By comparing the different models of parliamentary committees, C. Fasone rightly defines these models as 'systems', namely structures organised on the basis of a certain logic, for their different purposes. These structureal characteristics are capable of deeply affecting the form of government of each country (see C. Fasone, Sistemi di commissioni parlamentari e forma di governo, Cedam, 2012, 147: according to Fasone the system of parliamentary committees is defined as "the coherent and rational organisation of all parliamentary committees specialised in their mutual relations, in relations with other parliamentary bodies and with the government").

[58] In the US, the adoption of the system of standing committees (and of a very complex network of subcommittees) was strongly supported by the political parties' predominance in the Congress. G.W. Cox e M.D. McCubbins, Legislative Leviathan. Party Government in the House, Los Angeles, Berkeley, 1993, p. 159. Seniority and expertise, however, were and are still crucial for participation in the committees: " "however large or small a committee, it is important that those nominated to it should serve for long enough to build up a sufficient knowledge to enable them to sustain an informed dialogue with official and non-official experts, and that their attendance should be regular": W. McKay e C.W. Johnson, Parliament and Congress: Representation and Scrutiny in the Twenty-First Century, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 365. The importance of the Committees in gathering "usable knowledge" at the benefit of Congress work is emphasized by J. Cooper, The Origins of the Standing Committees and the Development of the Modern House, Houston, Rice university Studies, 1970.In the French National Assembly, the introduction of specialised standing committees was adopted in 1902, while in 1910 a new reform of the standing orders called for a composition of committees in proportion to the size of the political groups. In the United Kingdom, and in particular in the House of Commons, there is still no system of standing committees with legislative competence. The tendency in the legislative process to enhance the role of the Full House at the expense of the committee stage continues to prevail within the 'mother of parliaments': Westminster entrusts the preliminary examination of draft laws to ad hoc committees or to the Committee of the Whole House. However, committees of a stable nature were introduced by the regulatory reforms of 1978 with the aim of ensuring parliamentary scrutiny of the government's work. This was the case for the Departmental Select Committees responsible for monitoring the activities of the main ministries.

[59] « Les commissions sont en effet des structures adaptées à l'acquisition d'expertise. Elles ont l'expérience des lois passées portant sur un sujet similaire. Elles regroupent des élus maitrisant le sujet. Elles ont une plus grande souplesse organisationnelle que la séance ce qui leur permet d'adapter leur travaux, par exemple le nombre d'auditions requis, aux spécificités de l'enjeu»: C. Benoit, O. Rozenberg, Les Legislatives studies: de l'art de couper des buches et de collectionner les barils de porc, in O. Rozenberg, E. Thiers (eds), Traité d'études parlementaires, Bruxelles, Bruylant, 2018, 324.

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parliamentarians belonging to the same committee and, therefore, necessarily also the sharing of their knowledge. It is precisely on the basis of these assumptions that committees are also the specific place where fact-finding procedures are normally carried out, such as investigations and hearings enabling Parliament to acquire data and information from external sources, both scientific and other. The flow of knowledge produced by each committee is then put into circulation – with encyclopaedic dynamics – through the complex relationships linking each committee to the other committees in the system. These dynamics unfolds through different channels, such as the opinions that a committee may be required to give on subjects primarily assigned to the remit of other committees; or the holding of joint meetings between different committees. These procedures articulate the "synapsis" of the parliamentary encyclopaedia through which the representative assemblies are able to deal with the various topics they are examining.

It is interesting to note that, in connection with the emergence of this kind of "expert Parliament", the internal knowledge systems supporting parliamentary work have also evolved. In addition to parliamentary libraries, research services were set up in many national parliaments. These structures provide and elaborate expertise for the benefit of individual Members or of parliamentary committees dealing with issues of a high technical complexity. Again, the US Congress opened the way, with the creation in 1914 of the Legislative Reference Service within the Library of the Congress. The Service was created with the intent of employing competent researchers to gather data and to "render such data serviceable to Congress and committees and members thereof"[60]. The service was renamed in 1970 as the Congressional Research Service. It currently employs more than 400 policy analysts, attorneys and information professionals working across a variety of disciplines in one of CRS's five research divisions[61].

