

Geographical Representation in  
Parliament:  
Electoral Incentives and Party Control



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Parliament:  
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PhD Dissertation

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# Abbreviations

DiD	Difference-in-differences
GR	Geographical representation
MMD	Multi-member district
MMM	Mixed-member majoritarian system
MP	Member of parliament
PMB	Private members' bill
PPG	Parliamentary party group
PQ	Parliamentary question
PR	Proportional representation
SMD	Single-member district



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# Preface

This report provides a summary of the thesis ‘Geographical Representation in Parliament: Electoral Incentives and Party Control’. In addition to the report, the thesis consists of three self-contained, single-authored articles, as listed in Table 0.1. Throughout the summary, I use Paper 1<sub>ei</sub> (electoral incentives), 2<sub>fr</sub> (floor rules), and 3<sub>rs</sub> (re-selection) as shorthands to refer to the articles. In this summary, I present an overview and discussion of the theoretical arguments, methodological approaches, and main findings of the papers.

**Table 0.1.** Overview of the dissertation

Article	Title
Paper 1 <sub>ei</sub>	Electoral Incentives and Geographical Representation: Evidence from an Electoral Reform. <i>Legislative Studies Quarterly</i> .
Paper 2 <sub>fr</sub>	Geographical Representation on the Floor: How Parliamentary Rules Shape Legislative Speeches. <i>Under review</i> .
Paper 3 <sub>rs</sub>	Geographical Representation and Re-Election Prospects in Party-Centred Contexts. <i>Under review</i> .



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

As the etymological origins of the word suggest, at the roots of the concept of representation is the idea of making someone or something present. In the political domain, representation is often conceptualised as the act of ‘making present some aspect of a person or group’s interests, opinions, perspectives, or simply assents or dissents, in a deliberative or decision-making arena when that person or members of that group are not literally present’ (Mansbridge 2020, 48, see also Pitkin 1967). In this light, members of parliament (MPs) in representative democracies should make voters present in the legislative body. While some constitutions explicitly state that legislators represent the whole nation, in almost every democratic country in the world MPs are elected by groups of citizens who live in a concentrated area. In other words, representatives are elected by (i.e., have an electoral connection with) voters in specific constituencies.<sup>1</sup> Hence, one relevant group to make present is the people who vote in the district. One way that representatives can do this is to mention specific places within their districts in their parliamentary activities.

Representing local constituencies, which in this dissertation I call *geographical representation* (GR), is an example of an ideal typical model of political representation, namely dyadic representation. This model focuses on the individual MP–constituents dyad and portrays legislators as district delegates who should represent their constituents’ preferences (Miller and Stokes 1963; Pitkin 1967). By contrast, the partisan or collective model of representation identifies the core of political representation in the relationship between parties and voters (Thomassen and Andeweg 2004). According to the partisan model, which can be traced back to the work of Schattschneider and the responsible party model, parties formulate different policy platforms, and voters form preferences and hold parties accountable on the basis of those platforms

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1. Israel and the Netherlands are two notable exceptions that use one nation-wide constituency.

(APSA 1950; Schattschneider 1942). Individual legislators, meanwhile, are primarily accountable to their parties. In Sartori's (1968) words, 'citizens in modern democracies are represented *through* and *by* parties'.

These models of representation have important implications for the functioning of democratic institutions (Fleming 2020). To begin with, the two models reflect a tension between two visions of accountability (Carey 2008). Partisan representation is linked to collective accountability, according to which parties are accountable to voters. By contrast, dyadic representation highlights the importance of legislators' individual accountability to voters. Geographical representation, and dyadic representation more generally, may pose a challenge to collective accountability. By shifting voters' attention from parties' platforms to individual MPs' behaviour, the connection between voting decisions and government performance becomes looser, thus undermining the electorate's ability to hold parties and governments accountable (Powell and Whitten 1993).

Another implication is that if legislators invest more in their personal reputations among local constituents than in promoting the party record, parties' policy platforms might become weaker and less coherent, and thus less attractive to voters (Proksch and Slapin 2015). When geographical representation leads to disunity in parliament, it can have a detrimental impact on a party's electoral performance (Kam 2009). In addition, legislators' local orientation can increase spending on narrowly targeted public goods (such as infrastructure and subsidies) at the expense of broad programmes (such as education and welfare) (Milesi-Ferretti et al. 2002; Persson and Tabellini 2003). Finally, voters like geographical representation and expect MPs to deliver it (Bengtsson and Wass 2011; Pedersen 2020; Vivyan and Wagner 2016). However, when a mismatch between citizens' and legislators' representational preferences occurs, voters report lower levels of both trust in politicians (Bøggild 2020) and satisfaction with democracy (André and Depauw 2017).

Although geographical representation has long been studied in political science, two questions are still unsettled in the literature. First, the determinants of geographical representation are unclear. While geographical representation is often considered a re-election strategy, existing research has found mixed and contrasting results on the effect of electoral incentives (Crisp et al. 2004; Gagliarducci et al. 2011; Papp 2016), and has reported high levels of geographical representation in contexts where such incentives are limited (Geese and Martínez-Cantó 2022; Russo 2011). Moreover, previous studies have not explored whether parliamentary rules affect MPs' opportunities to represent local



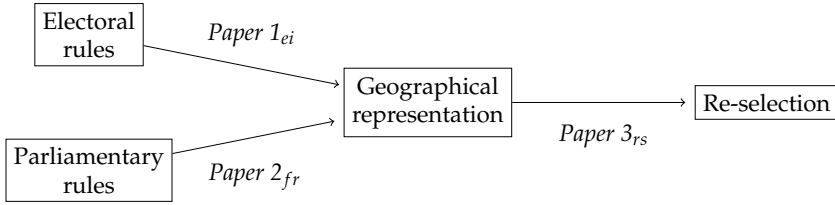
constituents. Parliamentary rules are an important institutional dimension to consider since they strike a balance between individual legislators' rights and parties' prerogatives in parliament.

As parliamentary rules define the level of control that parties can exert over their MPs, this aspect is linked to the second unsettled question: that is, whether parties encourage or constrain legislators' efforts to deliver geographical representation. While traditionally dyadic representation has been considered to be in tension with party representation (Thomassen and Andeweg 2004), it has also been argued that geographical and party representation are not necessarily incompatible. In particular, when legislators do not disrupt party unity on the floor, geographical representation might supplement party representation (Kam 2009; Zittel et al. 2019). Yet we lack empirical evidence on whether parties reward or punish legislators' geographical activities.

In this thesis, therefore, I investigate two related research questions that address these two unresolved issues. The first is whether electoral and parliamentary institutions affect geographical representation. The second is whether parties reward or sanction MPs for representing their constituencies in parliament with better or worse re-selection and re-election prospects. Figure 1.1 shows in which paper each of these questions is examined. Two of the papers focus on the causes of geographical representation (Papers 1<sub>ei</sub> and 2<sub>fr</sub>), while one focuses on its consequences (3<sub>rs</sub>).

Starting from the causes of geographical representation, the literature has provided two main answers to the question of why legislators engage in geographical representation: electoral incentives and intrinsic motivation. While the first explanation points to legislators' desire to be re-elected, drawing on the literature on the personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995; Mayhew 1974), the second suggests that legislators might deliver geographical representation out of a sense of duty, produced by socialisation or social norms, or inner satisfaction (Giger et al. 2020). I contribute to this debate by critically reconsidering how the extant literature has tried to uncover the effects of electoral incentives on legislative behaviour. In particular, I contend that the empirical designs that have been used cannot credibly identify the effects of electoral incentives, mainly due to the presence of potentially different selection mechanisms across electoral rules.

Additionally, I examine another potential driver of legislators' geographical focus, namely the lack of party control. In particular, I leverage variation in floor access rules to study whether the degree of party control affects MPs' proclivity to deliver geographical representation in



**Figure 1.1.** Thesis overview

legislative speeches. Starting from the assumption that in parliamentary debates parties use floor access control to maximise their collective benefits, I posit that parliamentary rules that give more discretion to individual MPs relative to party groups foster geographical representation by allowing legislators to self-select into specific debates and by increasing their independence in drafting speech content.

Turning to the second question, in order to understand how parties assess MPs' efforts to represent their constituencies I focus on party-centred contexts, where parties control legislators' careers and reap only limited benefits from legislators' efforts to represent local constituents. More specifically, I investigate the consequences of geographical representation on MPs' re-selection and re-election, thus focusing on the most fundamental reward that party leaders have at their disposal. I propose a theory of intra-party division of labour regarding geographical representation, according to which parties delegate the task of representing local constituents to members who have more time, more expertise, and more opportunities to do so. Furthermore, I argue that the division of labour also applies to the types of parliamentary activities employed, as party leaders might prefer written questions rather than bills as tools to deliver geographical representation in order not to dilute the party brand.

To shed more light on the relationship between electoral incentives, party control, and geographical representation, I focus on Italy as a case. As I discuss in Chapter 3, Italy constitutes a suitable case to test general arguments about the effects of electoral and parliamentary institutions on legislators' representational focus and about the consequences of their efforts to represent local constituents for re-selection and re-election prospects.

Having outlined the research questions of this dissertation, it is relevant to discuss why electoral institutions, parliamentary rules, and re-(s)election prospects are important dimensions to consider when study-

ing the drivers and consequences of geographical representation. I argue that answering the questions presented above can have important implications for institutional reforms and accountability. To begin with, electoral institutions represent the most studied explanation of constituency orientation (Tromborg and Schwindt-Bayer 2019). By contrast, a more limited body of work has focused on parliamentary rules, which have often been seen as emanating from electoral rules (Proksch and Slapin 2015). Yet, importantly from an institutional design perspective, one thing that electoral and parliamentary rules have in common is that they can be changed relatively easily. The findings of this thesis therefore illuminate whether the representational focus can be institutionally shaped by reforming electoral and parliamentary rules. As the handbook of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance puts it, '[w]hile many aspects of a country's political framework are often specified in the constitution and can thus be difficult to amend, electoral system change often only involves new legislation' (Reynolds et al. 2005, p. 5).<sup>2</sup> The Italian electoral trajectory (which I describe in detail below) demonstrates that electoral institutions can be reformed.

Similarly, parliamentary rules can be changed by amending standing orders through a majority vote. Indeed, there is evidence of substantial change in parliamentary rules in a number of different contexts (Shomer 2015; Sieberer et al. 2020; Zubek 2015). This allows me to draw some policy implications, which I present in the conclusion. Additionally, as argued above, parliamentary rules capture a crucial dimension of interest to scholars of parties and parliaments – party control. By studying how MPs' behaviour in a specific parliamentary activity responds to different degrees of partisan control, I provide one of the first direct tests of the effect of party control.

Moreover, I focus on legislators' electoral prospects as a consequence of geographical representation. In party-centred contexts, voters cannot affect individual candidates' electoral chances directly. When voters can only vote for parties and not for candidates, such as in closed-list proportional representation, parties mediate the relationship between voters and MPs. As a result, accountability is affected by how parties determine the composition and the ranking of their electoral lists. Considering citizens' preferences for geographical representation, it is important to explore whether party leaders take legislators' local orienta-

2. Albeit rare, there are cases of electoral systems that have been included in a country's constitution. An example is the South African constitution (1996), which prescribes that the electoral formula should 'result, in general, in proportional representation' (art. 46).

tions into account when deciding whom to re-select and offer favourable positions on their list.

## **Structure of the summary report**

The rest of the summary is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I outline my theoretical arguments, showing how they relate to the existing literature. Chapter 3 details the data sources, how I conceptualise and measure geographical representation, and the research designs that I use in the different papers. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the central findings of this thesis. Finally, Chapter 5 summarises the main results and discusses their implications; in light of the findings (and of their limitations), I reflect on the contribution to the literature and I suggest directions for future research.

## Chapter 2

# Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework of the dissertation. The chapter is divided into three parts, which reflect different steps in the process of political representation. In the first step, I explore how MPs navigate the incentive structure created by the electoral environment by calibrating their geographical focus. My main argument is that the existing literature has assumed that electoral institutions affect legislators' behaviour only through electoral incentives, neglecting to consider the impact of political selection. In the second step, once MPs have been elected, they act within the constraints of the parliamentary institution. Parliamentary rules delimit MPs' opportunities to be locally oriented by striking a balance between individual legislators' rights and the stringency of party control. Based on the implications of the rules that allocate floor time, I argue that stronger party control reduces MPs' opportunities to engage in geographical representation. Finally, MPs' efforts to represent geographical constituents can be consequential for their careers in parliament and affect their re-selection and re-election chances. In party-centred environments, this largely depends on the party leadership, which is in charge of selecting candidates and ranking them on the ballot. In this regard, I argue that geographical representation can be a risky re-election strategy which in some cases can impair MPs' electoral prospects. In particular, I propose a theory according to which party leaders sanction or reward geographical representation based on an intra-party division of labour. While for MPs the process just described is not linear and its steps cannot be separated, for the sake of presentational clarity, splitting these stages allows for more stringent theoretical reasoning.

## 2.1 Electoral incentives and geographical representation

Political scientists have long studied the effects of electoral systems. Building on Duverger's (1951) path-breaking contribution, a large body of work has investigated how electoral institutions influence party system fragmentation (Clark and Golder 2006; Cox 1997; Fiva and Folke 2016; Shugart and Taagepera 2017). Electoral systems have also been identified as a crucial determinant of many other macro political phenomena such as party system polarisation (Dow 2011; Matakos et al. 2016), turnout (Blais and Aarts 2006; Cox et al. 2016), economic and fiscal policies (Iversen and Soskice 2006; Persson and Tabellini 2003; Rogowski and Kayser 2002), and corruption (Chang and Golden 2007).

Another strain of research, meanwhile, has taken a micro approach to studying the impact of electoral rules on individual politicians' behaviour. This research agenda has usually adopted the framework proposed by Mayhew (1974), starting from the analytical assumption that legislators are single-minded re-election seekers. This does not imply that re-election is the only aim MPs pursue; rather, it underscores that re-election represents a proximate goal that virtually all politicians have since it serves as the precondition for attaining any other possible goal, such as influencing public policy. Yet which behavioural strategy better supports the re-election goal hinges on the electoral institutions in place. In particular, electoral rules determine the personal vote incentives; that is, the extent to which candidates need to rely on their personal reputations rather than those of their parties in order to win a seat. The concept of personal vote captures the part of electoral support which stems from candidates' personal characteristics and activities, rather than from partisan affiliation, voters' socioeconomic characteristics, and the state of the economy (Cain et al. 1984). In a seminal paper, Carey and Shugart (1995) explored how personal vote incentives vary in different electoral environments. When party leaders control candidates' rank on the ballot and voters are restricted to a single vote for one party, cultivating the party's reputation constitutes the optimal strategy for winning re-election. Conversely, as the power to elect individual representatives shifts from party leaders to voters, the value of the personal vote grows.

