Geographical Representation on the Floor
Parliamentary Rules and Legislative Speeches in Party-Centred Contexts[*]

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Abstract

The degree of party control of parliamentary debates influences which MPs take the floor. However, we do not know whether floor access rules matter also for the content of speeches. Drawing on a corpus of speeches delivered in bill debates in the Italian lower house over ten years, I investigate how variation in floor access rules across comparable debates shapes MPs' geographical representation in their legislative speeches. The findings reveal that open-access rules increase the intensity of geographical representation compared to when parties allocate speaking time, pointing to a tension between party control and dyadic representation. Additionally, this study demonstrates that the effect of open rules on geographical representation is consistent across MPs with different electoral incentives and degrees of alignment with party leadership, as well as across topics varying in their potential for geographical representation.

Introduction

MPs' representational focus has been a long-debated topic at least since Burke's famous speech to the electors of Bristol, in which he argued 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' (Burke 2000: 55). Recent studies have shown that legislators' district orientation is not only normatively important but has relevant implications

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for citizens' evaluation of politicians (Bøggild 2020; Bøggild and Pedersen 2020; Vivyan and Wagner 2015).

Legislators' local focus is often interpreted as a manifestation of dyadic representation, which conceptualises representation as the relationship between voters in a district and their elected representative. The alternative collective (or partisan) model, instead, highlights the importance of the bond between voters and parties, with individual MPs acting as party delegates (Thomassen and Andeweg 2004). A large body of research has addressed how MPs face competing demands from their party and voters in roll-call votes (Carey 2007; Sieberer et al. 2011), but we know considerably less about the extent to which parties constrain MPs' geographical scope.

To explore how partisan control affects geographical representation, I examine the consequences of different rules regulating MPs' access to the parliamentary floor. At the core of my argument is the notion that parliamentary rules that allow parties to control access to the floor limit parliamentarians' ability to participate in debates that are relevant to their local constituency, thus reducing their opportunities to deliver a geographical speech. Moreover, I contend that party control on speaking time also translates into higher scrutiny from the party leadership on the content of members' speeches, discouraging narrow local references to the advantage of broader policy messages. By contrast, the greater independence enjoyed by speakers who are able to self-select into debates increases their chances to deliver a local speech.

Empirically, I test this argument by analysing a corpus of speeches delivered in bill debates in the Italian lower house over ten years (2013–2022). Italy represents a good setting to investigate my hypothesis as it exhibits variation in floor access rules across types of legislative debates that should be equally suitable for geographical representation otherwise. The results show that, consistent with the expectations, legislators are more likely to mention geographical references in their districts under open-access vis-à-vis party rules. Additional analyses also indicate that the effect of open rules is similar across groups of MPs with different electoral incentives and different degrees of alignment with the party leadership, as well as across topics that vary in their potential for geographical representation.

By examining MPs' participation in legislative debates, I focus on a crucial element of democratic policy-making: as the original meaning of the word suggests, parliament is an arena for debate, and speaking on the floor is the quintessential MPs' task. While legislative speeches can also foster deliberation and persuasion in parliament (Bächtiger 2014), they represent strategic tools that politicians can use to communicate to voters, their party leaders, and other parties (Laver 2021; Proksch and Slapin 2012). Compared to other legislative activities,

speeches are more visible and are often picked up by the media (Fernandes et al. 2021; Maltzman and Sigelman 1996; Yildirim et al. 2023). Moreover, speeches provide MPs with an opportunity to engage in the three re-election-seeking activities identified by Mayhew (1974), without breaking party unity: they allow MPs to publicly state their policy preferences (*position taking*), to claim credit for the work they undertake for their constituents (*credit claiming*), and to promote their name (*advertising*). For these reasons, speeches can be seen as suitable tools for delivering geographical representation.

This paper makes two main contributions. First, it develops a theoretical argument about the connection between parliamentary rules and speech content. While previous work has focused on the allocation of speaking time within party groups, I show that floor access rules are also consequential for the message delivered by the speakers. Second, the article sheds light on how party control can influence dyadic representation. The existing literature has only indirectly looked at the effect of party discipline on geographical representation, for instance by comparing different types of activities with alleged different levels of party control (Baumann 2016). I contribute to this line of research by contrasting similar parliamentary activities with different partisan control, showing that it negatively affects geographical representation.

Parliamentary rules and floor access

By definition, legislative debates take place in an institutionalised parliamentary setting with specific organisational criteria. Legislative organisation defines the procedures that regulate the legislative process, including government formation and termination, agenda-setting powers, legislative-executive relations, and the rights of individual legislators (Alemán 2015; Shomer 2015). Procedural rules are essential to the functioning of parliament in order to prevent what Cox (2006) calls plenary bottlenecks, that is, inefficiencies resulting, *inter alia*, from MPs' unregulated access to the floor. Indeed, one of the crucial aspects of parliamentary rules relates to MPs' opportunities to deliver speeches on the floor. In this context, research distinguishes between two sets of rules depending on the actors who are first assigned floor time. Under open-access or permissive rules, floor time is allocated to MPs on an individual basis; that is, parties are not formally involved in the process. For instance, this is the case with debates in the House of Commons, where a member has to 'catch the Speaker's eye' just before the end of the previous speech in order to be given the floor (Blumenau and Damiani 2021). Alternatively, rules can be party-centred or restrictive: floor time is assigned to parliamentary party groups (usually in proportion to their seat share), which then decide how to re-allocate it internally. These are the rules

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that are commonly used in many European parliaments, including, for instance, the Bundestag (Müller et al. 2021).

Existing research has examined the consequences of floor access rules building on the literature on the intra-party politics of legislative speeches, which has studied the uneven allocation of speaking time within parliamentary party groups (PPGs). Moving from the consideration that plenary time is scarce and that only a limited number of MPs can deliver speeches on the floor, this line of research has shown that backbenchers, especially if ideologically distant from the party leadership, are less likely to take the floor (Proksch and Slapin 2012). This tendency intensifies during electoral campaigns (Bäck et al. 2019b), when parties need to present a consistent message to voters, which could be threatened by a larger and more ideologically heterogeneous list of speakers. Unequal allocation of floor time also occurs for non-electoral reasons as women enjoy less chances to take the floor than their male colleagues (Bäck et al. 2014).

Parliamentary rules condition parties' ability to control the allocation of floor time; in particular, restrictive rules help the party leadership to select speakers who better represent its views. By leveraging variation in restrictiveness of the rules that apply to different types of bills in Italy, Giannetti and Pedrazzani (2016) demonstrate that when parties formally control MPs' access to the floor, backbenchers are given less speech-making time compared to debates in which individual MPs have open access to the floor. Moreover, legislators of opposition parties are less likely to speak the more ideologically distant they are from their party leaders. However, Alemán and Micozzi (2022) show that parliamentary rules can be overruled by the informal party rules pertaining to different types of speeches. In their analysis of speech-making in Chile, they report that backbenchers were disadvantaged in their access to the floor in bill debates, despite formal open rules. By contrast, backbenchers were more likely than frontbenchers to intervene in non-lawmaking debates, more suitable for credit claiming before constituents. In these debates, parties also allowed rebel MPs (i.e., those voting against their party in roll-call votes) to take the floor (Alemán et al. 2017).