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[60] J.Y. Cole, The Congressional Research Service, in J.Y Cole and J. Aikin (eds.), Encyclopaedia of the Library of the Congress: for Congress, the Nation and the World, Washington, The Library of the Congress, 2004, 25.

[61] Congressional Research Service, Organizational Structure: https://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/about/structure.html. For a description of the key component elements of contemporary parliamentary research services, see Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Guidelines for parliamentary research services, 2015, https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/services-for-parliaments/publications/guidelines-for-parliamentary-research-services-en.pdf

5. The parliamentary encyclopaedia in the digital era

The twenty-first century seems to pose a deadly challenge to the ideal of an encyclopaedic arrangement of knowledge. The digital era seems to repudiate the ancient ideal of a circular knowledge synthesis, promoting in its place a "network" model open to potentially infinite developments and interconnections[62]. The Internet is the environment in which this model has been established and has evolved. This dimension is extremely complex and, although built by man, is such as to elude any attempt at systematic organization. The web appears as a new, enormous *ingens sylva*, such as that imagined by Giovan Battista Vico[63], that extends itself to the far horizon of the deep web recesses. In this new dimension, internet users' need to find data and information is met mainly through search engines, among which Google has, as is well known, assumed absolute primacy, to the point of imposing a true global monopoly (at least in the western world) in the field of information mediation. This has highlighted the problem of the transparency of search criteria, starting with the famous algorithms that determine the ranking of queries' outcomes.

One of the "side effects" of these developments is the seemingly irreversible crisis of great traditional encyclopaedias. The symbolic date of this crisis is 14 March 2012, when the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* announced the end of its paper publications. Some encyclopaedias continue to be published online only, but often with dramatically reduced entry formats compared to the past. On the other hand, the crisis in classical encyclopaedias has led to the emergence of a new encyclopaedic model based on radically different criteria. I refer to the great success of Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia continuously updated by users and available to date in 174 different languages[64]. Wikipedia is today the fourth most visited website in the world: Millions of users use it every day to get quick information on the most diverse topics. The limits of this project are rather clear today, twenty years after its launch: The progressive limitation of the contributors to a small "wikipaedian club", the partiality in the linguistic distribution of voices, and serious gender imbalances (only relatively few biographies on Wikipedia are about women). There are also countless entries which, as expressly stated in the text, show inadequacies from the point of view of the reliability of the sources supporting the articles. Despite these shortcomings, Wikipedia certainly represents a cognitive tool of the utmost interest from the point of view of the values of 'participatory democracy' it embodies. This model certainly poses a radical challenge to the traditional encyclopaedic scheme, particularly in two respects: the refusal of an authorial approach in favour of a bottom-up and spontaneous participation in the drafting

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[62] M. Castells, Communication Power, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, 33.

[63] G.B. Vico, La Scienza Nuova (1744), in Opere filosofiche, Firenze, Sansoni, 1969, 344.

[64] On Wikipedia, see A. Lih, The Wikipedia Revolution: How a Bunch of Nobodies Created the World's Greatest Encyclopedia, Hyperion Books, 2009, N. Tkacs, Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2014, P. Burke, A Social History of Knowledge II. From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia, cit., M. Profitt (ed.), Leveraging Wikipedia, connecting communities of knowledge, Chicago, ALA, 2018.

of the entries; the absence of any underlying hierarchical organisation in the selection and arrangements of the articles.

How has the parliamentary 'encyclopaedia' reacted to these developments?

It appears that parliaments have so far taken a rather conservative approach and have chosen to stick to the traditional structures. This applies, for example, to the "political encyclopaedia" of political groups, which still remains firmly a criterion for organising legislative assemblies even when its external reference – political parties – are in a deep crisis, at least if we look at the classic model of the party as a mass organisation, made up of ideologically homogeneous activists with pervasive territorial roots. A type of party that no longer exists, if only with few exceptions[65]. As a result, the parties did not disappear, but turned into much smaller organisations focusing essentially on two functions: Participation in election campaigns – which have become 'permanent' and no longer limited to particular stages of political life; presence and action in institutions, first and foremost legislative assemblies and executive bodies. One of the consequences of this development is a phenomenon which seems to some extent to be a return to the past: The progressive coincidence between the political party and its parliamentary projection, in the form of a political group[66]. Parliaments therefore today act as catalysts for political representation, in the sense of being the places where representation takes concrete shape. While political public debate has become communication and entertainment[67], it is also true that its anchoring to the parliamentary dimension, where power relations are measured though the interactions between the different political groups, seems necessary as ever before in order to make politics understandable and accountable[68].