This theory has important implications for MPs' behaviour. In contexts where the electoral potential for personal votes is high, legislators have the incentives to engage in personalised representation, where a stronger emphasis is placed on individual politicians and their pref-

erences compared to parties and their policy platforms (Pedersen and Rahat 2021). Focusing on MPs' representational repertoire, several behavioural strategies are theoretically associated with personalised representation. Examples of such behaviours include dissent in votes on the floor, individual legislative activities, and communication and campaign strategies. Research has thus focused on whether personalised behaviours are responsive to different electoral contexts.

For instance, deviations from the party line in roll-call votes can be a way for an MP to demonstrate independence from the party and to cultivate personalised electoral support. In a cross-country study, Carey (2007) reports that candidate-centred electoral systems significantly decrease party unity. Analysing MPs' voting behaviour in Germany, which employs mixed-member electoral rules, Sieberer (2010) shows that legislators elected in the majoritarian tier are more likely to cast a rebel vote on the floor compared to parliamentarians elected in the list tier. Other studies have shown that the use of individual parliamentary activities (Crisp et al. 2004; Høyland and Søyland 2019) and of campaign strategies (Catalinac 2016; Schürmann and Stier 2023; Zittel and Gschwend 2008) are affected by the electoral environment.

Constituency-oriented activities represent another example of personalised behaviours that MPs employ to garner electoral support, as local orientation helps them show that they care about their district (Bowler 2010; Chiru 2018; Pedersen and vanHeerde-Hudson 2019). Two main arguments have been proposed to connect geographical representation to electoral incentives. First, in contexts of higher electoral accountability, such as single-member district (SMD) systems, voters are better able to monitor their representatives and to be aware of their local efforts (Carey and Shugart 1995; Heitshusen et al. 2005; Lancaster 1986). Moreover, in smaller and less populated districts (as SMDs usually are, compared to multi-member districts, MMDs), MPs can develop stronger communication channels with their constituents, who, in turn, might expect their representatives to be particularly responsive (Dockendorff 2020). While previous studies on the influence of electoral rules on legislators' local orientations, mainly based on mixed systems, report mixed findings (Papp 2016; Russo 2021a; Zittel et al. 2019), the standard expectation is summarised in the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 1** *MPs' propensity to provide geographical representation is higher in single-member districts than in closed-list multi-member districts.*

Other contributions, in contrast, have focused on electoral reforms and on the resulting change in personal vote incentives (Chiru 2021;

Høyland and Søyland 2019). Here the argument is not only that electoral systems produce different degrees of geographical representation, but also that legislators experiencing an institutional change adapt to the incentives created by the new electoral rules by adjusting their behaviour. For instance, Høyland and Søyland (2019) show that in Norway legislators reduced their constituency focus in legislative speeches as a consequence of an electoral reform that decreased their incentives to cultivate a personal vote. This expectation leads to Hypothesis 2.

**Hypothesis 2** *Switching from a single-member district to a closed-list multi-member district has a negative effect on MPs' geographical representation.*

While electoral reforms create a sharp discontinuity in personal vote incentives, legislators' behaviour might not be immediately responsive to the new institutional setting, and the behavioural routines developed under the previous rules might persist over time. If that is the case, it is necessary to observe MPs' behaviour over an extended period of time to account for the possibility that legislators slowly adapt to institutional reforms. The resulting expectation is that changes in electoral incentives should have a larger impact on legislators' behaviour in the medium or long run compared to the short run.

**Hypothesis 3** *The longer the time elapsed since an electoral reform, the smaller the effect of previous electoral incentives on MPs' geographical representation.*

As I argue more extensively in the next chapter, the extant literature often claims to uncover the effects of electoral incentives on legislators' behaviour by testing hypotheses in line with Hypothesis 1. In contrast, I argue that, while electoral incentives are one of the channels through which electoral systems produce their consequences, they are not the only one. Electoral rules also influence political selection, affecting who successfully runs for office. Therefore, I contend that while Hypotheses 2 and 3 focus on the effect of electoral incentives, Hypothesis 1 considers the joint impact of incentives and selection. Moreover, as previous studies have largely overlooked the distinction between incentives and selection, an empirical assessment of the effect of electoral incentives on legislators' geographical focus is still missing.<sup>1</sup>

1. This problem does not apply to studies that use within-system variation in electoral incentives, e.g., produced by electoral vulnerability or term limits, to examine their effect on legislators' behaviour (André et al. 2015; Motolinia 2020). While these studies provide valuable insights on the role of individual-level moderators, scholars of political institutions are also interested in assessing the consequences of *different types* of electoral systems.



The scheme of incentives created by the electoral system is not the only institutional determinant of geographical representation in parliament. While electoral rules define the optimal strategies for MPs to win re-election, parliamentary rules constrain the set of feasible actions that legislators can take in parliament. Moreover, in party-centred contexts, parties heavily control individual MPs' re-selection and re-election chances. In this way, parties have the ability to shape the consequences of legislators' local focus for their careers. In the following sections, therefore, I theorise about the impact of parliamentary rules on the scope for geographical representation, and about how parties assess legislators' efforts to represent local constituents in party-controlled environments.

## 2.2 Parliamentary rules and party control

Parliamentary rules are an important dimension of legislative politics: they not only structure internal organisation and processes allowing parliaments to operate, but also allocate power among different actors (Alemán 2015). One way in which they do so is by defining the rights of individual MPs vis-à-vis those of parliamentary party groups (PPGs). This aspect is particularly evident in the case of the rules that discipline access to the floor in legislative debates. In this regard, legislatures typically employ two families of rules (Slapin and Proksch 2021). Party-centred – or, from MPs' perspective, restrictive – rules allocate speaking time to PPGs (in proportion to their number of seats), which then delegate portions of this time to specific members. Open-access (or permissive) rules instead grant legislators the right to take part in a debate on an individual basis. As a result, floor access rules have clear implications for the level of control that parties can exert over legislative speech-making: while restrictive rules allow parties to determine the list of speakers, under permissive rules they do not have formal powers to oversee access to the floor.

Previous research has argued that geographical representation can be anodyne and supplementary to party representation. This argument would apply to specific parliamentary activities that satisfy a set of conditions. In particular, activities like parliamentary questions (PQs) and vote explanations (a) allow MPs to signal to local constituents 'without contradicting their party on the floor', (b) 'are not directly geared towards taking policy choices', and (c) 'do not raise opportunity costs for parties since they are not required to allocate scarce floor time' (Zittel

et al. 2019, p. 684). In such cases, party control should not constrain geographical representation as representing local constituents would nurture the reputation of the party in the district without breaking party unity or diluting the party label.

Yet it is unclear whether parties hold an equally positive view on legislators' geographical focus in activities that are more salient and take scarce floor time. Existing studies highlight the fact that parties use floor access control as a gatekeeping instrument to prevent specific groups of MPs from delivering speeches in parliament. This is the case for backbenchers, especially when ideologically distant from the party line and during electoral campaigns (Bäck et al. 2019b; Proksch and Slapin 2015; Proksch and Slapin 2012), and for female legislators (Bäck et al. 2014). Backbenchers' disadvantage in speech-making disappears under open-access rules, showing that it is a direct consequence of formal party control (Giannetti et al. 2019).

Given that parties express preferences regarding who should take the floor, they may also have preferences concerning the content of the messages delivered on the floor. Here I investigate this question by focusing on geographical content specifically. The general argument I put forward builds on the idea that while individual MPs might see legislative debates as an opportunity for self-promotion and for sending geographical signals, parties use parliamentary speech-making for a number of other reasons, including party competition, agenda setting, and intra-coalitional dynamics (Baumann 2016; Giannetti et al. 2016; Ivanusch 2023; Martin and Vanberg 2008). As a consequence, legislators' desire to please local constituents might be of secondary importance to parties. This is particularly true in party-centred environments, where the electoral benefits of MPs' personalised behaviours should be limited compared to party reputations.

Assuming that parties' and MPs' preferences regarding legislative speeches might diverge, I posit two possible mechanisms connecting parliamentary rules to geographical representation. The first mechanism relates to the composition of the list of speakers who take the floor in a given debate. Under open-access rules, MPs are permitted to take the floor freely, meaning that there is no formal delegation (from parties to speakers) involved. The implication for geographical representation is that members are able to take part in debates that are relevant to their

constituencies.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, when restrictive rules are in place, parties determine to whom legislative speeches will be delegated. From parties' perspective, legislators' loyalty and competence on the topic discussed is expected to be paramount relative to the topic's relevance to an MP's district. In some cases, parties do more than just fail to prioritise MPs' desire to represent their geographical constituents; they may actively oppose such efforts when there is a perceived risk of undermining party unity or of expressing dissenting views towards the party (Bäck et al. 2019a; Bhattacharya 2023; Nedregård 2023). In conclusion, MPs' ability to self-select into debates increases their opportunities to address topics their constituents care about. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of speeches being geographically focused.<sup>3</sup>

A second mechanism is linked to parties' control of speech content. When parties delegate speakers, they might have the opportunity to scrutinise the text of speeches. Conversely, under permissive rules, MPs may enjoy more room for manoeuvre in drafting their speeches. The question of whether higher party surveillance limits the scope of geographical representation depends on how parties view geographical representation in legislative debates. One possibility is that, from parties' standpoint, narrow geographical signals undermine their ability to communicate their policy platforms and to appeal broadly to voters (Alemán et al. 2017). Too many geographically targeted messages might result in an inconsistent set of policy statements that risk eroding the credibility of the party label.

As both mechanisms (floor access and speech content control) are expected to work in the same direction, they lead to the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 4** *Under open-access (compared to party-centred) floor rules, legislators are more likely to deliver geographically targeted speeches.*

Hypothesis 4 posits that parliamentary rules that give parties the power to control access to the floor limit MPs' opportunities to be geographically focused. The argument just proposed does not assume that parties are intrinsically averse to geographical representation in

2. At the aggregate level, backbenchers' decreased opportunities to give speeches under restrictive rules can have a negative impact on geographical representation, as front-benchers might be less likely to deliver it. Here, however, I examine how parliamentary rules influence a specific MP's propensity and opportunities to go local.
3. While in this part of the thesis I do not delve into the underlying motivations of MPs' behaviour, my argument does not assume a specific rationale for why MPs might choose to emphasise local issues in their speeches.

speeches. Rather, I maintain simply that party leaders might prioritise a legislator's ability to deliver a message that maximises the party's collective benefits over an MP's desire to represent local constituents. Taking a step forward, in the next section I ask whether in environments where parties exert strong control over individual MPs' re-selection and re-election prospects, geographical representation is a dimension that party leaders take into account, at least marginally, when deciding which incumbents to re-select and which list rank to assign them. In this way, I focus more directly on whether parties inhibit or facilitate geographical representation through re-(s)election incentives in party-centred contexts.

## **2.3 Re-selection: Division of labour and different activities**

Legislators are often portrayed as agents accountable to two principals: party leaders and voters (Carey 2007). While in contemporary representative assemblies legislators are virtually always subject to the control of their parties, the influence of voters as an additional principal varies substantially depending on the institutional context. In particular, when electoral rules allow voters to have a significant impact on individual MPs' electoral prospects (such as in open-list systems), voters constitute another important principal. From an accountability perspective, this raises the question of how these two principals assess MPs' geographical efforts.

However, the existing research on this issue is asymmetric. While there is empirical evidence of what voters think about geographical representation, our understanding of party leaders' perspectives remains limited. This question is particularly relevant in party-centred contexts – that is, in environments where party leaders exercise strong control over a legislator's re-election, with limited influence from voters and local party members. Put differently, in such contexts voters cannot reward or punish individual representatives, and MPs' careers depend crucially on party leaders' choices; yet it is still unclear whether these choices are affected by legislators' geographical focus.

Notably, several studies have revealed that citizens hold a favourable view of politicians with local orientations. In addition to the evidence on citizens' representational preferences reported in the introduction, Chiru (2018) has shown that voters tend to reward MPs who are active on local issues in parliament with more personal votes. Beyond

an explicit geographical focus, other studies have demonstrated more broadly that individual parliamentary activities help incumbents attract personal votes (Crisp et al. 2013; Däubler et al. 2018; François and Navarro 2019; Sorace 2021). In party-centred contexts, some contributions suggest that legislators who are more active on the floor are more likely to be re-selected by their parties (Borghetto 2018; Louwerse and Van Vonno 2022).

Yet party leaders' reactions to legislators' geographical activities in these environments have remained unexplored. This is surprising as geographical representation in party-centred contexts, where legislators seemingly lack the incentives to deliver it, is a 'major puzzle in the fields of democratic representation and parliamentary behaviour' (Geese and Martínez-Cantó 2022, p. 918). Here I approach this question by proposing a theory that argues that the impact of geographical representation on re-selection and re-election chances hinges on an intra-party division of labour that delegates this task to specific groups of legislators and prescribes the use of particular parliamentary tools to deliver it.

The theoretical argument builds on the assumption that, from the party leaders' standpoint, a moderate level of geographical representation is optimal in party-centred contexts. On the one hand, MPs who engage with local constituents nurture the party's reputation in the district (Geese and Martínez-Cantó 2022). Even if voters might not be aware of parliamentary proceedings, parliamentary activities are often picked up by the media (Arnold 2004; Bowler 2010; van Santen et al. 2015). Since in party-centred contexts legislators lack the electoral incentives to be responsive to their constituencies (as securing a good position on the list is the most effective way to be re-elected), this form of representation might be incentivised to prevent a possible collective action problem where all legislators shirk from it (Lancaster 1986). On the other hand, the party leadership may fear that MPs who prioritise their constituencies could become local mavericks who threaten party unity. Moreover, attention to local issues in lawmaking activities can dilute a party's policy platform. Finally, geographical representation might entail opportunity costs and reduce MPs' efforts in other aspects of their parliamentary work, including campaign activities and committee work.