While there is evidence that parliamentary rules affect who can access the floor, existing research has largely neglected to investigate the impact of parliamentary rules on speech content. The only exceptions are two papers by Bhattacharaya, who shows that restrictive rules dampen intra-party dissent and diversity in the opinions expressed in Bundestag debates on the Eurozone crisis (Bhattacharya 2020; Bhattacharya 2023). Yet, these analyses leverage variation in rules by comparing floor speeches to explanations of vote, which are written and less visible activities. Therefore, the results might be driven by differences between floor activities (in terms of goals and saliency) more than by parliament-

ary rules.[1] Moreover, we still miss a comprehensive account of how the content of speeches is affected by the parliamentary rules in place.

Before turning to examine how floor access rules can affect geographical representation, a few words are needed to motivate why studying the effects of parliamentary rules as distinct from partisan control is theoretically grounded. Two objections can be raised. First, parties' informal rules can trump formal standing orders, as Alemán and Micozzi (2022) show. Still, their finding that parties can enforce party norms when floor rules are permissive does not imply that parliamentary rules are inconsequential. To draw this conclusion, we should find the same pattern in similar debates where different parliamentary rules are employed. Second, parties can modify parliamentary rules. Scholars have highlighted that parliamentary rules tend to be endogenous to electoral institutions. Parties can rather easily modify standing orders and strategically adopt the rules that better pursue their electoral goals (Shomer 2015; Sieberer et al. 2011; Zubek 2015). Parties opt for open-access rules when they benefit from MPs' personal vote seeking, while restrictive rules are preferred in party-centred contexts with limited salience of individual candidates (Carey and Shugart 1995; Keh 2015; Proksch and Slapin 2015). While parties can shape formal rules in the way that best suits their interests, it is also true that 'party leaders are effective in disciplining legislators only when institutional arrangements enable them to do so' (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2016: 775).[2] Parliamentary rules thus represent an institutional constraint to MPs' behaviour that is conceptually distinct from party discipline and electoral rules (Strøm 1997).

Geographical representation in legislative debates

To examine how parliamentary rules can affect the content of speeches, and specifically their geographical focus, an important consideration is that legislative speeches can perform different functions. On the one hand, speeches allow individual MPs to engage in personalised representation in the parliamentary arena, often with the goal of catering to their districts (Blumenau 2020; Bulut and İlter 2020; Fernandes et al. 2020; Lin and Osnabrügge 2018; Yildirim 2020). The incentives to cultivate a personal vote and the need to please decentralised selectorates are often considered the drivers of legislators' efforts to represent local constituents (Fernandes et al. 2020; Viganò 2024; Zittel et al. 2019). Yet high levels of geographical representation have been reported in party-centred contexts where

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1. Bhattacharya (2023: 557) acknowledges this point writing that 'discursive differences between the two channels *can be at least partially explained* by different rule sets' (italics added).
2. Party unity can also result from intrinsic motivation and cohesive preferences within parties thanks to, for instance, candidate selection (Cirone et al. 2021; Fiva and Nedregård 2024).

such incentives are limited (Borghetto et al. 2020; Geese and Martínez-Cantó 2022; Russo 2011), pointing to the role of local ties (Tavits 2009) and intrinsic motivation (Giger et al. 2020; Norris 1997). In this paper, therefore, I assume that legislators might want to engage in geographical representation even in environments with reduced electoral incentives.

On the other hand, legislative debates are not only useful for MPs' self-promotion but also serve parties' collective goals. Speeches enable parties to compete on issues (Ivanusch 2023) and governing parties to highlight the differences between them and their coalition partners (Martin and Vanberg 2008) and set the legislative agenda (Giannetti et al. 2016; Pedrazzani 2017). The bivalent nature of speeches implies that parties and individual MPs may have divergent priorities regarding legislative speech-making. The arguments presented below do not assume that parties are averse to geographical representation, which can rather supplement party representation and benefit the party's collective reputation (Kam 2009; Zittel et al. 2019). Instead, I claim that the other goals that parties want to pursue through legislative speeches can compete with, and possibly trump, MPs' localism, particularly in settings where parties only moderately benefit from personal vote seeking (i.e., the marginal benefits of geographical representation are relatively low).

My argument draws on Proksch and Slapin's (2012) delegation model of legislative speeches – in which party leaders, based on the electoral value of party unity, decide whether to delegate the floor to potentially rebel backbenchers – but departs from it in a crucial way. In particular, I argue that the game varies depending on the parliamentary rules in force.[3] Under party-centred rules, party leaders decide whether to delegate a speech to a member and which member to delegate. If party leaders fear that a specific MP cannot communicate effectively the party message on the floor, they can either deliver the speech themselves or delegate a more loyal member. Under open-access rules, the game does not formally involve delegation and members can directly choose to join a debate. Yet a strategic element persists as parties can still create informal rules to allocate floor time by using the perks they can offer to their members (e.g., legislative and party office, good re-election prospects, and staff resources). The extent to which such informal rules are enforced makes this second scenario more or less similar to the party-centred one.

The differences between the two scenarios have important implications for the geographical content of speeches. First, parliamentary rules impact the composition of the list of speakers, which in turn can systematically affect the content

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3. In theory, the two initial scenarios of the game result from a decision of party leaders to adopt restrictive or permissive floor rules. At a given point in time, however, parties could be unable to change rules (e.g., for difficulties in building a coalition supporting the reform), which I therefore model as exogenous.

of the speeches delivered. When the leadership has the opportunity to control access to the floor, it will select a speaker who better reflects the message that the party wants to communicate to voters and to other parties. This implies that the ideal speaker should not only be competent and informed about the bill on the agenda (Fernandes et al. 2019), but also express a position aligned with the party leadership (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2016; Proksch and Slapin 2012). Such a speaker could be, for instance, the party's spokeperson in the relevant policy area (Mickler et al. 2025). By contrast, especially in contexts where personal voting is limited, the leadership is not expected to prioritise MPs' desire to please local constituencies. As a result, the party leadership might not select the same speakers who would self-select into a debate for local reasons if rules allowed them to do so.

To make an example, consider a debate on unemployment. MPs elected in districts experiencing high levels of unemployment should have a strong interest in delivering a speech on this topic and in making a local case to show responsiveness to voters. However, the MPs who want to take the floor for geographical representation might differ from the ideal speakers from the party's perspective (e.g., they might lack committee expertise on the topic). In more extreme cases, the party leadership might fear that constituency pressures can make legislators deviate from the party line. Consistent with this, it has been shown that MPs from economically troubled districts are prevented from taking the floor by their parties, especially in debates on unemployment (Bäck et al. 2019a; Nedregård 2023). In conclusion, such a dynamic can reduce MPs' chances to speak in debates that are relevant to their constituents, thus dampening the opportunity to deliver geographical representation.