The same conservative trend can be discerned with reference to the system of parliamentary committees. In many legislative assemblies, committees remain fundamentally organized according to the structure of the ministries in the national government[69].

The "resistance" (and also the resilience) of the parliamentary encyclopaedia in such an apparently highly anti-encyclopaedic era is not only explained by the traditional conservative spirit of the parliamentary institutions. Rather, it appears to be linked to the fundamental function of representing pluralism in the growing complexity of our societies. Such function rejects the idea of an inevitable chaotic fragmentation of our societies and incorporates the need of providing common and organized platforms where the key political choices can be adequately deliberated by the democratic institutions.

 This need for an encyclopaedic approach is confirmed by the strategies underlying the action of some great international organisations dealing with public policies. This is the case of the United Nations, whose General Assembly approved in 2014, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the

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[65] T. Paguntke, Party Organizational Linkage: Parties without Firm Social Roots?, in K.R. Luther and F.Mueller-Rommel (eds.) Political Parties in the New Europe: Political and Analytical Challenges, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 43-62.

[66] On these developments, see R. Dalton, M.P. Wattenberg (eds), Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

[67] B. Manin, Principes du gouvernement représentatif, Paris, Calmann-Lévy. 1995, has defined this new situation as « the democracy of the public »

[68] See the analysis of M. Luciani on the nature of the crisis of representative institutions. Luciani maintains that the real origins of this crisis should be traced in a "crisis of the represented" as vanishing of the collective identities (that, in turn, reflects the crisis of individual identities as consequence of the decline of social roles): against this backdrop, "faced with the disintegration of the represented, parliament is one of the few places where one can try to restore coherence and unity to a pluralism that is enormously disjointed. Representation, in other words, is an essential tool for giving a political form to civil society", M. Luciani, Il Parlamento negli anni Novanta, in L. Violante (ed.), Storia d'Italia. Annali 17. Il Parlamento, Torino, Einaudi, 2001, 423.

[69] However, there are countries where parliaments have tried to introduce new committees with a cross-cutting remit like committees for the future (Finland) or for the technological assessment of the legislative measures (UK, France).

broad lines of public policy action, which commit all acceding States to 17 objectives, which are in turn divided into 169 sub-targets[70]. Similar programmes of action have been developed by the European Institutions with the launch in 2020 of the Next generation EU Strategy that provides the financial framework for the policies to be adopted by the Member States to overcome the economic crisis caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. The EU Plan sets out few broad objectives (green transition, digital transition, equity and social and territorial cohesion, macroeconomic stability) that will be implemented through the member states' national plans. The whole policy- and decision-making process (and its implementation) will be submitted to an annual review through the European Semester mechanism.

These initiatives seem to confirm the prophetic intuition of G.H. Wells, who had imagined the creation of a "world encyclopaedia" in the new century to replace the old national encyclopaedias. A new encyclopaedia to be intended not as a "miscellany", but as "a concentration, a clarification and a synthesis[71] "

Adapting this nascent world encyclopaedia to national contexts and needs may be the next mission of the parliamentary assemblies. This goal has much to do with the need to find forms of democratic transition from the first phase of "wild" globalisation to a new equilibrium between the national dimension and global interdependence. Responses to this challenge can only come from the bottom up, from national spheres. In this context, parliaments need to update their encyclopaedic patterns in order to be able to intercept the new formats that are currently shaping public policies. This entails, for example, rethinking the system of parliamentary committees. A major step forward would be a radical reform on the basis of the new contemporary public policies emerging at the global level (environmental sustainability, digitalisation, fight against climate change, women empowerment, etc.). As we have seen, these are the categories used today by great supranational organisations to design the global policies of the future. Moreover, in order to remain the living encyclopaedia of democratic politics, Parliaments' approach to knowledge should adopt some of the suggestions deriving from the wikipedian experience. This implies the abandoning of the traditional closed and self-sufficient model, in order to open up the parliamentary encyclopaedic pattern to the participation not only of experts but also of ordinary citizens[72]. In this field, there are Parliaments with very interesting experiences, for example with E-petitions, which allow a given number of citizens to put forward certain topics to the attention of the Government and the Parliament[73]. Some legislative assemblies have also created very advanced forms of public consultation by parliamentary committees[74].