In order to attain an optimal, moderate level of geographical representation, parties can rely on an internal division of labour based on two criteria: who delivers it and how it is delivered. In party-centred contexts, parties can implement the division of labour by controlling incumbents' re-selection and their rank on the list. Relative to the first

criterion, I contend that geographical representation is delegated to the MPs who can deliver it more efficiently, namely the legislators who have more time, more expertise, or more opportunities to represent their constituencies. First, backbenchers have more time to represent local constituents as they bear fewer formal duties and play a less prominent role in shaping their party's issue agenda compared to MPs who have leadership positions in the party or in parliament (Meyer and Wagner 2021). Second, MPs who worked in local politics before entering parliament are particularly suited to deliver geographical representation because they are more likely to have direct contact with local networks and to be better informed about local constituents' issues (Binderkrantz et al. 2020; Geese and Martínez-Cantó 2022; Shugart et al. 2005; Walgrave and Soontjens 2023). Third, MPs who sit in specific legislative committees might have greater opportunities to target resources to their districts or at least to deal with issues that are especially relevant at the local level. This is the case of the so-called distributive committees, dealing with policy areas such as transportation, agriculture, and public works (Shugart et al. 2021; Stratmann and Baur 2002).

Moreover, I argue that parties also have preferences regarding how geographical representation should be delivered to voters, which constitutes a second criterion for the division of labour. In particular, I draw a distinction between lawmaking (bills) and non-lawmaking activities (written questions), expecting that parties encourage the use of the former and hinder the use of the latter to address geographical issues. Written parliamentary questions would be more suitable for this task as they require less effort and do not harm the party's policy platform. By contrast, a high number of localistic and narrow bills could damage a party's reputation and its credibility in addressing broad societal problems. In addition, bills can also threaten the party's core policy positions (Alemán and Micozzi 2022).

To summarise, I posit that parties encourage backbencher, local, and distributive committee MPs to use written questions to engage in geographical representation. Conversely, parties deter the same groups of MPs from using private members' bills (PMBs) to deliver GR. To enforce this division of labour, parties can use the most crucial mechanism of reward and sanction they have at their disposal: the power to renominate incumbents and to control their positions on the list. The resulting expectations are summarised in Hypotheses 5a, b, and c and 6 a, b, and c.

**Hypotheses 5a, 5b, 5c** *Geographical representation in written questions increases the probability of re-selection and safe candidacy for backbencher/locally experienced/distributive committee MPs.*

**Hypotheses 6a, 6b, 6c** *Geographical representation in bills decreases the probability of re-selection and safe candidacy for backbencher/locally experienced/distributive committee MPs.*

## Chapter summary

Electoral incentives are often considered to be the most crucial determinant of legislators' geographical focus. The literature on the effects of electoral incentives on legislators' behaviour was developed in the American context (Cain et al. 1984; Mayhew 1974), but was later applied to other institutional settings. Still, scholars have argued that, compared to the United States, European parliamentary contexts are characterised by stronger parties (Zittel 2017).

In this chapter, therefore, I have tried to develop a theoretical framework that encompasses electoral rules and parties as institutional constraints to geographical representation. In particular, I first revisited the argument about the effect of electoral institutions on MPs' district focus, distinguishing between the impacts of incentives and selection. I then turned to consider two other dimensions conceptually linked to geographical representation and parties: parliamentary rules and re-(s)election in party-centred contexts. Starting from the former, while the Congress literature highlights how legislative organisation can serve individual legislators' goals (Katz and Sala 1996; Shepsle and Weingast 1987), parliamentary rules can also promote the interests of parliamentary party groups (Alemán 2015; Shomer 2015). Although legislative organisation is often considered endogenous to electoral institutions, the two dimensions are theoretically distinct and not always empirically aligned. I thus explored the implications of parliamentary rules, and of the different levels of party control they create, for geographical representation.

Moving to the latter, the electoral incentives literature usually considers legislators' local orientations to be a way to win personal votes and secure re-election (Mayhew 1974). However, in party-centred contexts, voters cannot reward legislators' local efforts as parties exert strong control over re-election prospects. I thus theorise about whether and under what conditions party leaders consider geographical repres-

entation delivered by individual members to be an asset or a liability. In such contexts, in which electoral incentives to represent local constituents are low, parties might use re-selection and the list rank on the ballot to steer MPs to deliver the level of geographical representation that maximises the party's collective benefits. In this light, re-election incentives do not necessarily stem from electoral institutions alone, but might also be actively created by parties.



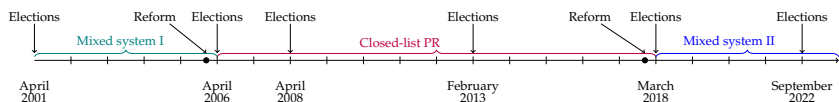
# Chapter 3

## Data and methods

In this chapter, I first motivate my case selection and the choice to focus on parliamentary activities to study geographical representation. I then provide a discussion the concept and measurement of geographical representation, followed by a validation of the dictionary approach that I employ in the three empirical analyses. Finally, I describe the empirical challenges related to the identification of the effect of electoral incentives and I outline the designs and data sources used in the thesis.

### 3.1 Case selection

Several factors make Italy a suitable case to study general arguments on the effects of institutions on legislators' behaviour and on the impact of geographical activities on MPs' careers. To begin with, Italy constitutes a good setting to investigate whether electoral incentives and parliamentary rules affect geographical representation as both these dimensions exhibit variation in the period under consideration. Italy has employed different electoral systems over the last thirty years. In 1993, in a period characterised by corruption scandals, party system restructuring, and electoral referendums, a mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) electoral system replaced the open-list proportional representation (PR) system introduced after the Second World War (D'Alimonte 2005). In the mixed system, voters cast two ballots: one to choose a party list in the proportional tier and one to choose a candidate in a single-member district. Little more than a decade later, a few months before the 2006 general elections, a new proportional system was introduced, this time with closed lists (CLPR) and a majority bonus (Renwick et al. 2009). Figure 3.1 illustrates the institutional changes on a timeline. In line with the discussion in Chapter 2, this electoral trajectory is particularly valuable for its change from the MMM (Mixed system 1 in Figure 3.1) to the CLPR system since it offers two sources of variation in electoral in-



**Figure 3.1.** Italian electoral systems, 2001–2022

centives. First, the mixed system provides the opportunity to observe MPs with different electoral incentives within the same parliament (synchronic variation). Second, the electoral reform changes the incentives of parliamentarians over time (diachronic variation).

Moreover, the Italian lower house’s standing orders display variation in legislative rules for one parliamentary activity, namely legislative speeches. In particular, the parliamentary rules for the lower house introduced in 1997 envisage two sets of procedures to allocate floor time for speeches on bills (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2021). In the Italian parliament, the legislative process can take two main routes. First, MPs and the government can introduce an ordinary bill, which is assigned to a legislative committee and can eventually be discussed and voted upon on the floor.<sup>1 2</sup> Second, the government can issue decrees that need to be converted into law by parliament within sixty days (Della Sala and Kreppel 1998). While decrees were originally intended for exceptional circumstances of necessity and urgency, governments have increasingly used them as a fast-track legislative process (Cox et al. 2008; Kreppel 1997). Consequently, the policy areas addressed by ordinary bills and decrees are now largely overlapping (De Micheli 1997; Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2016). The legislative processes of these two lawmaking tools also display strong similarities, with deep involvement by legislative committees (for more details see Paper 2<sub>fr</sub>). For the purposes of this dissertation, therefore, debates on ordinary bills and executive decrees are comparable as they are equally likely to display a geographical content.

Importantly, however, the rules that allocate floor time in these two types of debates differ. In debates on ordinary bills, except for time reserved for cabinet members, rapporteurs, and independent MPs, most of the speaking time (four-fifths) is allocated to party groups, in propor-

1. Regional councils, voters (at least 50,000), and the National Council for Economics and Labour (a constitutional organ) also have the power to propose a bill.
2. Ordinary bills also include delegated legislation (sometimes called delegated decree authority), in which the parliament authorises the executive to make new laws for a limited time and for specified purposes set by the legislature itself (Borghetto and Lisi 2018; Carey and Shugart 1998).

tion to their seat share. In turn, PPGs determine which members take the floor on behalf of the party. Only one-fifth of the time is devoted to individual MPs who want to deliver a speech. In the case of executive decrees, by contrast, PPGs do not play any formal role, and floor time is only assigned to MPs on an individual basis. The difference between these two sets of rules is crucial as it produces dissimilar levels of party control over legislative speech-making. In terms of formal rules, party control is strong in debates on ordinary bills, while it is weak in discussions of executive decrees.

Italy is also a good environment to explore how party leaders evaluate geographical representation and to what extent their decisions on how to select and rank candidates reflect incumbents' local orientations. Between 2006 and 2018, Italy represented an ideal-typical example of a party-centred context, given its electoral institutions and the methods employed by parties to recruit their candidates. As displayed in Figure 3.1, in this period a closed-list PR system was employed. As a result, voters could only vote for party lists and not for individual candidates, whose election depended on (a) their party's performance and (b) their position on the list. Additionally, candidate selection was generally both centralised and exclusive, granting wide discretion to the central party leadership (Calossi and Pizzimenti 2015; Marino and Martocchia Diodati 2017). In such a context, individual MPs' re-election was in the party leaders' hands, with limited or no influence of local party officers and voters. Thus, this setting allows me to focus on party leaders in isolation from other actors (voters and local party members) who are likely to have different preferences about politicians' geographical orientation.

Finally, in Italy the phenomenon of interest – geographical representation – can be observed. Historically, Italy has been characterised by high levels of particularism and distributive policies (Cavalieri et al. 2018; Decadri 2020; Di Palma 1977; Golden 2003). More recently, several studies have found that MPs make wide use of individual parliamentary activities to advance local interests (Gagliarducci et al. 2011; Marangoni and Tronconi 2011; Russo 2011). As described later in this chapter, the data employed in this thesis align with these previous results.

## **3.2 Studying geographical representation in parliament**

In this dissertation, I employ parliamentary activities to study MPs' efforts to represent local constituents. As I describe in the next section, I

do so by considering the geographical references that legislators make in their legislative activities. Such a focus raises two important questions that relate both to the nature of the representative acts performed and to the parliamentary context in which these acts take place.

The first aspect concerns the type of representation that legislators deliver by mentioning their constituencies in parliamentary activities. The large theoretical literature on political representation offers a framework to approach this issue. Pitkin (1967) famously distinguished between different views of representation. Particularly relevant here is the distinction between symbolic and substantive representation. Symbolic representation identifies the ways the representative stands for the represented. Substantive representation, in contrast, defines the activities that representatives undertake in the interests of the represented.<sup>3</sup> Analogously, Eulau and Karps (1977, p. 242) identify four components of representation (or responsiveness, using the authors' terminology): policy responsiveness indicates to what extent legislators represent voters' policy preferences; service responsiveness captures the non-legislative activities that MPs undertake to assist their constituents, including casework and constituency service; allocation responsiveness defines the provision of benefits to the constituency, such as earmarks and pork barrel spending; and symbolic responsiveness entails 'public gestures of a sort that create a sense of trust and support in the relationship between representative and represented'.

The individual activities that I study in this thesis – private members' bills, parliamentary questions, and legislative speeches – all have a predominant symbolic connotation. In other words, their direct impact on tangible outcomes, such as substantive policies or fund allocations, is limited. This is clearly true for questions and speeches, but even private members' bills, which in principle can produce policies, are usually viewed as symbolic tools useful for sending signals to voters, but with low chances of becoming law (Brunner 2013). Consistent with this, in the period under consideration, less than 5% of all private members' bills presented in the Italian lower house were approved (Russo 2021b).

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3. Pitkin also identified two other views of representation: formalistic representation, which focuses on the institutional arrangements that define representation, and descriptive representation, which captures the extent to which representatives resemble the represented. Descriptive representation is conceptually distinct from both symbolic and substantive representation as citizens may feel represented by politicians who can promote their interests without mirroring their characteristics. Therefore, I focus on legislators' behaviour and not on their local roots (but see Paper 1<sub>ei</sub> for the effects of localness on GR).

Still, while individual parliamentary activities are mainly symbolic, they can also have a substantive component. Even if these activities do not directly trigger governmental action, they allow MPs to articulate issues and put them on the legislative agenda (Chiru 2018; Däubler et al. 2016). As I discuss below, the agenda-setting potential of individual activities is underlined by the issue competition literature (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010; Seeberg 2023). In this light, a geographical activity works as a signal that the MP sends to other political actors, such as parties and the government, potentially affecting tangible outcomes. Therefore, symbolic geographical representation can have an indirect substantive value (Russo 2021b).

The second aspect relates to the choice to focus on MPs' *parliamentary* behaviour. With this choice I study what politicians do in parliament, while excluding other representational tasks that they can undertake, including constituency service, casework, and campaign and social media activities. The main reason is that parliamentary activities represent an efficient way for MPs to reach out to constituents as 'parliament provides MPs with a highly visible platform for improving their reputation with voters' (Fleming 2020). MPs can disseminate their parliamentary record on their website or social media and, more importantly, they can try to use it to get media attention, as they do with press releases (Grimmer 2013). The empirical evidence indicates that legislators are indeed successful in having their activities covered by media (Arnold 2004; Bowler 2010; van Santen et al. 2015). Moreover, compared to constituency service, parliamentary behaviour has the advantage of offering MPs an economy of scale (Kam 2009). If publicised, it can reach many voters simultaneously. By contrast, constituency service and casework are time and labour-intensive.

In addition, individual parliamentary activities offer several advantages for the study of legislators' behaviour. First, they allow me to access and study systematically the behaviour of a large number of MPs as these tools are available to all legislators and are actually employed by most of them. Second, these data are made publicly available by parliaments in a format that lends itself to content analysis (Fernandes et al. 2019). Third, the focus on these activities (written PQs, bills, and speeches) enables me to study individual-level legislative tools where legislators' preferences can be better observed compared to, for instance, roll-call votes, where strong party discipline can mask individual preferences.