Second, MPs could adjust the content of their speeches to the legislative rules. This argument suggests that coordination between the member delivering the speech and the party leadership is likely to be stronger – and that speeches may be subject to greater preventive scrutiny – when PPGs delegate speakers compared to an open-access scenario. As a consequence, restrictive rules can have a negative effect on geographical representation. MPs, acting as party delegates, may refrain from including local references in their speeches, either because they anticipate that party leaders might not like narrowly targeted messages being delivered in salient law-making debates at the cost of more party-oriented signals (Alemán et al. 2017), or because they hope to improve their chances of being selected to speak againby adopting a broader, party-oriented focus. Conversely, when parties do not formally control the list of speakers, MPs would feel relatively more free to tailor the speech in a way that suits their electoral constituencies. While it is empirically hard to disentangle the two mechanisms (floor access and party control), they work in the same direction, leading to the ex-

pectation that parliamentary rules impact on geographical representation both because they affect who takes the floor in specific debates and because tighter party control limits MPs' opportunities to be locally oriented.

Hypothesis 1 *Legislators are more likely to deliver geographically targeted speeches under open-access (compared to party-centred) floor access rules.*

Legislative speeches in Italy

An ideal test for the hypothesis just introduced would require contrasting identical debates in which the only thing that differs is the floor procedures regulating them. In practice, the necessary conditions for a feasible, good test are (a) within-country variation in parliamentary rules, to exclude the variation produced by cross-country confounders, and (b) the presence of substantially similar types of debates, for which floor access rules constitute the only significant difference (as far as geographical representation is concerned). The Italian parliament meets both conditions, thus representing a unique opportunity to study the effects of parliamentary rules on geographical representation in legislative speech-making.

To begin with, the Italian lower house (*Camera dei Deputati*) exhibits variation in parliamentary rules concerning legislative debates. After a major reform of the lower house standing orders in 1997, parliamentary rules for debates on legislation envisage two sets of procedures to access the floor. For ordinary bills, rules are party-centred in that they assign most floor time to PPGs. In particular, a (variable) portion of time is reserved for the government, bill rapporteurs, and members not affiliated with any party group. The main part of the speaking time is, instead, allocated as follows: four-fifths of floor time are assigned to parties, while the remaining fifth is devoted to individual MPs. The time assigned to parties is then internally re-distributed to individual MPs. By contrast, for bills converting executive law decrees into laws (conversion bills), parliamentary rules are open access as all the available time is directly allocated to individual MPs without the filter of party whips.[4] Therefore, the main difference between these two sets of rules is the extent to which party groups are formally in control of floor time. Quantitatively speaking, floor time assigned to parties ranges from a substantial part for ordinary bills to zero for conversion bills. This feature has already been leveraged by Giannetti and Pedrazzani (2016) to investigate backbenchers' access to the floor.

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4. Article 77 in the Constitution

Not only do parliamentary rules vary across debates on conversion and ordinary bills, but such debates are comparable in terms of content, saliency, and legislative procedure besides speaking rules. According to constitutional provisions (Article 77), executive law decrees (*decreti legge*, hereafter law decrees) are intended for exceptional cases of necessity and urgency. Law decrees allow the government to rapidly legislate by producing acts that come to effect immediately, but they need to be submitted to parliament as conversion bills and approved within 60 days, failing which they expire (Della Sala and Kreppel 1998). Despite the stringent constitutional requirements, Italian governments have extensively (and increasingly) employed decree legislation since the 1970s (Kreppel 1997). Law decrees have become a de facto alternative to ordinary bills, allowing governments to better pursue their agenda (Cox et al. 2008). In this sense, decrees appear to be substitutes for ordinary legislation, with content and policy areas largely overlapping (De Micheli 1997). For instance, in the period considered, law decrees focused on, among other things, youth unemployment, prison reform, and violence against women – issues that do not qualify as emergencies in a strict sense.[5] Moreover, ordinary and conversion bills are similar also in terms of political salience (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2016).[6] While law decrees articulate arguably salient government priorities, the ordinary bills that are discussed on the floor are likely to be important proposals that have realistic chances to be approved, since hopeless bills never reach this advanced stage. Consistent with this, Figure B.2 in the Appendix shows that debates on the two types of bills displayed similar agendas.

Last, legislative processes for ordinary and conversion bills are similar. An important aspect of the Italian legislative procedure is the degree of involvement of parliamentary committees, which hold strong formal powers in a comparative perspective (Curini and Zucchini 2015; Della Sala 1993). In particular, committees can mainly play two roles in the process: when sitting in the so-called reference session (*sede referente*), committees carry out preliminary work on proposals, which are then re-examined and voted on the floor, while in the legislative session (*sede legislativa*), they can directly approve legislation without a passage on the floor. Both sessions can be used for ordinary bills, but only *sede referente* is allowed for conversion bills. As no floor debate takes place for these bills (which, in the period examined, constitute less than 5% of total bills), they are not part of the analyses. All the bills discussed on the floor employed the same type of legislative procedure (*sede referente*), meaning that the only pro-

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5. The examples come from the 2013–2018 term. The legislative proposals are, respectively, C. 1458, C. 1921, and C. 1540.

6. To support the claim that in terms of salience, Giannetti and Pedrazzani (2016) show that the number of committees involved in the legislative process – a proxy for the importance and complexity of bills – does not systematically differ across the two types of bills.

cedural difference between ordinary and conversion debates relates to the time frame – restricted to 60 days for conversion bills and unrestricted for ordinary bills. However, this dimension should not affect the probability of a speech to be geographically focused. Moreover, it is worth noticing that bill debates are one of the few floor opportunities for MPs to connect with local constituents in the Italian parliament. Unlike the House of Commons question time (Blumenau and Damiani 2021), PPGs tightly control oral questions and motions (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2021). Similarly, in contrast to the Chilean lower house *Hora de Incidentes* (Alemán et al. 2017), the time for end-of-session speeches on matters unrelated to the bill under discussion (*interventi di fine seduta*) is very limited.

In addition, Italy represents a good example of a party-centred electoral environment. As noted above, the possible misalignment between individual members and parties' preferences regarding speeches should be more likely in contexts where parties' benefits from personal vote are limited (Proksch and Slapin 2012). In other words, while legislators might still want to pursue local interests despite low electoral incentives, parties are likely to prioritise communication strategies that serve broader strategic or programmatic goals. In the period under consideration (2013-2022), Italy employed a closed-list PR system and a mixed-member majoritarian system. Closed-list PR is typically identified as the most party-centred system (Carey and Shugart 1995), and in the mixed system, introduced in 2017, the contribution of individual candidates to parties' electoral performance was negligible (Cavallaro et al. 2018; Pedrazzani and Pinto 2018).