Finally, interesting experiments have taken place in some countries with the insertion of deliberative democracy processes within parliamentary decision-making, involving citizens in the setting of the

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[70] See United Nations, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

[71] H.G. Wells, World Brain, Methuen, 1938, 58.

[72] On these developments, see R.Rubio and R.Vela, Open Parliaments around the World. Open Parliaments Tools in Comparative Perspective, Luiss School of Government Working Papers, 49, 2019. https://sog.luiss.it/sites/sog.luiss.it/files/WP%2049%20Rubio-Vela.pdf >

[73] R. Lindner, U. Riehm, Electronic Petitions and Institutional Modernization. International Parliamentary E-Petition Systems in Comparative Perspective in "eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government", 2009, 1, 10.

[74] C. Leston-Bandeira and A. Walker, Parliament and Public Engagement in C. Leston-Bandeira and L. Thomson, Exploring Parliament, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, 308

parliamentary agenda and in the formulation of proposals for parliamentary vote[75]. Deliberative processes can help enlarge the cognitive basis of parliaments. They usually allow participants to share not only their preferences but also their knowledge, with the effect of bringing out the implicit knowledge held by the people. This appears to be a very important feature in an age in which there is a growing reaction against "expertocracy" that demands to find new ways of combining specialized knowledge with common sense. Parliaments can be at the centre of efforts in this direction.

The encyclopaedic paradigm is therefore likely to remain relevant for the structure and the work of representative assemblies also in the future. However, the full adaptation of this paradigm to the contemporary "infosphere" requires a quantum leap in innovation and imagination [76]. For contemporary Parliaments, the challenge is centred on the problem of how to combine some of the inalienable principles of parliamentarism (free mandate, national representation, procedural autonomy) with the need to break the wall of separation with the citizens through new open and inclusive procedures. A move aimed at rendering the deliberative dimension of our democracies more inclusive and articulated. In order to achieve this objective, the new parliamentary encyclopaedia has to reinterpret in our time the three great principles that inspired the Diderot's *Encyclopédie*: memory, reason and imagination.

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75 For an overview of the recent experiences aimed at establishing a permanent or ongoing deliberative structures that complement the existing institutions of representative decision making see OECD, Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en.

76 The key role of imagination for democratic representation has been rightly emphasized by N. Urbinati, Representative Democracy, cit., 122: "The nature of representativity as reflective adhesion (of the representative to the represented) cannot be understood without contemplating the role of imagination because, as we have seen, representativity does not pertain to an existential or factual presence to be replicated or mimicked, but to a presence through ideas and communication that the political actors (representatives and represented) create".

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Luiss School of Government welcomes unsolicited working papers in English and Italian from interested scholars and practitioners. Papers are submitted to anonymous peer review. Manuscripts can be submitted by sending them at sog@luiss.it . Authors should prepare complete text and a separate second document with information identifying the author. Papers should be between 8,000 and 12,000 words (excluding notes and references). All working papers are expected to begin with an abstract of 150 words or less, which should summarise the main arguments and conclusions of the article. Manuscripts should be single spaced, 11 point font, and in Times New Roman.

Details of the author's institutional affiliation, full postal and email addresses and other contact information must be included on a separate cover sheet. Any acknowledgements should be included on the cover sheet as should a note of the exact length of the article. A short biography of up to 75 words should also be submitted.

All diagrams, charts and graphs should be referred to as figures and consecutively numbered. Tables should be kept to a minimum and contain only essential data. Each figure and table must be given an Arabic numeral, followed by a heading, and be referred to in the text. Tables should be placed at the end of the file and prepared using tabs. Any diagrams or maps should be supplied separately in uncompressed .TIF or .JPEG formats in individual files. These should be prepared in black and white. Tints should be avoided, use open patterns instead. If maps and diagrams cannot be prepared electronically, they should be presented on good quality white paper. If mathematics are included, 1/2 is preferred.

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