Moreover, by including different activities I am able to observe variation in party control. Written questions are usually seen as the

most unconstrained individual legislative activity, free from party control (Rozenberg and Martin 2011; Wiberg 1995). However, some authors have argued that, especially in party-centred environments, MPs use parliamentary questions in coordination with the party leadership, which tries to maximise the benefits for the party (Fernandes et al. 2019; Fernandes et al. 2018). For instance, questions can be used by parties to compete over setting the agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010) and allow opposition parties to exert policy influence (Seeberg 2023). Taking both these perspectives into account, in this thesis I consider questions to be individual activities that, at the same time, can display some level of coordination. In Paper 3<sub>rs</sub>, for example, I put forward a theory of division of labour that builds on the idea that parties coordinate their members' individual activities.

The same logic applies to a greater extent to bills. Bills constitute an important component of a party's programmatic platform, contributing to defining the party's label and reputation. This is particularly true for opposition parties, which need to show voters credible alternatives to the cabinet's policies. Additionally, bills are more expensive to draft (in terms of time and effort) compared to questions. For these reasons, I argue that bills are more party-constrained than questions and that parties use different coordination criteria across the two activities.

Finally, I expect legislative speeches to be the most heavily-constrained individual activity. This should be the case for one main reason: while in theory there are no upper bounds to MPs' questioning and lawmaking activities, floor time is limited. Coupled with MPs' desire to gain visibility, the scarcity of floor time implies that parties need to allocate it strategically, thereby constraining legislators' behaviour. However, the extent to which parties are able to do so depends on the institutional context. As discussed above with respect to the Italian case, parliamentary rules can give party groups more or less control over the allocation of floor time.

### **3.3 Measuring geographical representation**

To measure legislators' geographical focus in parliament, in line with previous research I focus on legislative activities that MPs explicitly target at their electoral constituencies (Russo 2021a; Zittel et al. 2019). More specifically, I consider as geographically targeted those activities that mention a geographical unit located in the representative's region of election, which in the Italian context is a larger area than the district.

Figure 3.2 illustrates the difference between these geographical units.<sup>4</sup> The Italian territory is divided into 20 regions, which constitute the first-level administrative units (NUTS 2). Districts, instead, are purely electoral units. Multi-member districts are usually larger than single-member districts. Panel b in Figure 3.2 zooms in on Tuscany to show how, in the context of a mixed system, single-member districts are nested in multi-member districts, which are in turn nested in regions. As an example, Tuscany used to be divided into four MMDs that contained several SMDs. The multi-member district *Toscana – 4* included, for instance, three different single-member districts (*Arezzo*, *Siena*, and *Grosseto*).

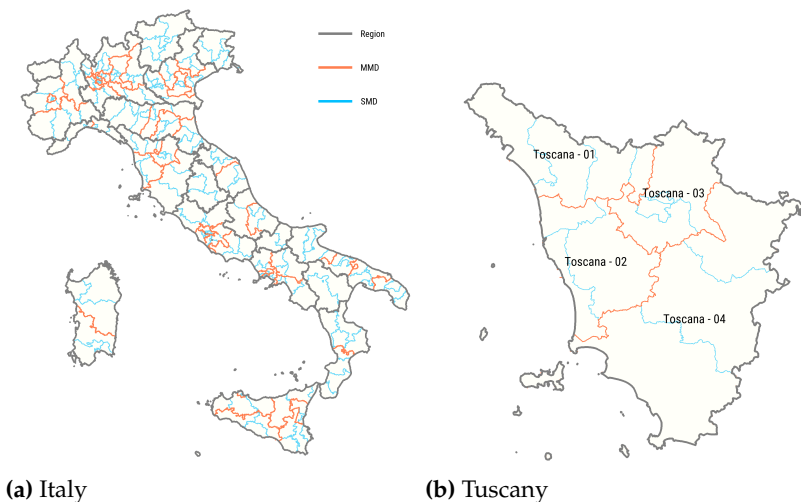
The choice to focus on regions rather than districts is motivated by two considerations. The first is the need to compare similar geographical units under the different electoral tiers (the majoritarian and proportional tiers of the mixed system) and electoral systems (the mixed and the proportional systems) that characterise the Italian electoral context in the period examined. The second reason is that matching geographical entities with regions allows me to capture references to regions, which constitute a large share of all the geographical references. In other words, many parliamentary texts mention a region (e.g., Tuscany) without naming a city or another marker that can be linked to a specific district (e.g., Siena).

All in all, MPs who represent their region of election are likely to be perceived by constituents as locally oriented. Given the relatively small size of regions, legislators advancing regional interests are also representing narrower areas, such as districts. In the thesis, therefore, I interpret the attention devoted to the region in which an MP has been elected as a proxy for their attention to local constituents.

To measure geographical representation, I employ a dictionary that includes the names of all Italian municipalities, regions, national parks, motorways and highways (*autostrade* and *strade statali*), main rivers, and seas. For regions, adjectives (e.g., Tuscan) are also included. The dictionary automatically detects the geographical markers, which are then matched with an MP's region of election. If the marker falls within such a region, the text is classified as an instance of geographical representation; otherwise it is not. To illustrate how the dictionary works in practice, Table 3.1 presents some excerpts of parliamentary texts, with geographical entities detected by the dictionary in italics. The presence of

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4. The illustration is based on the districts in the 2017 electoral system (before the reduction in assembly size after a referendum in 2020). Given different weights of the majoritarian tier, the previous mixed system, introduced in 1994, had a higher number of SMDs.



**Figure 3.2.** Italian regions, multi-member districts, and single-member districts (2017)

geographical references is not a sufficient condition for coding an activity as geographical: in the second text, for instance, the MP mentions a region which does not correspond to their region of election and, therefore, the bill is not considered geographical.

The definition just presented excludes two types of activities which can be viewed as geographical in a broader sense. First, behaviours that address local concerns only indirectly are not detected by the dictionaries. For instance, an MP could refer to narrow manufacturing or agricultural sectors which are strongly linked to a specific territory, without naming any place. Additionally, MPs can engage with broad policy issues that are particularly relevant to their constituencies. Legislators, for example, can try to please their high-unemployment district by supporting generous unemployment benefits (Borghetto et al. 2020; Däubler 2020). More generally, the presence of functional groups with uneven geographical distributions can be leveraged to design policy proposals and parliamentary initiatives in a distributive fashion (Decadri 2020; Rickard 2018). Still, I argue that my dictionary approach sufficiently captures geographical representation in light of three considerations. In the first place, in the validation of the dictionary (see below), I did not encounter cases of references to narrow sectors that could be clearly traced



**Table 3.1.** Geographical representation and dictionaries

Activity	Text	MP's region	GR
Speech	I say this today precisely because of what has happened in my province, the province of <i>Lecco</i> , where there has been a major landslide, with a problem of river overflow, which has involved an entire upper valley and a valley floor on the shores of Lake <i>Lecco</i> and Lake <i>Como</i> , now in a situation of extraordinary emergency.	Lombardy	Yes
Bill (preamble)	The increasing presence of coypus is particularly alarming, especially in some areas of <i>Lombardy</i> , for two reasons: damage to agricultural crops and important hydraulic-agricultural works and the spread of leptospirosis.	Veneto	No
Written question	Since 2000, unfortunately, the Roman amphitheater of <i>Cagliari</i> , the main monument of the Roman era existing in <i>Sardinia</i> as well as one of only three Roman amphitheaters carved into rock still existing, is occupied by a wooden set-up for summer performances initially arranged by the <i>Cagliari</i> opera house, which obstructs its full and satisfactory cultural potential.	Sardinia	Yes

*Note:* The parliamentary activities cited in the table are, respectively: a speech made by Gian Mario Fregomeli, 12/6/2019; a bill sponsored by Giovanna Negro et al., 3 August 2011; a PQ asked by Federico Palomba, 8 March 2011 (my translations).

back to an unmentioned geographical area. In addition, while policy representation through broad proposals is certainly a way to advocate for the interests of local constituencies, it is hard to disentangle legislators' motivations to represent the district from more general dynamics, such as political ambition and contribution to the party's policy platform. Finally, from an advertising perspective, if legislators want to communicate their activities to voters, they should be expected to include local cues in their speeches and questions to make them more salient to constituents. Even bills are usually introduced by a preamble which illustrates their motivation, allowing the sponsor to make an explicit reference to their intended local audience.

Second, legislators might decide to represent constituents with whom no electoral connection exists. This is the case of surrogate representation, whereby MPs represent voters outside their own districts (Mansbridge 2003).<sup>5</sup> Here a focus on geographical rather than surrogate representation is justified for two reasons. First, as Paper 1<sub>ei</sub> investigates the effects of electoral incentives, an electoral relationship needs to exist between legislators and the represented constituents. Second, while we know that voters like their representatives to be locally oriented (e.g., Vivyan and Wagner 2016), we do not know whether voters want or care about surrogate representation. Moreover, there is limited evidence that parliamentarians engage in surrogate representation (with the exception of work studying minority representation; see, e.g., Angevine 2017; Broockman 2013). Thus, the empirical relevance of surrogate representation is still unclear.

Having discussed how dictionaries can detect geographical references in parliamentary activities, the next issue relates to the operationalisation of geographical representation. To begin with, the choice of how to operationalise the concept depends on the unit of analysis. When the analyses are conducted at the document (i.e., PQ/bill/speech) level, a dummy variable is employed to capture whether the text contains a geographical marker which matches with the MP's region of election. When the unit of analysis is individual MPs, instead, the choice is less straightforward. The existing literature has mainly adopted two strategies. The first possibility is to use the number of geographical parliamentary activities (Papp 2020; Zittel et al. 2019). A count variable of this sort taps into an MP's overall contribution to geographical rep-

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5. Recently, surrogation has also been interpreted in a partisan (as opposed to a territorial) sense, according to which 'the constituent considers as her representative a specific elected representative of a party for whom she did not vote' (Wolkenstein and Wratil 2020, p. 869).

**Table 3.2.** Geographical representation in the Italian parliament (*Camera dei Deputati*)

Activity	Years	Geographical focus
Written questions	2001–2013	39.5%
Private members' bills	2001–2013	15.1%
Legislative speeches	2013–2022	18.4%

resentation in parliament, but does not take into account the relative importance of geographical representation in the MP's legislative portfolio. The second possibility, instead, is to consider the proportion of parliamentary activities devoted to geographical representation (Russo 2011).

Considering this discussion, in the three papers I use slightly different versions of the variable. In Paper 2<sub>fr</sub>, where the unit of analysis is individual speeches, geographical representation is a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 when the text of the speech contains a place located in the legislator's region of election. Conversely, Paper 1<sub>ei</sub>, which looks at how the variation in electoral incentives affected MPs' attention to local issues, uses the proportion of geographical PQs and bills in order to measure the relative importance of geographical representation in MPs' legislative activities. Finally, in Paper 3<sub>rs</sub>, where my goal is to assess the impact of geographical activities net of legislative activism, I employ a count variable measuring the number of geographical questions and bills, with the total number of questions and bills included as a control.

To provide an overview of the significance of geographical representation across the different parliamentary activities that I employ in the thesis, Table 3.2 shows the share of activities that the dictionary classifies as geographical. Texts that mention a place in the MP's region of election make up a significant part of individual activities in the Italian lower house, ranging from 15% for bills to almost 40% for written questions.<sup>6</sup>

6. The fact that GR is more prevalent in speeches than bills may seem at odds with the argument that legislative speeches are more party-controlled than bills. Still, this is not the case for two reasons. First, the intensity of GR is similar in bills and debates with party-centred rules. Second, bills can be less suitable for GR compared to speeches for reasons unrelated to party control.

### 3.4 Validating the dictionary

As with other text-as-data methods, dictionary approaches require validation, of which manual coding represents the gold standard (Collingwood and Wilkerson 2012; Grimmer and Stewart 2013). A validation through hand coding allows me to calibrate the dictionary, which mechanically matches all occurrences of its entries (Benoit 2020).

To perform the validation, I employed a sample of parliamentary texts, more specifically budget bill amendments and written questions. By manually coding written questions and bill amendments, I cover two of the three parliamentary activities I study in my dissertation.<sup>7</sup> Although I did not directly use speeches in the validation, these activities provide a good test for the reliability of the dictionary, including in the setting of legislative debates. Similar to speech data, questions and amendments come in the form of written texts. Moreover, written questions and budget amendments are often used to advance local interests, which increases the chances of finding geographical references in the texts and, consequently, possible shortcomings of the dictionary.

In practice, the validation of the dictionary involved two steps. First, I read the most frequent geographical markers identified by the dictionaries. Based on this inspection, I excluded from the dictionaries some names of towns that can also be used as (capitalised) common nouns which created spurious matches due to polysemy (such as *Fondi*, funds). Moreover, I also excluded from the matches those that were part of some specific administrative courts (e.g. *TAR del Lazio*) and national agencies (e.g. *Conferenza permanente per i rapporti tra lo stato, le regioni e le province autonome di Trento e Bolzano*), almost always cited for reasons unrelated to local issues.

Second, I hand-coded the geographical focus of 1,300 budget amendments and 400 written questions to detect potential false positives and negatives. To do so, I compare hand-coding to automated coding. If a mismatch between the two codes exists, I distinguish between two cases: (1) the dictionary finds a geographical reference which is not considered meaningful in the manual coding (*false positives*) and (2) the dictionary fails to capture a reference in an amendment that I classified as locally targeted (*false negatives*). In the next paragraphs, I detail the results of the validation.

To begin with, I analysed around 1,300 budget amendments presented in the Italian upper house (*Senato*) during the 2019 budget session.

7. Amendments to bills, albeit technically different from bills, are substantially similar to bills, as they aim at modifying a bill's content.

Out of 1,331 amendments, 31 texts displayed a mismatch between the manual and the automatic coding (2.4%). I found 28 instances of false positives: in these cases, the allocative part of the amendment included lists or tables of funds assigned to several regions, which makes it hard to assess their geographical focus. In addition, there were four false negatives, which included references to a small river not present in my dictionary of the main rivers, a natural disaster that happened in a clearly identifiable geographical area, a part of a highway, and a foundation.

Additionally, I hand-coded a random sample of 400 written questions presented in the lower house (*Camera dei Deputati*) during the 18th legislative term (2018–2022). Compared to amendments, parliamentary questions are less technical and, to an extent, more colloquial; stylistically speaking, they are more similar to speeches. A comparison between the two coding schemes reveals a mismatch in seven cases (1.75%). For the false positives (2), one case mentioned a region only to illustrate a broader problem (psychological help for cancer patients), while another question included a surname with the same spelling as a municipality in the MP's region of election.