A final clarification relates to the genesis of the different rules. A short description of the historical process leading to the current set of rules is useful to show that the existing asymmetry did not result from the intention to provide legislators with an opportunity to voice dissent or to engage in constituency service through open rules, but rather from the attempt to rationalise floor access and prevent plenary bottlenecks. In a more general reform process aimed at strengthening government powers, the restrictive rules that apply to ordinary bills were introduced in two steps between 1990 and 1997 in order to improve the efficiency of legislative procedures. Previous rules granted MPs extensive rights to take the floor without stringent time constraints (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2021). The decision not to apply restrictive rules to debates on conversion bills was intended to be temporary but has eventually persisted into standing orders until now, despite the counter-intuitive lack of a clear schedule for debates that are intrinsically time-constrained. This choice was originally driven by the rationale of discouraging governments from making excessive use of this legislative option (Castaldi 2005; Ceccanti 1998). In conclusion, the roots of the discrepancy in floor access rules are exogenous to geographical representation and,

more generally, to individual members' rights. More importantly, ordinary and conversion bills seem equally suitable for MPs' geographical representation.[7]

Data and variables

The empirical analyses employ an original dataset covering all legislative speeches on ordinary bills and bills converting law decrees in the Italian lower house (*Camera dei Deputati*) in two parliamentary terms (2013–2018 and 2018–2022). As discussed in the previous section, the choice to focus on ordinary and conversion bill debates and not on other forms of oral communication in parliament (e.g., oral questions and question time) is motivated by the need to compare similar types of debates. If an MP gives more than one speech in the same debate, these are concatenated and treated as one. Multiple speeches in a debate are typically part of the same speech that has been interrupted by the house speaker (e.g., to remind the speaker how much time is left) or by another member. Speeches delivered by the house speaker and deputy speakers are excluded given their procedural content. Finally, I drop speeches that contain less than 50 words, considering that they are usually related to procedural issues that do not encompass any substantive content. The final dataset, where the units of observation are individual speeches, consists of 27,499 speeches delivered by 1,332 MPs.

The dependent variable captures geographical representation in speeches. In line with previous research (Russo 2021; Zittel et al. 2019), the variable detects explicit geographical representation: a speech is considered geographical if it mentions a geographical unit located in the representative's region of election.[8] More specifically, legislative texts are automatically classified using geographical dictionaries that include 8,795 entries corresponding to municipalities, regions, national parks, motorways and highways, main rivers and seas. The references are then matched with the MPs' region of election; the variable takes value 1 if the speaker mentions a geographical unit in their region of election and 0 otherwise. A validity test comparing the automatic classification to a sample of hand-coded parliamentary text results in over 97% agreement, indicating that the dictionary identifies geographical representation with sufficient precision and recall (more

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7. While unobserved differences between debates on conversion bills and ordinary bills cannot be fully ruled out, such differences would bias the results only if they were systematically correlated with both the choice to legislate by decree and MPs' propensity to make local references.

8. The Italian territory is divided into 20 regions. The choice to use regional rather than district dictionaries is motivated by the need to compare similar geographical units under different electoral systems (the proportional and the mixed systems).

details in Appendix A).

The independent variable classifies speeches based on whether restrictive or permissive rules were applied to the debate in which they took place. Since rules vary across types of debates, the dummy variable *open rules* is coded as 1 for speeches on conversion bills and 0 for speeches on ordinary bills.

Parliamentary rules are not the only characteristic that can affect MPs' possibility to be geographically focused in their speeches. Another important dimension is the topic of the debate of which the speech is part. The different policy domains that a bill (and, consequently, the corresponding debate) can address lend themselves to geographical representation to a varying extent. For instance, a debate on international affairs might be less suitable for articulating local interests compared to one dealing with public infrastructures. In this sense, bill topics constitute a constraint to the content of MPs' speeches. To control for the influence of debate topics on the likelihood of geographical references, I hand-coded all the bills that were discussed on the floor using the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) coding scheme, which comprises 21 major topics, and I included the CAP coding as a control (Bevan 2019).[9] Descriptive statistics on the distribution of speeches across topics and types of debates are available in Appendix B.[10]

In one of the robustness tests (see the next section), I leverage speech topics' different suitability to geographical representation. To identify the policy areas that appear, on theoretical grounds, more favourable to representing local interests, I draw on the literature on legislative committees. This line of research has often contrasted distributive to party committees (Gschwend and Zittel 2018; Shugart et al. 2021; Stratmann and Baur 2002). Distributive committees deal with policy areas that are not particularly salient at the national level but allow to target policies to the district, whilst party committees focus on broader policy issues that are central to party competition. Although the focus of these studies is on committees, a similar logic can be applied to debate topics by matching committee jurisdictions with CAP codes. A dummy variable identifies whether the bill discussed in the debate falls into one of the categories that have been consistently classified as distributive committee jurisdictions: agriculture, transportation, and housing and urban policies.

As a second control, I consider speech length expressed as the number of words uttered, since it might be easier to include a geographical reference when the number of words spoken increases. Moreover, a dummy variable indicating whether the speaker is the rapporteur of the bill discussed is included. Rappor-

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9. To check reliability, I recoded 150 out of 962 bills. Intra-coder reliability was above 94%.

10. Since for public lands and foreign trade there were no conversion bills discussed (and consequently no speeches), I dropped from the analysis speeches on these topics (around 250 speeches in total).

teurs perform an institutional role and are, therefore, less likely to use speeches for personalised representation. In the two terms considered, there were five different coalition governments marked by shifts in their composition. As a result, I control for a variable capturing whether the MP was a member of a party in the cabinet at the time of delivering the speech. Given the fixed-effects specification (see below), the models do not need to include time-invariant controls at the speaker level that are not debate specific. To account for possible unobserved time trends that might bias the results, year fixed effects are included.[11] In some of the robustness tests (which do not use individual fixed effects), speech data are merged with information on the speakers, collected from the open data of the Italian parliament.[12] These data include biographical and political information on the MPs and their party groups. Table B.1 in the Appendix indicates that, with respect to most observable characteristics, speakers did not systematically differ across ordinary and conversion bill debates.

Results

Starting from descriptive statistics, Table 1 reports descriptive evidence tentatively supporting the hypothesis that open rules have a positive effect on legislators' geographical focus. The proportion of geographical speeches is more than 22% under open rules, while it is 15% when parties control who takes the floor, in line with the theoretical expectations. Moreover, Table 1 also shows that the absolute number of speeches given under the two sets of rules differ across legislative terms. While in the first term speeches on ordinary bills are more than twice as many as those on bills converting law decrees, in the following parliament most speeches were discussing the latter. On top of a general increase in governments' use of law decrees, the second term analysed here (2018–2022) coincides with a series of crises that might have made governments rely even more extensively on emergency legislation (Pedersen and Borghetto 2021). In particular, such numbers could be explained by Covid-19, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the consequent economic crisis (topics that arguably took a large part of the legislative agenda).

To test the hypothesis that MPs' propensity to deliver geographical speeches is affected by the floor access rules in place and to credibly identify such effects, I use within-MP variation in speech-making behaviour. For each MP in a given term, speeches delivered in the open-rules setting (debates on conversion bills)

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11. Table C.1 in the Appendix presents additional specifications that include interactive fixed effects (MP×year), capturing potential MP-specific time trends such as MPs changing committee memberships.

12. http://data.camera.it/data/en/linked-data/

Table 1. Descriptive statistics across floor access rules

Variable	Term	Party rules			Open rules			Test
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
% of regional speeches	2013-2018	9386	0.14	0.35	5047	0.2	0.4	F= 81.745***
	2018-2022	4892	0.15	0.36	8176	0.23	0.42	F= 115.325***
	Both	14278	0.15	0.35	13223	0.22	0.41	F= 247.284***
Number of speeches per MP	2013-2018	672	19.33	24.6	672	8.47	11.55	
	2018-2022	660	10.74	14.46	660	13.48	17.82	
	Both	1332	15.08	20.67	1332	10.95	15.19	

are compared to the speeches made under restrictive rules (ordinary bills). By focusing on within-MP variation, I control for time-invariant individual characteristics and other unobserved factors that could potentially confound the relationship between floor rules and legislative speeches.[13]

Individual fixed-effects models are appropriate in these cases. Moreover, a logit model is needed given the binary nature of the dependent variable. However, when the number of observations for each unit is low (as is the case here, at least for some MPs), fixed-effects logit models exhibit a bias because of the incidental parameter problem (Katz 2001). To account for this, I rely on a conditional logit estimator model (Heiss et al. 2019).[14] Considering the large part of variation absorbed by the individual fixed effects, the analyses constitute a stringent test for the theory.

Table 2 presents the findings, showing estimates from a bivariate model in Model 1, while Model 2 includes the controls.[15] The positive and significant coefficient for open-access rules supports the hypothesis and indicates that in debates into which MPs could self-select, speakers were more likely to mention a geographical unit in the region of their constituency compared to debates where parties formally controlled the access to the floor. Interestingly, the coefficient of open-access rules remains significant (and even increases in size) after the inclusion of the controls, showing that the results are not driven by different topics discussed under permissive rules. As for the magnitude of the effect, marginal effects show that permissive rules increase the probability for a speech to be geographical by five percentage points. Considering that the effects are estimated within individuals and that in the data, on average, 15% of speeches are classified as geographical, the impact of open rules is rather substantial.

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13. 180 legislators participated exclusively in one type of debate. As a result, their speeches do not contribute any information to the estimator. By contrast, robustness tests with multilevel models use all the available information and support the findings presented here.
14. Using fixed-effects logit instead of conditional logit models does not alter the results.
15. The full model with topic coefficients is reported in Appendix B.

Table 2. Floor access rules and geographical speeches, conditional logistic regression

	Geographical speech	
	Model 1	**Model 2**
Open-access	0.407***	0.419***
	(0.037)	(0.043)
Speech length		0.001***
		(0.00002)
Rapporteur		−0.740***
		(0.098)
Government party		−0.153**
		(0.070)
Fixed-effects		
MP	✓	✓
CAP topic	✗	✓
Year	✗	✓
N	27,499	27,499
R-squared	0.005	0.055
Max. R-squared	0.514	0.514
Log Likelihood	−9867.926	−9149.506
Wald Test	123.720*** (df = 1)	1339.190*** (df = 30)
LR Test	124.943*** (df = 1)	1561.782*** (df = 30)
Score (Logrank) Test	124.516*** (df = 1)	1595.492*** (df = 30)

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

To demonstrate the robustness of the relationship between floor access rules and geographical representation across different model specifications, three sets od robustness tests are reported in Appendix C. First, I run multilevel models with random effects. Second, I replicate my findings by conducting the analyses at the MP (instead of speech) level, using the number and the proportion of geographical speeches as dependent variables. Third, I adopt an alternative operationalisation of the dependent variable, measuring the number of geographical entities mentioned in a speech. Across all these specifications, the results remain consistent with the main findings reported in the study. Multilevel and MP-level models also show that, in line with previous research, local MPs (i.e., legislators elected in their home region) and MPs elected in southern regions are more likely to deliver geographical speeches, indicating that local ties mat-

ter for legislators' territorial focus (Marangoni and Russo 2018; Marangoni and Tronconi 2011; Tavits 2009). In addition, members of parties in the cabinet are less likely to exhibit a local orientation in their speeches, possibly indicating that 'their limited time on the floor should be used to sell the executive's positions to the electorate at large' (Fernandes et al. 2020: 684).

While the results support my theoretical expectation regarding geographical representation, one may wonder whether the argument describes a general tendency in parliamentary behaviour or only applies to specific groups of MPs and topics, which might be driving the results just presented. Therefore, to further explore the robustness of the relationship between floor access rules and geographical representation, a number of additional tests are performed. Figure 1 shows the conditional marginal effect plots, while full model results and specifications are displayed in Appendix D. A first possibility is that open-access rules only matter for legislators who are at odds with their party leadership (as manifested by dissent in floor votes). Loyal MPs – the argument goes – do not need permissive rules to deliver geographical representation as their party is willing to let them join the debates relevant to their constituencies. By contrast, MPs who are less aligned with their party could face larger hurdles in taking the floor and more party interference with the content of their speeches, thus constituting the group of parliamentarians for which it is more likely to observe an effect of open rules. Figure 1a explores this possibility and reveal that legislators take advantage of open rules independently of the loyalty to the party expressed by their voting record, as the effect of open rules is positive and significant across all levels of loyalty. Even legislators who never vote against their party appear to be more geographically focused when they sign up individually for a speech instead of being selected by the party.

Second, the scope of my theoretical argument might be limited to a narrow subset of debate topics. Since not all debates offer similar opportunities for going local, the effect of permissive rules could be present only in debates dealing with topics suitable for geographical representation (agriculture, transportation, and territorial policies). In contrast with this line of argument, the evidence presented in Figure 1b demonstrates that open rules positively influence the geographical focus of speeches irrespective of the district centredness of the debate. Permissive rules, therefore, are consequential not only in district-oriented debates but also in higher policy debates concerning, for instance, health, education, and the economy.

A third argument contends that the restrictiveness of floor access rules is particularly important for the legislators who have the electoral incentives to please local constituents, consistent with the idea that geographical representation can be a strategy to secure re-election (Papp 2016). In the period covered

by the data, the Italian electoral rules changed from a closed-list PR to a mixed-member majoritarian system. In an additional test, I investigate whether the effects of open rules apply particularly or exclusively to the members elected in the majoritarian tier, which should produce the highest personal vote incentives (Viganò 2024). Once again, the results (Figure 1c) indicate that the effect of permissive rules is consistent across MPs with different electoral incentives, illustrating that even legislators elected under closed-list PR rules – who face limited personal-vote incentives – take advantage of the open floor nonetheless. Taken together, this supplementary evidence shows that parliamentary rules have robust implications for geographical representation. Importantly, their effects are not confined to the actors with the highest incentives or to the most likely debates, but extend to a broader range of MPs and speech contexts. Finally, the effects are similar for members affiliated to different party groups, irrespective of their government/opposition status (Figures D.1 and D.2 in the Appendix).

indicating that even legislators elected under closed-list PR rules—who face limited personal-vote incentives—still take advantage of the open floor.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored how parliamentary rules, and in particular those pertaining to floor access, affect legislators' propensity to engage in geographical representation. The results report a positive and significant impact of open (compared to party) rules on local references in legislative speeches, indicating that MPs take advantage of weaker party support to deliver geographically targeted speeches. Moreover, the findings show that the effects of open rules are robust across different groups of legislators and debates, suggesting a general and consistent impact of floor access rules. By analysing how legislators' use of the same parliamentary activity reacts to different levels of party control, this paper sheds light on how party control might constrain geographical representation, contributing to the scholarly debate on collective and dyadic representation.