There were also five false negatives: (1) a lake (*lake Garda*); (2) the name of a town that was misspelt in the parliamentary question; (3) a text that referenced a sub-region in Puglia (*Alta Murgia*); (4) a sea lane with a hyphenated municipality name that was not captured by the dictionary (*Messina–Reggio Calabria*); and (5) a question mentioning both an administrative court and a relevant geographical reference.

While the literature has not yet provided clear thresholds for what qualifies as a good level of precision (false positives) and recall (false negatives) in dictionary validation (Hase 2023), in this case the performance metrics are reassuring. With a precision score of 98.2%, a recall rate of 99.5%, and an F1-score of 98.9, the dictionary seems sufficiently able to capture geographical representation in legislative texts.

### 3.5 Identifying the effects of electoral incentives

As I briefly introduced in Chapter 2, electoral systems can have an impact on legislators' behaviour through two distinct channels. On the one hand, electoral institutions create incentives for re-election seeking MPs to behave in specific ways (Carey and Shugart 1995). On the other hand, electoral rules also influence political selection, affecting who successfully runs for office (Galasso and Nannicini 2017; Myerson 1993). In this

section, I contend that while previous research has claimed to uncover the effect of electoral incentives on legislators' behaviour, it has overlooked the distinction between incentives and selection, thus capturing their joint impact.

Existing studies have employed different sources of variation in electoral systems.<sup>8</sup> Yet these empirical strategies fail to credibly estimate the effects of electoral incentives. First, some studies are comparative: they leverage electoral system variation by comparing countries with various electoral institutions (Crisp et al. 2004; Heitshusen et al. 2005). A well-known problem of this approach, however, is the threat of unaccounted-for cross-country differences which could explain differences in MPs' behaviour. For instance, the United Kingdom and Denmark do not only differ in terms of their electoral systems (single-member plurality and open-list PR), but also along many other relevant dimensions, including party competition and political culture. As a result, comparing these countries to assess, for example, the influence of electoral systems on MPs' loyalty on the floor might not allow us to identify precisely the effect of electoral rules. Moreover, the selection problem described below also applies to this case.

Second, some studies have looked at countries with mixed-member electoral systems as quasi-experimental settings where a controlled comparison can be performed (Sieberer 2010; Stratmann and Baur 2002). Studying variation in electoral incentives within the same parliament eliminates the problem of country-level confounders. However, contrary to the prevailing assumption in the literature, this is not enough to identify the impact of electoral incentives. For mixed parliaments to be true controlled environments, the allocation of MPs to tiers (majoritarian and proportional) should be random.<sup>9</sup> Of course, this is not the case and MPs' characteristics might be systematically different in the two tiers, with these differences being endogenous to electoral institutions. For instance, it is reasonable to think that the candidates most likely to succeed in the candidate-centred SMD competition exhibit different personality traits compared to those in closed lists, with very limited visibility of individual candidates. Such traits, in turn, are correlated with a predisposition to personalised representation (Bøggild et al. 2021). Similarly, candidates who are locally known, possibly thanks to their local political experience, are more likely both to win the single-member district race

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8. All of them are observational as it is impossible to experimentally manipulate political institutions.

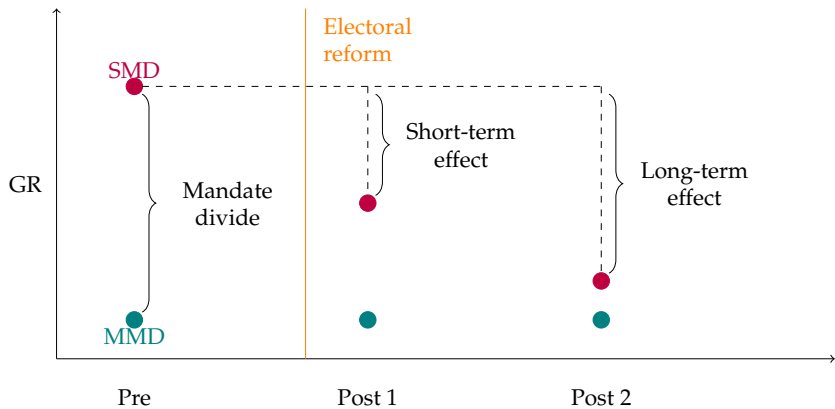
9. For the sake of the argument I abstract from the potential contamination effects across the tiers of the mixed system (Ferrara et al. 2005).

and to deliver geographical representation once elected (Binderkrantz et al. 2020; Tavits 2009). As long as it is hard to account for these (possibly unobservable) systematic differences, a second mechanism might connect electoral systems and MPs' behaviour: a behavioural discrepancy between the tiers emerges because different types of MPs are selected by different electoral rules.

A third source of variation has been found in electoral reforms (Coman 2012). In this case, electoral rules change over time within the same environment, with all the time-invariant country characteristics being constant. Still, as in the case of mixed systems, the change in electoral rules might precipitate a systematic change in the types of politicians being elected. While focusing on re-elected MPs attenuates the problem (Carson and Sievert 2015; Høyland and Søyland 2019), electoral reform studies are affected by unobserved time trends that might be driving the results.

The problems just described undermine the ability to causally identify the effect of electoral incentives. If electoral incentives affect MPs' behaviour, the same MPs will behave differently in different electoral environments. However, it is theoretically possible that the differences in behaviour across electoral systems (or across the tiers of mixed systems) found in the literature are entirely driven by the ability of electoral rules to induce different types of politicians to successfully run for public office. In such a case, electoral incentives would play no role, and legislators' behaviour would remain the same if different electoral rules were used. While this extreme case is unlikely, it remains true that, if some selection effects are at work, one cannot credibly identify the effect of electoral incentives.

Therefore, I argue that a compelling identification strategy should account for the selection effects of electoral rules. I provide a possible solution which leverages the two sources of variation in electoral incentives offered by the Italian case: mixed systems and electoral reforms. Figure 3.3 illustrates the logic behind this argument. The x-axis indicates time, while the y-axis indicates a behavioural outcome, specifically geographical representation in parliament. Consider a mixed parliament (*Pre*) in which some members are elected in single-member districts, while others are elected in multi-member districts. For illustration, in line with the conventional argument, majoritarian MPs display a higher level of geographical representation compared to proportional legislators. This is commonly known in the literature as *mandate divide*; that is, a behavioural discrepancy between legislators elected in different tiers of a mixed system. However, as explained earlier, the *mandate divide*



**Figure 3.3.** Identifying the effect of electoral incentives

does not equal the effect of electoral incentives as it might be produced, at least in part, by political selection. Suppose instead an electoral reform replaces the mixed system with a closed-list PR system. As a consequence, all legislators elected after the reform (*Post 1*) display the same (allegedly low) electoral incentives.

However, the impact of the electoral reform on the MPs who served in parliament both before and after depends on the electoral tier in which they were elected. MPs previously elected in MMDs are not affected by a change in electoral incentives as they run in closed-list multi-member districts both before and after the reform. By contrast, legislators who were formerly elected in SMDs experienced a decrease in electoral incentives when they transitioned to multi-member districts after the reform. In this setting, MPs previously elected in SMDs represent the treatment group, while those formerly elected in MMDs constitute the control group. Assuming that the effects of political selection are time-invariant, tracking the difference between the two groups of legislators over time allows me to identify the effects of electoral incentives, net of potential time trends. More specifically, the difference in the differences between SMD and MMD legislators (before and after the reform) would correspond to the impact of the SMD MPs' decrease in electoral incentives. If electoral incentives indeed drive MPs' behaviour, one should observe a reduction in the intensity of geographical representation in the treatment group compared to the control group following the electoral reform. Figure 3.3 also includes a second term after the electoral reform, denoted as *Post 2*. Expanding the time frame to two legislative



terms enables me to explore whether the effect of a change in incentives does not immediately manifest in a corresponding change in legislators' behaviour.

### 3.6 Empirical strategies

The aim of this thesis is to assess (a) how electoral and parliamentary institutions affect geographical representation and (b) how geographical representation impacts on MPs' re-selection and re-election prospects. To do so, I rely on different observational strategies.

Starting from the effect of electoral institutions, the empirical challenge is to identify the effect of electoral incentives. As I argued above, potential behavioural differences between legislators across electoral rules might not be due to how differently various institutions drive MPs' behaviour but rather to different types of politicians being elected under the different systems. This issue relates to a more general and ubiquitous problem in observational studies, that of selection bias (Angrist and Pischke 2009).

The identification strategy I employ to address this concern is a difference-in-differences (DiD) design. With such a design, I look at how the difference between the treatment and the control groups (SMD and MMD legislators) changes after the treatment (the electoral reform). In addition, I control for a number of dimensions, including cabinet and legislative offices and legislators' localness, a dummy variable coded as 1 for MPs elected in their region of birth.

The identifying assumption is that, in the absence of the treatment, the difference between the treatment and control groups would have been the same before and after the treatment. This assumption does not hold if the gap between the treatment and control groups varies for reasons other than the treatment. Parallel trends describe a counterfactual, and hence unobservable, scenario. While parallel trends cannot be proven, one can still make a DiD design more credible by showing that (a) there are no particular reasons to expect a sudden behavioural change in the control group around the time of treatment, and (b) the trends of the outcome for the treatment and control groups were similar before the treatment (Huntington-Klein 2021).

In this case, there is no reason to expect a sudden change in the proportional MPs' geographical focus around the time of the electoral re-

form (2005).<sup>10</sup> More generally, the institutional reform was not driven by factors related to the outcome of interest (that is, geographical representation). Previous contributions suggest that the governing coalition implemented the reform to minimise an expected electoral defeat and bypass intra-coalition negotiations to coordinate on common candidates in the majoritarian tier of the mixed system (Baldini 2011; Pasquino 2007; Renwick et al. 2009). Since I focus on the same group of MPs over time and thus showing their trends is unfeasible (few members were in parliament for more than three consecutive terms), I report the pre-treatment trends for all majoritarian and proportional MPs in the three mixed-system terms preceding the reform (Appendix to Paper 1<sub>ei</sub>). Overall, this evidence supports the plausibility of parallel trends.

Moving to parliamentary rules, identifying their impact on geographical representation potentially suffers from selection bias as well. As I described above, to investigate this relationship I leverage the setup of legislative debates in the Italian lower house. More specifically, I focus on debates on two types of bills (ordinary and conversion bills) for which rules of access to the floor are different. However, comparing the intensity of geographical representation across these two types of debates raises two concerns. First, the group of speakers might systematically differ across debate types. For instance, in the debates that use open-access rules, MPs who are ideologically less aligned with the party leadership might have greater opportunities to deliver a speech compared to the restricted floor access scenario.<sup>11</sup> Second, the topics addressed in these two groups of debates might differ. As a result, the probability of a speech being geographically targeted might be affected by unobserved factors.

Two methodological strategies allow me to address these concerns. First, I use individual fixed effects. By doing so, I leverage within-MP variation in speech making behaviour across different parliamentary rules, keeping speakers' characteristics constant. Second, I include bill topic (classified according to the Comparative Agendas Project scheme) as a control for the issue discussed in the debate.

In the resulting model, the unit of analysis is the individual speech, where the dependent variable is a dummy coded as 1 for geographical

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10. To account for the possibility that majoritarian MPs adjusted their behaviour in anticipation of the electoral reform, I exclude from the analysis the period after the final reading of the electoral reform bill.

11. This point differs from the first mechanism connecting parliamentary rules to geographical representation outlined in Chapter 2. Here, I discuss the possibility that rules impact MPs' participation not only in a specific debate, but also in a *type* of debate (ordinary bills).

speeches. To account for a binary dependent variable, a logit model is appropriate. Given that the number of observations for each MP can be low, which may result in a bias, I employ the conditional logit model (Heiss et al. 2019; Katz 2001). While the individual fixed effects absorb the unobserved variation at the speaker level, characteristics of the speech or of the speaker-speech dyad might still influence the probability of a speech being geographical. Therefore, I include two other variables as controls. The first is speech length, since longer speeches might accommodate geographical mentions more easily. The second is a dummy variable coded as 1 when the speaker is the rapporteur of the bill discussed in the debate, as rapporteurs are more constrained by the institutional duties they perform in the discussion (e.g., introducing the bill).

Finally, I investigate the effect of geographical representation in parliament on re-selection and re-election prospects (Paper 3<sub>rs</sub>). In this case, my identification strategy is to control for observable differences between legislators. Geographical representation might affect party leaders' choices at the margins, but other dimensions (possibly also related to local orientation) can be more influential. One unobservable characteristic that party leaders probably take into account is candidates' quality (or, more subjectively, agreeableness to the party leadership). Therefore, I control for the variables that might be related to this dimension. First, I include electoral vulnerability at the previous election. The idea is that candidates who were formerly given a safe position on the list are highly valued by their parties, which are likely to continue supporting them at the next election. Second, I control for candidates' tenure (the number of parliamentary terms served by an MP), gender, and age. Third, I control for members who switched parties as this might negatively affect a candidate's reputation. Fourth, I control for parliamentary effort, operationalised as the total number of written questions and bills.<sup>12</sup>

Two dependent variables are used to explore the consequences of geographical representation. First, I focus on re-selection, a binary variable coded as 1 for incumbent MPs who are reselected for the next election. Second, I use the expected safety of the assigned position on the list, computed as the ratio between the number of seats a party won in the district at the previous election and a candidate's position on the party list; higher values indicate more electoral safety. I run logistic regressions for the first outcome and OLS regressions for the second.

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12. While loyalty in roll-call votes can be another factor that party leaders take into account, it seems to be unrelated to re-selection in the data.

### 3.7 Data sources

Table 3.3 presents an overview of the research designs and data sources that I use in the three papers in the thesis. Here I briefly describe the data sources employed. All papers use parliamentary data. In particular, Papers 1<sub>ei</sub> and 3<sub>rs</sub> focus on written questions and bills, while Paper 2<sub>fr</sub> looks at legislative speeches. The texts of written questions are directly available through the open data published by the Italian lower house.<sup>13</sup> Texts of bills and speeches, meanwhile, were automatically scraped from the website of the Italian parliament.