While the arguments proposed in the paper can apply widely, the link between floor access rules and geographical representation should be particularly relevant in party-centred contexts. Previous research has shown that in these environments, MPs engage in geographical representation, despite the lack of electoral incentives, to cater to local selectorates (Fernandes et al. 2020) or for intrinsic motivation (Russo 2021). The situation differs in candidate-centred systems, where parties benefit from MPs' personal vote-seeking efforts (Proksch and Slapin 2012). In these cases, the impact of open rules could be more limited as long as parties are more willing to give the floor to MPs for their geographical speeches also under restrictive rules. Yet another scenario

(a) Voting record

(b) Speech topic

(c) Electoral incentives
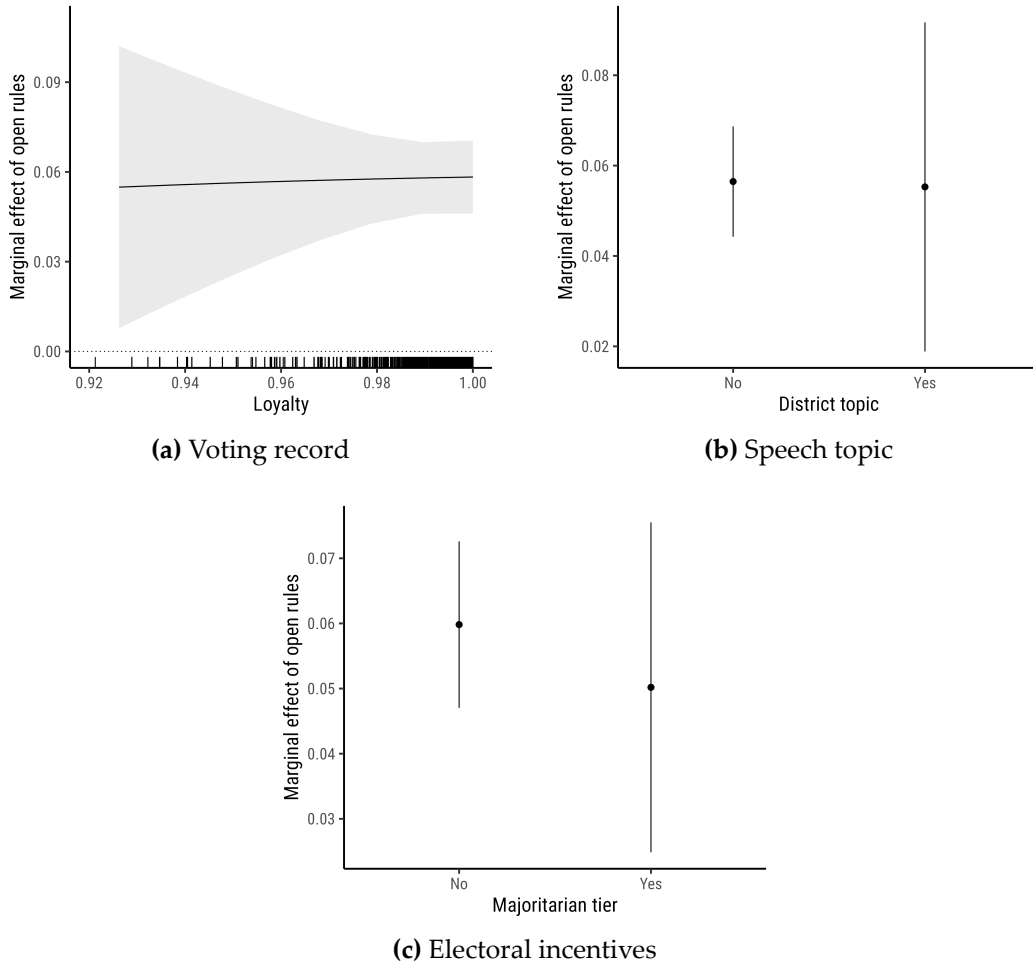
Figure 1. Conditional marginal effects of open-access rules (95% confidence intervals)

may arise in party-centred, high personal vote incentives contexts, such as open-list PR systems. Here individual MPs have a strong incentive to cater to local constituents due to intra-party competition, but parties might derive limited benefits from geographical representation if voters' choice is primarily based on party labels. In such a scenario, the effect of open rules might be even larger than the one detected in this study.

Finally, this paper raises some questions that can be addressed by future studies. First, an in-depth examination of parties' informal rules could provide a better understanding of the impact of formal vis-à-vis informal rules as permissive floor rules can coexist with parties' internal coordination to enforce party dis-

cipline. While opening the black box of party informal rules can be a fruitful exercise, this issue does not threaten the results of the present study. If anything, the existence of informal rules would imply that the effects identified here represent a conservative estimate of the impact that open rules could have in the absence of additional informal constraints. Second, and more generally, different sets of floor access rules can be used to study several other dimensions of speech content. One possibility is that MPs make use of the open rules to express more critical positions towards the party leadership. As an alternative exploratory analysis, I investigate whether MPs tailor their communication style depending on the floor rules in place (Appendix E). Consistent with the idea that simpler language can be used to connect to voters (Slapin and Kirkland 2020; Spirling 2016), MPs speaking under open-access rules tend to use shorter words. Yet legislators' speeches exhibit higher lexical diversity with permissive rules. Moreover, the level of complexity as measured by a readability score and the use of first-person language do not appear to vary significantly across debate types. Overall, further research is needed to analyse how floor rules can influence personalisation in speeches.

Last, as discussed in the theoretical section, the significant effect of open rules can result from two different mechanisms: MPs' possibility to take part in specific debates without party appointment and MPs' greater autonomy in writing their speeches under open-access rules. The findings do not allow me to assess the contribution of each mechanism to the results. Qualitative evidence on how parties manage floor time could provide valuable insight into whether party control primarily manifests in floor gatekeeping or in overseeing speech content.

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Online Appendix for
Geographical Representation on the Floor
Parliamentary Rules and Legislative Speeches in Party-Centred Contexts

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Contents

A Geographical dictionary: validation and examples

As described in the main text, I make use of dictionaries that include the names of all the Italian municipalities, regions, national parks, motorways, and highways (*autostrade* and *strade statali*), as well as the main rivers and seas.[16] The presence of geographical markers identified by the dictionaries is not a sufficient condition for a speech to be considered geographical. In addition, geographical references need to match with the MP's region of election.

Two examples of geographical speeches are shown below; the geographical markers detected by the dictionaries are in italics. In both cases, the geographical references correspond to the MPs' region of election.

> Thank you, Mr Speaker. The amendment we are proposing, in addition to support olive growing in Salento, also has another element, namely that re-planted olive trees can be purchased from nurseries in *Puglia*, because we must not forget that, partly because of what has happened, *Puglia*'s nurseries have been severely affected by this crisis; perhaps a support measure of this kind could bring some relief to the sector. [Speech by Ubaldo Pagano, 16/4/2019, my translation].

> I say this today precisely because of what has happened in my area, the province of *Lecco*, 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 *Lecco* and Lake *Como*, now in a situation of extraordinary emergency; there have been 800 evacuations in a municipality of 2,300 inhabitants and another 200 evacuations in a municipality of just

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16. For the 20 Italian regions (NUTS 2), adjectives (e.g. Tuscan) are also included.

over 2,000 inhabitants because of the risk that the floods might devastate the entire inhabited areas. [Speech by Gian Mario Fregomeli, 12/6/2019, my translation].

To validate the dictionary in the context of a larger project, I have employed a sample of parliamentary texts, more specifically budget bill amendments and written questions. Although I have not directly used speeches in the validation, these activities provide a good test for the reliability of the dictionary in the setting of legislative debates. First, similarly to speech data, questions and amendments come in the form of written texts. Second, written questions and budget amendments are often used to advance local interests, which increases the chances to find geographical references in the texts and, consequently, possible shortcomings of the dictionary.

In practice, the validation of the dictionary has involved two steps. First, I read the most frequent geographical markers identified by the dictionaries. Based on this inspection, I have excluded from the dictionaries some names of towns that can also be used as (capitalised) common nouns which created spurious matches (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 considered not meaningful in the manual coding (*false positives*) and (2) the dictionary fails to capture a reference that made me classify the amendment as locally-targeted (*false negatives*). In the next sections, I detail the results of the validation.

To begin with, I analysed around 1300 budget amendments presented in the Italian upper house (*Senato*) during the 2019 budget session. Out of 1331 amendments, 31 texts displayed a mismatch between the manual and the automatic coding (2.4%). I find 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 make it hard to assess their geographical focus. In addition, there were 4 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 7 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 the 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. In conclusion,

the dictionaries display a high level of precision and recall, allowing me to identify geographical representation with a sufficient level of accuracy.

B Descriptive statistics and full models

Figure B.1 reports, for each MP in a given term, the correlation between the number of speeches delivered on ordinary bills and those made during conversion bill debates. The relatively high correlation between the two types of speeches ($r = 0.61$) suggests that they are complementary activities rather than substitutes. Table B.2 presents descriptive statistics on MPs' characteristics across different types of bill debate (ordinary and conversion bill), with their corresponding sets of rules (party and open rules). Table B.2 indicates that, along most dimensions, speakers did not systematically differ across ordinary and conversion bill debates. In addition, rapporteurs and MPs from governing parties are less likely to deliver speeches under open rules. Figure B.1 displays the distribution of speeches across different topics, split by floor rules. Figure B.2 reports the coefficients (including the topic and year fixed effects) from the main model in the manuscript (model 2 in Table 2).

Table B.1. MPs' characteristics across floor access rules

Variable	Party rules			Open rules		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Age	13197	50.6	11.2	11899	50	10.4
Male	13197	0.717	0.45	11899	0.713	0.452
Ideological distance	12579	0.0928	0.19	11596	0.0919	0.184
Loyalty	13197	0.993	0.0163	11899	0.994	0.0128
Tenure	13197	2	1.22	11899	1.98	1.15
Leg. office	13197	0.122	0.328	11899	0.102	0.303
Gov. office	13197	0.033	0.179	11899	0.0389	0.193
Gov. party	13197	0.496	0.5	11899	0.389	0.488
Rapporteur	13197	0.0859	0.28	11899	0.0401	0.196
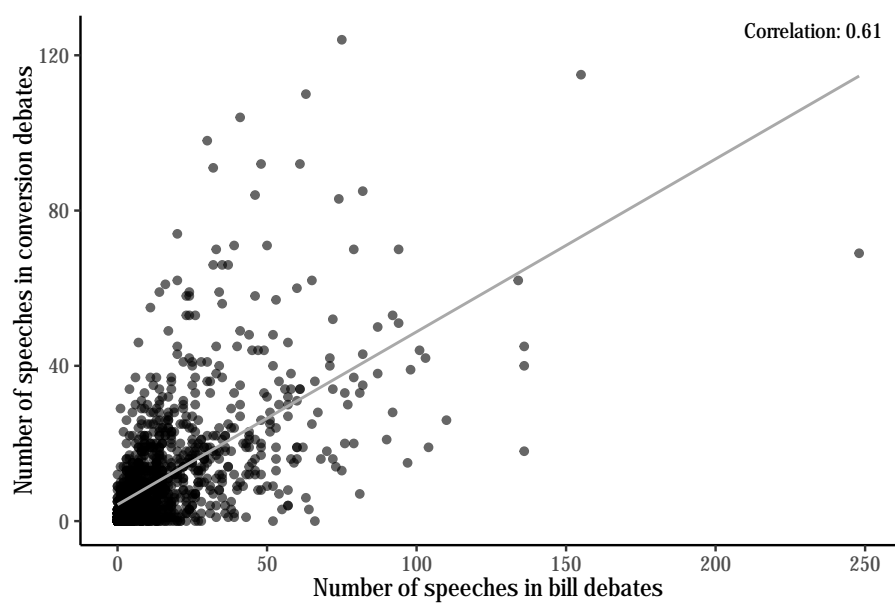
Figure B.1. Distribution of speeches by topic and debate type
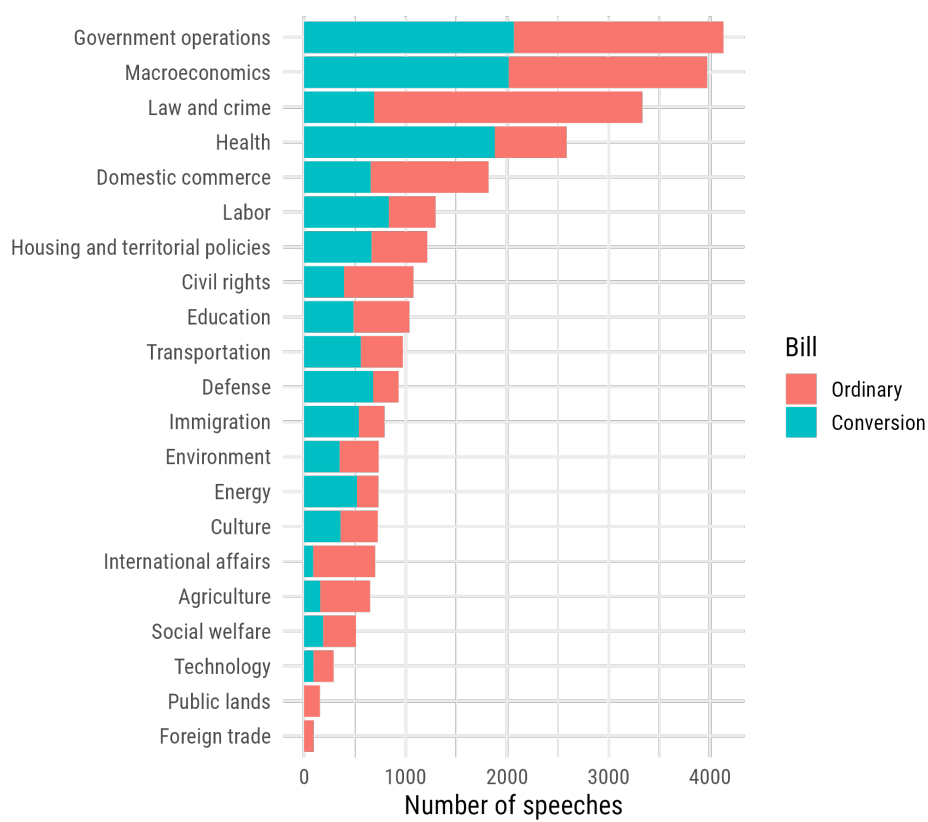
Figure B.2. Distribution of speeches by topic and debate type
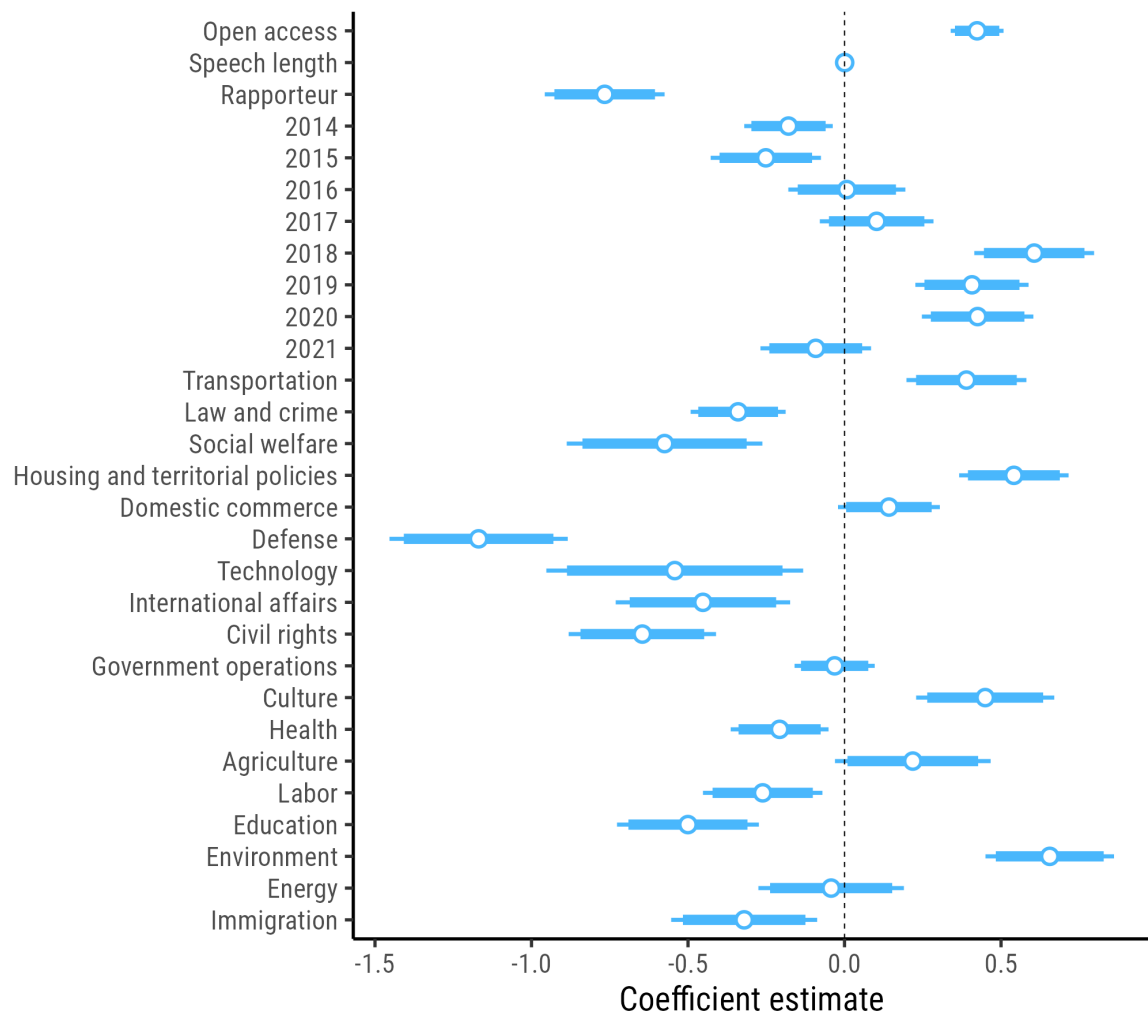
Figure B.3. Coefficient plot for the main model in the manuscript (Model 2 in Table 2)