In addition, I use data on MPs' biographical characteristics (such as place of birth, age, and gender) and political information (including party membership, offices in the legislature and in the cabinet, and committee membership). These data are available on the website of the Italian parliament. In Paper 1<sub>ei</sub>, data on legislative offices come from Russo (2021b). In Paper 2<sub>fr</sub>, I also use information on the topic of the bills discussed in legislative debates. To this end, I collected the texts of the bills discussed and hand-coded them according to the Comparative Agendas Project codebook, which includes 21 major topics (Bevan 2019). Some additional analyses in Paper 2<sub>fr</sub> leverage MPs' loyalty in roll-call votes. Data on legislators' voting record were collected by the independent organisation Openpolis.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Paper 3<sub>rs</sub> includes data on candidates for parliament. For the elections considered, these data were provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior.<sup>15</sup>

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13. <http://data.camera.it/data/en/>.

14. <https://www.openpolis.it/>. I would like to thank Ettore Di Cesare for sharing these data.

15. I am grateful to Massimiliano Baragona for making these data available.

**Table 3.3.** Overview of data and research designs

	<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Key planetary variable(s)</b>	<b>ex-Design</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Data sources</b>
Paper 1 <sub>ei</sub>	Geographical representation (written PQs + PMBs)	Electoral centres	in-Difference-in-differences	2001–2013	Italian lower house legislators $N = 616$	Parliamentary data and MPs' characteristics
Paper 2 <sub>fr</sub>	Geographical representation (speeches)	Parliamentary rules	Individual fixed effects	2013–2022	Speeches in the Italian lower house $N = 27,501$	Parliamentary data and MPs' characteristics
Paper 3 <sub>rs</sub>	Re-selection and safe candidacy	Geographical representation (written PQs + PMBs) (X) Backbencher status (mod.) Local experience (mod.) Distr. committee (mod.)	Logit and OLS regressions	2006–2013	Italian lower house legislators $N = 1,651$	Parliamentary data and MPs' and candidates' characteristics



# Chapter 4

## Overview of main findings

This chapter presents the main findings from the three empirical analyses. In the first section, I investigate the consequences of the 2005 Italian electoral reform on geographical representation. This case allows me to isolate the effect of electoral incentives from the potential impact of selection mechanisms. In the following two sections, I examine the relationship between party control and geographical representation. In particular, the second section looks at how MPs' propensity to deliver geographical representation in legislative debates is affected by the varying level of party control attached to different parliamentary rules. Finally, in the third section I focus on the impact of legislators' geographical focus in bills and written questions on their re-selection and re-election chances.

### 4.1 How do electoral incentives influence geographical representation?

To examine how electoral incentives influence geographical representation, I first identify two groups of Italian MPs based on the tier of the mixed system in which they were elected before the 2005 electoral reform, distinguishing between single-member district (majoritarian) and multi-member district (proportional) MPs. I then compare the behaviour of these two groups of MPs before and after the electoral reform, which introduced a proportional system with multi-member districts only. At the core of the argument is the idea that while parliamentarians formerly elected in SMDs experienced a decrease in their incentives to deliver geographical representation, legislators formerly elected in MMDs were not directly affected by the electoral reform. At the same time, proportional MPs represent a control group to account for possible time trends in geographical representation. Consequently, the expectation is that the lower electoral incentives translated into a reduction in

geographical representation among majoritarian MPs. By studying two terms after the electoral reform, the analyses also take into account the possibility that the behavioural consequences of the institutional change did not immediately follow the reform but took some time to appear.

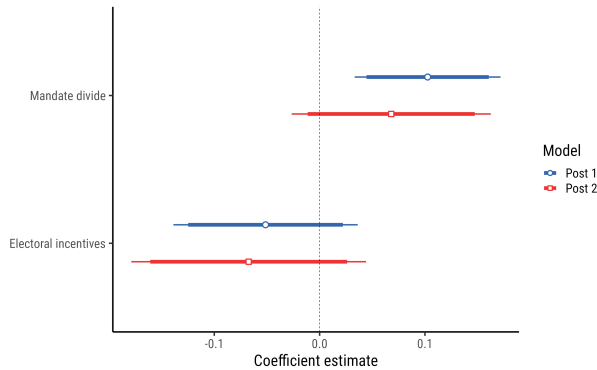
To identify the effect of electoral incentives on legislators' geographical focus, I use difference-in-differences models. In the models, I first analyse legislators' behaviour in two consecutive terms, called for simplicity's sake Pre and Post 1 (2001–2006 and 2006–2008). I then focus on the (smaller) group of legislators who were in parliament before the reform and in the second term after the reform (Post 2, 2008–2013). The DiD estimators capture the effect of electoral incentives by investigating how SMD MPs' geographical focus changed relative to MMD legislators in the first and second term after the electoral reform. By contrast, the coefficient for the mandate divide indicates whether MPs elected in SMDs exhibited behavioural differences from MMD MPs in the mixed parliament (that is, before the electoral reform).

As shown in Figure 4.1, which reports the results for written questions, the effect of electoral incentives is insignificant, despite having the expected sign.<sup>1</sup> This means that the decrease in SMD MPs' electoral incentives produced by the reform did not lead to a statistically significant contraction of their PQs' geographical focus. This holds true even when I use Post 2, which started two years after the electoral reform, as the second term. Conversely, before the electoral reform SMD legislators were significantly more geographically focused than MMD members (mandate divide), at least when considering the larger group of MPs included in Models 1 and 2. Moreover, after the reform the effect of the electoral tier becomes insignificant (regression outputs not reported here).

While the effects of the decrease in electoral incentives are insignificant, a growing body of work argues that null findings do not necessarily rule out the presence of meaningful effects (Lakens et al. 2018; Rainey 2014). Following these contributions, I run equivalence tests to check how large an effect can be, given my findings. The results cannot exclude an effect as high as 12 percentage points, which would be equal to the impact of being elected in the majoritarian tier before the reform. Nonetheless, it is important to contextualize these results. To summarise, the findings indicate that (a) there is a significant difference between majoritarian and proportional MPs *before* the electoral reform, in line with the mandate divide hypothesis; (b) majoritarian MPs did not significantly decrease their geographical focus when electoral incentives

1. Analyses of bills produce results largely consistent with these (see Paper 1<sub>ei</sub>).





Note: The coefficient plot visualises the results of Models 2 and 4 in Table 4 of Paper 1<sub>ei</sub>.

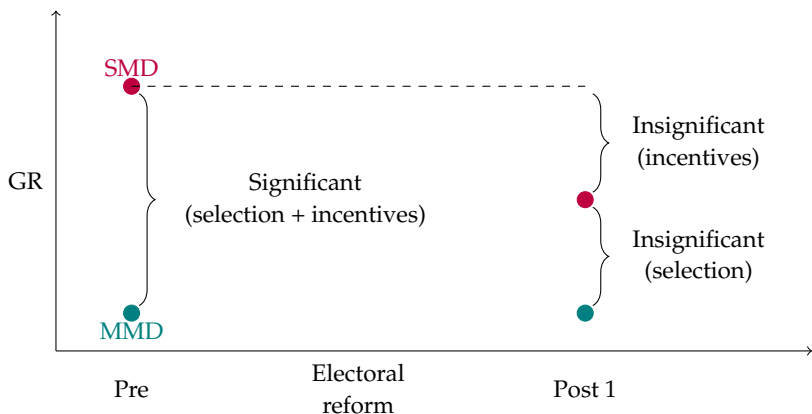
**Figure 4.1.** The effects of electoral incentives on geographical representation

shrank; and (c) the difference between majoritarian and proportional MPs attenuates and becomes insignificant *after* the electoral reform. Figure 4.2 visually summarises these findings.

My interpretation of these results is that neither electoral incentives nor selection independently affect legislators' geographical focus. When they operate together (*Pre* in Figure 4.2), electoral incentives and selection produce a significant effect (a). However, when controlling for selection effects, the impact of electoral incentives (the difference-in-differences) is insignificant (b). Similarly, the disappearance of the mandate divide after the reform (c), in the absence of different incentives, suggests that selection alone cannot account for the pre-reform mandate divide either.

The Appendix to Paper 1<sub>ei</sub> provides an extensive set of supplemental analyses, including models where parliamentary questions/bills are the unit of analysis (with the goal of increasing the number of observations) and models with fixed-effects specifications. Robustness checks also consider different operationalisations of the dependent variable (e.g., a count variable instead of the proportion of geographical activities). In line with the main results, these additional findings show an insignificant effect of electoral incentives.

In conclusion, the results do not support my theoretical expectations as the reduction in electoral incentives experienced by formerly majoritarian MPs did not yield a significant change in their geographical focus. While the results mainly speak to scholars interested in dy-

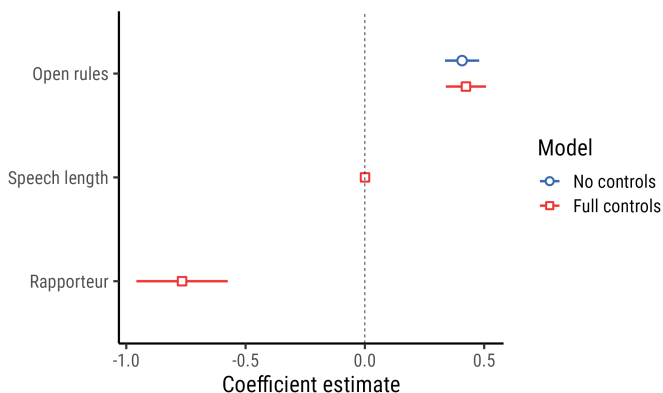


**Figure 4.2.** Summary of the results: GR, incentives, and selection

adic representation, they also make a more general point regarding the consequences of electoral institutions on legislators' behaviour. Most results found in the literature are potentially undermined by the selection effects I have described. This is clearly illustrated by my findings: the classic design (comparing legislators across the mixed-system tiers) found significant results in line with expectations; however, no robust evidence supports an independent effect of electoral incentives.

## 4.2 How does party control influence geographical representation?

Having examined the influence of electoral incentives, I now turn to investigating the relationship between geographical representation in parliament and party control. In Paper 2<sub>fr</sub> I approach this question by examining how the intensity of geographical representation varies for different levels of party control. As detailed earlier, I do so in the context of legislative speeches in the Italian lower house. This context constitutes a suitable setting to explore this question because it provides variation in parliamentary rules across debates on ordinary and conversion bills. In particular, I compare MPs' speech behaviour under restrictive (ordinary bills) and permissive rules (conversion bills) to study the impact of party control. I expect a positive effect of open rules on geographical repres-



*Note:* The coefficient plot visualises the results of Models 1 and 2 (individual fixed-effects conditional logit) in Table 2 of Paper 2<sub>fr</sub>.

**Figure 4.3.** The effects of open rules on geographical representation

entation in speeches, thanks to MPs' ability to self-select into debates and to the lower level of coordination within parties.

The results, visualised in Figure 4.3, support the theoretical expectations. Individual fixed-effects models indicate that open rules are conducive to more intense geographical representation. The effect of open rules remains positive and significant also with the inclusion of speech topic controls, indicating that their impact is not driven by different issues being discussed in debates with different rules. As for the substantive interpretation of the findings, open rules increase the probability of a geographical speech by five percentage points.

To further investigate the relationship between party control and geographical representation, I conduct additional analyses to explore whether the effects of open rules are limited to a subset of MPs or debates (Appendix to Paper 2<sub>fr</sub>). More specifically, I look at how the impact of permissive rules is conditioned by MPs' degree of alignment with the party leadership, debates' suitability for geographical representation, and legislators' electoral incentives. First, MPs' loyalty might be a moderating variable as open rules could be particularly important for legislators who are most likely to be disadvantaged by party control, namely those who breach party unity in votes on the floor. The results, however, indicate that this is not the case, showing a consistent effect of permissive rules for different levels of MP loyalty. Second, the results just presented might be confined to debates that, due to the nature of the

topic discussed, are particularly prone to being geographically focused. To probe this possibility, I classify debate topics according to the classification of distributive policy domains proposed by the literature on legislative committees (Shugart et al. 2021; Stratmann and Baur 2002). Again, the results indicate that the effect of open rules is robust for both district-oriented and non-district-oriented debates. Finally, I examine whether the effects are present only for MPs with higher personal vote incentives, who might have a greater need to take advantage of open rules. Still, the impact of open rules is the same for MPs elected with majoritarian and closed-list PR rules. All in all, the results suggest a general effect of open rules on geographical representation for a wide set of MPs and debates.

### **4.3 How does geographical representation influence MPs' careers?**

The results reported in the previous section showed that the greater the control exerted by parties on legislators' behaviour in parliament, the smaller the room for geographical representation. Still, my argument did not imply that party leaders are necessarily hostile to MPs' efforts to cater to local constituents. Parties have goals they want to pursue through legislative speeches, and these goals might simply prevail over legislators' desire to be district oriented. To test how parties evaluate MPs' local orientation more directly, therefore, I shift the focus on geographical representation as an explanatory variable. In particular, this section looks at the most fundamental rewards parties can provide to their members in parliament: the opportunity to run again at the next election and good electoral prospects to win a seat.

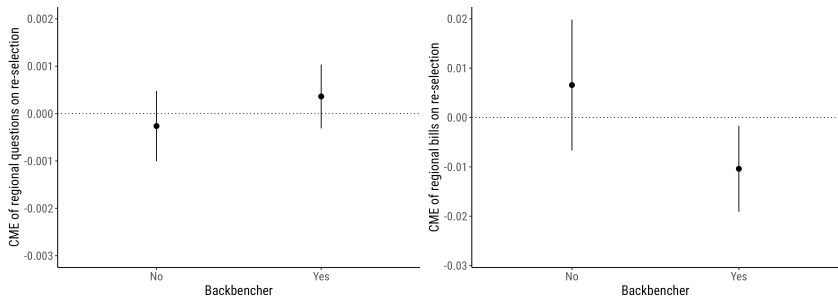
As introduced earlier, my theoretical expectations hinge on two considerations. First, I contend that parties have preferences regarding which parliamentary activities should be used to deliver geographical representation. In particular, I expect the party leadership to prefer that members use written questions rather than bills to cater to their constituents. The reasons for this are that bills, considering the effort required, are less efficient tools for local purposes compared to parliamentary questions, and that too many local bills can dilute a party's policy platform. Second, I posit that party leaders also have preferences regarding which legislators should be in charge of geographical representation, namely those who have more time, more expertise, and more opportunities to represent their districts. The resulting hypotheses are

that geographical representation in written PQs positively impacts on the electoral prospects (re-selection and safe candidacy) of backbencher, local, and distributive committee MPs. An opposite, negative effect is expected for these groups of MPs when they use bills to provide geographical representation.

The number of geographical questions and bills is interacted with backbencher status, local experience, and distributive committee membership to investigate whether the impact of geographical representation on re-selection is conditional on these dimensions. Starting from parliamentary questions, the results of logistic regressions with re-selection as dependent variable do not support the hypothesis that the pattern of division of labour described above impacts on party leaders' decisions regarding whom to renominate. As depicted in the left-hand side graphs of Figure 4.4 (see Paper 3<sub>rs</sub> for the full models), the effect of geographical questions on re-selection is indistinguishable from zero (i.e., the confidence intervals overlap with zero) independently of MPs' backbencher status, local experience, and committee membership. The results are robust to alternative specifications, including a different operationalisation of the dependent variable and of local experience and models where members elected in parties which had some element of open/decentralised candidate selection are excluded from the analyses.

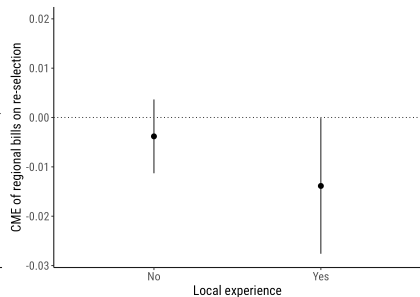
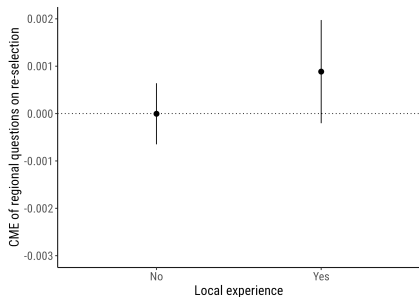
Turning to bills, a pattern in line with the theoretical expectations emerges. The conditional marginal effects plots in the right panel of Figure 4.4 are consistent with the idea that party leaders discourage the MPs who have more opportunities to deliver geographical representation from using bills to perform this task. In particular, for backbenchers, MPs with local experience, and MPs who sit in distributive committees, sponsoring geographical bills is detrimental to their re-selection prospects. By contrast, the re-selection of MPs with leadership positions, without local experience, and with membership in other committees is not affected by geographical bills.

If anything, geographical representation can worsen incumbents' probability of being re-selected by their parties. In closed-list settings, however, a crucial dimension is candidates' list position, which voters cannot modify. Therefore, I also look at whether legislative activities with a geographical focus influence MPs' electoral safety at the next election. As shown in Figure 4.5, the safety of an incumbent's list position is not influenced by geographical representation, irrespective of the dimensions based on which the division of labour is expected to occur. The conditional marginal effects plots illustrate that the impact of geographical representation is always indistinguishable from zero and



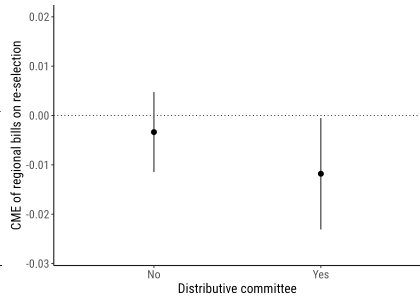
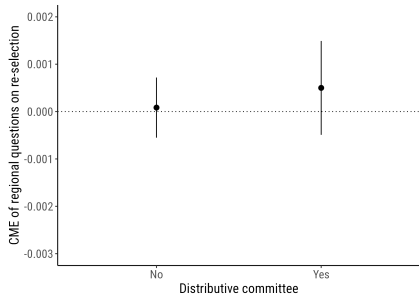
**(a) Backbencher, PQs**

**(b) Backbencher, bills**



**(c) Local, PQs**

**(d) Local, bills**



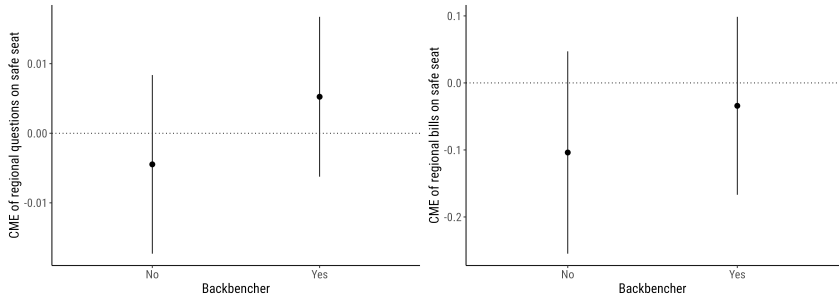
**(e) Distributive committee, PQs**

**(f) Distributive committee, bills**

Note: The conditional marginal effects plots visualise the results of Models 2, 3, and 4 (logistic regressions) in Table 2 of Paper 3<sub>RS</sub>.

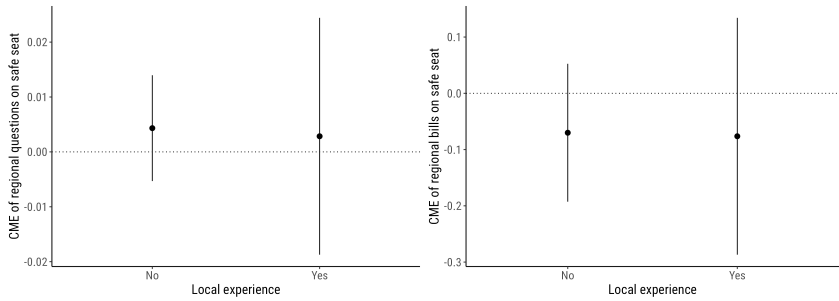
**Figure 4.4.** Marginal effects of geographical representation on re-selection

that the null findings hold for both parliamentary questions and bills. Robustness tests using a dichotomous measure of seat safety reproduce the null results. In conclusion, the empirical evidence indicates that geographical representation is only relevant for the party leadership's decision regarding which members to de-select. In particular, MPs who deliver geographical representation through private members' bills are less likely to be re-selected by their parties. By contrast, the hypothesis that geographical representation influences incumbents' positions on the list is not supported.



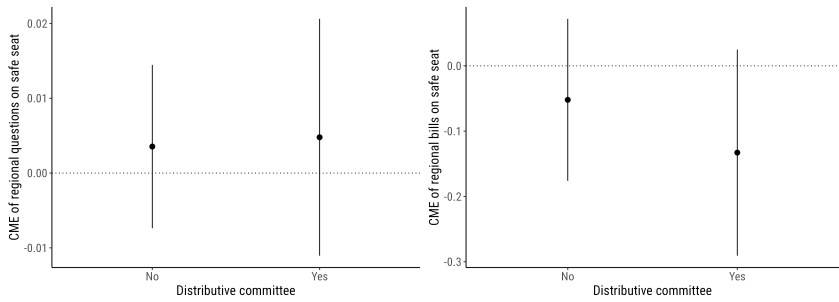
**(a) Backbencher, PQs**

**(b) Backbencher, bills**



**(c) Local, PQs**

**(d) Local, bills**



**(e) Distributive committee, PQs**

**(f) Distributive committee, bills**

Note: The conditional marginal effects plots visualise the results of Models 2, 3, and 4 (OLS regressions) in Table 2 of Paper 3<sub>RS</sub>.

**Figure 4.5.** Marginal effects of geographical representation on safe list position



# Chapter 5

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I provide a summary of the main results of the three papers. I then examine the core theoretical and empirical contributions of the thesis. Finally, I discuss the implication of the findings, their limitations, and possible extensions for further research.

### 5.1 Summary of the findings

In this thesis, I set out to explore causes and consequences of geographical representation. Table 5.1 summarises the theoretical expectations and the empirical findings. The first research question that I addressed is whether geographical representation is responsive to electoral incentives. In short, I find that electoral incentives matter less than one would expect based on the existing literature. In particular, a decrease in electoral incentives failed to exert a significant impact on legislators' propensity to represent their local constituents in parliament. The insignificant results hold even when I consider the long-term effects of a change in incentives to account for the possibility that MPs' behaviour is inelastic in the short term. By contrast, I find support for the mandate divide hypothesis, indicating that electoral incentives coupled with selection effects make MPs elected under more candidate-centred rules more geographically focused.

As another potential driver of geographical representation, I focus on parliamentary rules. Leveraging variation in floor access rules in the Italian lower house, I am able to show that MPs are more likely to be geographically focused when their party does not formally control who has access to the floor. The effect of parliamentary rules finds support across different groups of MPs and types of debates. Specifically, the effect is robust across MPs with different electoral incentives and degrees of alignment with the party leadership, as well as across topics varying in their potential for geographical representation.

**Table 5.1.** Overview of hypotheses and findings

Paper	Hypothesis	Findings
1 <sub>ei</sub>	MPs' propensity to provide geographical representation is higher in SMDs than in MMDs ( <i>H1</i> ).	✓
	Switching from a SMD to a closed-list MMD has a negative effect on MPs' geographical representation ( <i>H2</i> ).	✗
	The longer the time elapsed since an electoral reform, the smaller the effect of previous electoral incentives on MPs' geographical representation ( <i>H3</i> ).	✗
2 <sub>fr</sub>	Under open-access (compared to party-centred) floor rules, legislators are more likely to deliver geographically targeted speeches ( <i>H4</i> ).	✓
3 <sub>rs</sub>	Geographical representation in written PQs increases the probability of re-selection and safe candidacy for backbencher/locally experienced/distributive committee MPs ( <i>H5a</i> , <i>H5b</i> , <i>H5c</i> ).	✗
	Geographical representation in bills decreases the probability of re-selection and safe candidacy for backbencher/locally experienced/distributive committee MPs ( <i>H6a</i> , <i>H6b</i> , <i>H6c</i> ).	✓*

Notes: ✓ = statistically significant support for the hypothesis; ✗ = no statistically significant relationship; \* = only for re-selection.

Moreover, I analyse whether MPs' efforts to advance local constituents' interests is beneficial to their careers in parliament. Focusing on the Italian party-centred context, I show that the effects of geographical representation on re-selection and re-election prospects are conditional on the types of parliamentary activities involved and on the group of legislators engaging in this task. The results indicate that while written questions with a local focus do not have any impact on MPs' re-(s)election chances, MPs who sponsor geographical bills can be sanctioned by the party leadership in the form of lower chances of being re-selected. In particular, this negative effect is found for the members who are theoretically more likely to deliver geographical representation – backbenchers, MPs with local ties, and those with opportunities to engage in distributive policies.

## 5.2 Contributions

Theoretically, this thesis contributes to the literatures on electoral systems and legislative behaviour by drawing a distinction between electoral incentives and selection. The existing literature has often assumed that the effects of electoral systems are conceptually equivalent to those of electoral incentives (e.g., Stratmann and Baur 2002). Stated differently, it has been assumed that all the effects of electoral institutions on legislators' behaviour can be attributed to electoral incentives. However, I contend that this approach neglects another possible channel that connects electoral systems to legislators' behaviour – political selection. As previous contributions have largely missed this distinction, it is unclear whether electoral institutions are consequential in driving politicians' behaviour or in selecting different types of politicians. On this theoretical basis, I empirically show that electoral incentives, isolated from selection effects, do not significantly alter legislators' geographical focus.

I then make a second contribution to the growing literature on legislative speeches. Existing studies have mainly focused on the unequal allocation of floor time within party groups (Proksch and Slapin 2012). In this framework, parliamentary rules have been seen as tools that can enhance parties' ability to keep ideologically misaligned legislators off the floor (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2016). In this thesis, instead, I offer a theory of how parliamentary rules can affect individual MPs' speech-making behaviour. Given that the goals of parties and legislators during

legislative debates can diverge, I argue that lower party control allows MPs to be more geographically centred.

Moreover, another contribution of the thesis is to provide a direct test of how party control influences legislators' behaviour, and in particular their propensity to deliver geographical representation. Previous research has focused on how legislators' behaviour differs across activities that are more or less controlled by parliamentary party groups. For instance, Baumann (2016) compares issue emphasis in activities that differ in terms of party control (PMBs and speeches). Similarly, Bhattacharya (2023) argues that party control reduces MPs' opportunities to express dissent by contrasting legislative speeches with written explanations of vote. However, these studies cannot rule out the possibility that differences in MPs' behaviour across activities with different levels of party control are driven by differences in the characteristics of the activities (and in politicians' preferences regarding how to use them) rather than by party control itself.

This dissertation also contributes to the literature on geographical representation. A common claim is that as long as it does not lead to voting against the party line on the floor, geographical representation in parliament is a supplement to partisan representation, and that parties can benefit from their members' local efforts (Zittel et al. 2019). While this argument might apply under some conditions, when extended to a wide set of individual activities in parliament it underestimates the risks that geographical representation may entail. From this perspective, I argue that using lawmaking activities (i.e., bills) to advance local interests can dilute a party's policy platform and is therefore discouraged by the party leadership. Even when it does not challenge party unity, geographical representation emerges as a potentially contentious form of representation, where individual MPs and party leaders' preferences can diverge.

### **5.3 Implications and further research**

Taken together, the results indicate that electoral incentives are not a strong determinant of geographical representation. Coupled with the observation that being geographically focused in lawmaking activities can be detrimental to MPs' re-selection, these results raise the question of why representatives do it anyway. A possible answer is related to intrinsic motivation. Legislators might be intrinsically interested in representing the district and consider this task a constitutive part of their

role as representatives, irrespective of its returns. This tendency would explain why legislators are constituency-oriented even in party-centred contexts and despite the negative consequences that might arise. This argument would also help to explain the null effects of electoral incentives. If the tiers of a mixed system select politicians with different role orientations, changes in MPs' incentives might not translate into changes in their behaviour. Such a dynamic is also linked to socialisation: legislators might be socialised in specific roles (partly defined by electoral institutions), which can be difficult to modify.

Another possible explanation points to a non-electoral type of incentive. Legislators might use their parliamentary activities to transition towards a non-parliamentary career. Specifically, constituency activities can help MPs to secure a political career at the local level (Chiru and Gherghina 2020). While this is a plausible possibility, it seems unable to provide a general account of the phenomenon as most legislators are likely to have progressive ambition (Schlesinger 1966). All in all, further research could provide insights on MPs' attitudes towards geographical representation.

The picture that emerges from this thesis and from the literature on voters' representational preferences seems consistent with Carey's (2007) competing principals theory. Voters and party leaders appear to pull legislators in different directions, at least with respect to geographical representation. In particular, the fact that party control has negative consequences for geographical representation points to an important representational trade-off. Parties use parliamentary rules in a way that constrains MPs' geographical focus and sanction MPs who have more opportunities to advance local interests when they do so in lawmaking activities. However, voters like locally oriented legislators, and disappointing their representational expectations can negatively impact trust in politicians (Bøggild 2020). In short, geographical representation highlights a tension between dyadic and partisan representation, at least in party-centred contexts.<sup>1</sup>

However, two caveats are worth keeping in mind. First, while there is evidence of voters' positive assessments of legislators' local efforts (e.g., Vivyan and Wagner 2016), we do not know whether voters care about geographical activities in parliament specifically. Second, the question of what parties think of extra-parliamentary constituency service is still open. As a consequence, constituency service might reconcile parties' desire to have a group of disciplined and cohesive legislators

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1. In candidate-centred environments, where parties benefit more from individual politicians' reputations, the two forms of representation might be less in tension.

and voters' preference for locally oriented representatives. Further research on these topics can shed light on whether this is the case.

Even assuming that voters like geographical representation, this does not settle the normative debate on this form of representation. The trade-off between local and national representation is a long debated and unresolved controversy in political theory. In his speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774, Edmund Burke (2000, p. 55) famously maintained that

parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; [...] but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not member of Bristol, but he is a member of parliament.

Burke's concerns about the perils of local representation, where narrow local interests clash with each other, were echoed by the Federalists in the debate on the American constitution. As an example, James Madison, arguing in favour of large districts to counteract the prevalence of territorial representation, wrote that 'we find the representatives of Counties and corporations in the Legislatures of the States, much more disposed to sacrifice the aggregate interest, and even authority, to the local views of the Constituents: than the latter to the former' (Hutchinson et al. 1962, p. 211). Conversely, the Anti-Federalists, who opposed the ratification of the constitution, strongly disputed the centralisation of power and advocated for a system providing representation of local concerns through small communities of interest, which would enable close ties between constituents and representatives (McWilliams 1989; Rehfeld 2005).

The two camps are also reflected in the political science scholarship on particularism (Decadri 2020). On the one hand, Cox (1987) argues that MPs focusing on the provision of particularistic goods vis-à-vis the promotion of diffuse interests results in legislative inefficiency. This line of research is linked to work on distributive policies and pork barrel politics, where particularism is often equated with the inefficient allocation of resources (Golden and Min 2013; Weingast et al. 1981). This would open the way for inequalities in representation, with some citizens better represented than others (Papp 2020), as suggested by the debate on whether parties' optimal targets of distributive policies are

core supporters or swing voters (Cox and McCubbins 1986; Lindbeck and Weibull 1987). In this regard, future research could study whether there is a link between the attention devoted to a geographical area in parliament and the share of public resources that it attracts. On the other hand, other scholars have contended that MPs who represent local interests perform an essential representational task, increasing the quality of representation (Leston-Bandeira 2012; Miller and Stokes 1963; Munroe 1977).

More recent contributions have gone one step further, questioning the territorial definition of electoral constituencies that is dominant in current representative democracies. Rehfeld (2005) proposes a definition of constituency based on two main normative criteria: permanence and heterogeneity. Constituencies should be stable over time to ensure accountability (*permanence*) and composite enough to make them resemble the nation as a whole (*heterogeneity*). The solution he advocates is thus permanent random constituencies to which citizens are assigned when they become eligible to vote. While assessing these normative claims is beyond the scope of this thesis, this discussion shows that geographical representation lies at the core of political representation and carries substantial implications for representative democracy.

The results also illustrate the importance of parliamentary rules. Parliamentary rules are often considered malleable by parties, which shape them in the ways that best advance their goals (Proksch and Slapin 2015; Shomer 2015; Sieberer et al. 2011). Moreover, in some cases informal party rules can prevail over formal ones (Alemán and Micozzi 2022). Still, my results indicate that parliamentary rules do matter. At the same time, the findings raise another puzzle. If under restrictive rules parties get the desired level of geographical representation, the higher levels found under open rules would imply its over-provision. The question then is why parties do not change rules to have more control of the floor. A possible tentative answer comes from Cox (2000), who argues that the costs in terms of time and effort that changing the rules and building the required parliamentary coalition entail can deter parties from amending standing orders. In the Italian case, this argument might explain why open rules apply to debates that, given the fast-track of the type of bills discussed, would benefit more from party-centred rules. Still, as geographical representation is only one aspect of legislative speeches, this set of rules might represent an equilibrium from other intra-party perspectives. Overall, further research is needed to understand how parties view this issue.

An additional point relates to the finding that re-selection appears to be unrelated to geographical representation in written questions. While written questions are widely recognised as the individual parliamentary activity that is least constrained by parties, some authors have argued that they are coordinated and articulated in PPGs given the collective benefits they can provide to parties (Fernandes et al. 2019; Fernandes et al. 2018). Consistently, Geese and Martínez-Cantó (2022) show that legislators from the same parties coordinate efforts to represent local constituents through PQs. In this thesis, the null results with respect to written questions do not rule out intra-party coordination, but indicate that, if some coordination exists, it does not necessarily imply strong enforcement with regard re-(s)election prospects. Coordination might also be encouraged with other types of rewards, such as party office. A promising route for future research would be to study which, and to what extent, activities are coordinated within party groups, which criteria are used to coordinate, and with what set of positive and negative incentives.

Finally, from an institutional design perspective, the findings highlight three important aspects. First, reforming electoral institutions might not immediately change the way politicians represent voters, as the effect of a change of incentives can be limited. Over time, the persistence of behavioural routines might fade, although I found no evidence of this mechanism in the medium run. Moreover, new entrants, selected under different electoral rules and with potentially different focuses or styles of representation, will gradually enter into parliament. As a consequence, the combined effect of incentives and selection is more likely to significantly alter MPs' behaviour.

Second, these results underscore the role of parliamentary rules in facilitating or constraining geographical representation. However, this finding is contingent on parties' preferences for allocating floor time and on legislators' motivation. Regarding the former, in candidate-centred (compared to party-centred) contexts, parties might attach greater importance to individual MPs' personal vote-seeking activities, given their more substantial impact on parties' electoral performance. Germane to this argument, previous research has shown that parties are more willing to give the floor to backbenchers in candidate-centred environments (Proksch and Slapin 2012). As for the latter, the impact of open rules hinges on legislators' inclinations to be geographically focused. While the literature has demonstrated that geographical representation is a common phenomenon across countries with different political institutions and cultures (Blumenau and Damiani 2021; Chiru 2021; Geese and



Martínez-Cantó 2022; Martin 2011; Russo 2011), if legislators are not interested in catering to local constituents to begin with, open rules might not increase the intensity of geographical representation.

Third, and related to the second point, the impact of geographical representation on re-selection might be different in candidate-centred contexts. My arguments address party-centred contexts, where parties are likely to reap limited benefits from geographical representation. Where electoral rules are more candidate-centred, with a higher optimal level of geographical representation, parties might not need to deter MPs from advancing local interests.

These considerations speak to the generalisability of the findings of this thesis. The extent to which the results travel to other settings is likely to depend on the prevalence of the geographical focus of representation and on the party-centredness of the setting. The effect of parliamentary rules may be more pronounced when legislators are motivated or incentivised to deliver geographical representation. In these cases, MPs are more eager to take advantage of the open access to the floor to deliver a message to their constituents. However, in contexts with high personal vote incentives, parties benefit more from geographical representation and have fewer incentives to limit MPs' attempts to represent local constituents, even when they have formal control of the floor. A similar argument applies to re-selection. In candidate-centred contexts, parties might not need to enforce a division of labour for geographical representation; or if they do, it could be based on different criteria from those that I have proposed.



## English summary

A crucial dimension of representative democracy is how legislators represent voters. Models of political representation depict MPs as agents of their parties, which are held accountable by voters (collective representation) or as delegates of their constituents (dyadic representation). While in the European context collective representation has emerged as the dominant model, it has been observed that even in this setting MPs devote a considerable part of their work in parliament to representing their local constituents, which I call *geographical representation*.

Still, our understanding of the drivers and consequences of geographical representation is limited. This thesis examines whether the institutional setting, defined by electoral and parliamentary rules, affects MPs' efforts to deliver geographical representation in parliament. In addition, it investigates whether adopting a geographical focus helps MPs to win re-selection and re-election in party-centred contexts, where parties heavily control these processes.

Electoral systems have usually been identified as the main driver of legislators' local focus. However, the existing literature has not distinguished between two distinct mechanisms that can connect electoral institutions to legislators' behaviour: electoral incentives and political selection. Moreover, parliamentary rules have often been assumed endogenous and aligned to electoral rules, and their potential impact on geographical representation has remained largely unexplored. Conversely, I argue that parliamentary rules, by defining the level of control that parties can exert over individual MPs' activities in the legislature, can affect the scope for geographical representation. Finally, I explore how party leaders assess legislators' geographical activities. To do so, I look at whether geographical representation in parliament affects MPs' re-selection and re-election prospects in party-centred contexts.

The empirical analyses reveal three main findings. First, electoral incentives alone do not seem to be a significant driver of geographical representation. By contrast, electoral systems characterised by high personal vote incentives significantly increase legislators' geographical focus when incentives and selection effects are jointly considered. Second,

parliamentary rules that increase floor control hinder geographical representation in legislative speeches. Third, MPs who are delegated geographical representation (backbenchers, MPs with local experience, and MPs sitting in distributive committees) and use lawmaking activities to do so enjoy marginally worse re-selection prospects.

The main contribution of this dissertation to the existing literature is therefore twofold. On the one hand, the effects of electoral incentives on legislators' behaviour found in previous research might be overstated, and future studies need to distinguish between incentives and selection when assessing the impact of electoral systems. On the other hand, I show that, contrary to the prevailing expectation, geographical representation is not necessarily a supplement to party representation. Parties might constrain legislators' local efforts in parliament, which can even lead to negative effects on MPs' careers when they involve lawmaking activities. Coupled with the finding emerging from other studies that voters like district-oriented representatives, this dissertation shows the potential trade-off between collective and dyadic representation.

## Dansk resumé

En afgørende dimension af det repræsentative demokrati er, hvordan lovgiverne repræsenterer vælgerne. Modeller for politisk repræsentation skildrer parlamentsmedlemmer som agenter for deres partier, der holdes ansvarlige af vælgerne (kollektiv repræsentation) eller som delegerede for deres vælgere (dyadisk repræsentation). Mens kollektiv repræsentation i europæisk sammenhæng har vist sig at være den dominerende model, er det blevet observeret, at parlamentsmedlemmer selv i denne sammenhæng bruger en betydelig del af deres arbejde i parlamentet på at repræsentere deres lokale vælgere, hvilket jeg kalder *geografisk repræsentation*.

Alligevel er vores forståelse af drivkræfterne bag og konsekvenserne af geografisk repræsentation begrænset. Denne afhandling undersøger, om de institutionelle rammer, defineret af valg- og parlamentariske regler, påvirker parlamentsmedlemmernes bestræbelser på at levere geografisk repræsentation i parlamentet. Desuden undersøges det, om et geografisk fokus hjælper parlamentsmedlemmer med at blive genvalgt i parti-centrerede kontekster, hvor partierne i høj grad kontrollerer disse processer.

Valgsystemer er normalt blevet identificeret som den vigtigste drivkraft for lovgivernes lokale fokus. Den eksisterende litteratur har dog ikke skelnet mellem to forskellige mekanismer, der kan forbinde valginstitutioner med lovgivernes adfærd: genvalgsincitamentet og politisk udvælgelse. Desuden er parlamentariske regler ofte blevet anset for at være endogene og tilpasset valgreglerne, og deres potentielle indvirkning på geografisk repræsentation er stort set udforskede. Omvendt argumenterer jeg for, at parlamentariske regler, ved at definere niveauet af kontrol, som partier kan udøve over individuelle parlamentsmedlemmers aktiviteter i den lovgivende forsamling, kan påvirke mulighederne for geografisk repræsentation. Endelig undersøger jeg, hvordan partilederne vurderer lovgivernes geografiske aktiviteter. Det gør jeg ved at se på, om geografisk repræsentation i parlamentet påvirker parlamentsmedlemmernes muligheder for at blive genvalgt i parti-centrerede sammenhænge.

De empiriske analyser afslører tre hovedresultater. For det første synes genvalgsincitamenter alene ikke at være en væsentlig drivkraft for geografisk repræsentation. Derimod øger valgsystemer, der er karakteriseret ved incitament til at få mange personlige stemmer, lovgivernes geografiske fokus betydeligt, når incitamenter og udvælgelseffekter tages i betragtning. For det andet hæmmer parlamentariske regler, der øger partikontrollen, geografisk repræsentation i taler i parlamentet. For det tredje har parlamentsmedlemmer, der får uddelegeret geografisk repræsentation (*backbenchers*, parlamentsmedlemmer med lokal erfaring og parlamentsmedlemmer, der sidder i fordelingsudvalg), og som bruger lovgivningsaktiviteter til at gøre det, marginalt dårligere udsigter til genvalg.

Denne afhandlings vigtigste bidrag til den eksisterende litteratur er derfor todelt. På den ene side kan effekten af genvalgsincitamenter på lovgivernes adfærd, som er fundet i tidligere forskning, være overvurderet, og fremtidige studier er nødt til at skelne mellem incitamenter og udvælgelse, når de vurderer effekten af valgsystemer. På den anden side viser jeg, at geografisk repræsentation, i modsætning til den fremherskende forventning, ikke nødvendigvis er et supplement til partirepræsentation. Partier kan begrænse lovgivernes lokale indsats i parlamentet, hvilket endda kan føre til negative effekter på parlamentsmedlemmernes karrierer, når de involverer lovgivningsaktiviteter. Sammen med resultaterne fra andre undersøgelser, der viser, at vælgerne kan lide valgkredsorienterede repræsentanter, viser denne afhandling den potentielle afvejning mellem kollektiv og dyadisk repræsentation.

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