C Robustness tests

In this section, I provide evidence that the results are robust to different model specifications. First, the effect of open rules is robust to the inclusion of different fixed effects accounting for possible temporal correlations in the data. Table C.1 presents models with month, year×topic, MP×year, MP×topic, and party×term FEs. While the number of observations decreases in some specifications (e.g., models with MP-year and MP-topic fixed effects), the coefficient for open-access debates remains statistically significant and substantively consistent with the baseline results. For these robustness checks, I use logit models rather than conditional logit, as the inclusion of multiple fixed effects makes the latter computationally intensive.

Second, I run multilevel (instead of fixed effects) models, with random intercepts and slopes for each MPs. In these cases, the set of control variables includes biographical information about the speaker (age, gender), information regarding political office such as government (ministers, junior ministers and undersecretaries) and legislative offices (committee chairs, party whips), the number of terms served in parliament (tenure), a dummy for legislators elected in southern regions (where local representation was historically more prevalent, Marangoni and Russo (2018)), and a dummy for localness (MPs elected in the region where they were born). Results are shown in Table C.2, and indicate that open rules produce the expected effect on geographical representation.

Third, the results are robust to the choice of an alternative dependent variable (Table C.3). Specifically, I employ a count variable capturing the number of geographical units (located in the MP's region of election) mentioned in each speech.

Fourth, I replicate my findings by conducting the analyses at the MP (instead of speech) level. In Table C.4, the dependent variables is the number of geographical speeches delivered by an MP. As a count dependent variable is used, I employ a negative binomial regression. By contrast, in Table C.5 the dependent variable is the share of geographical speeches. The results emerging from these models confirm the findings presented in the main analyses: open rules significantly increase legislators' geographical focus in their legislative speeches.

Table C.1. Floor rules and geographical speeches, logistic regression

	Geographical speech				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Open-access	0.4994***	0.5272***	0.5411***	0.4537***	0.4377***
	(0.0568)	(0.0553)	(0.0507)	(0.0619)	(0.0549)
Speech length	0.0006***				
	(2.58×10^{-5})				
Rapporteur	-0.7375***				
	(0.1273)				
Government party	-0.1698**				
	(0.0838)				
Fixed-effects					
MP	Yes	Yes			
Year×month	Yes				
Topic	Yes				
Year × topic		Yes			
MP×year			Yes		
MP×topic				Yes	
Party×term					Yes
Fit statistics					
Observations	25,360	25,357	19,262	14,168	27,481
Squared Correlation	0.19517	0.15538	0.14376	0.15852	0.01491
Pseudo R^2	0.18374	0.14759	0.12738	0.13540	0.01553
BIC	30,621.8	31,918.8	37,912.5	35,346.0	25,922.8

Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

Table C.2. Floor rules and geographical speeches, random effects model

	Geographical speech
Open-access	0.444***
	(0.046)
Speech length	0.001***
	(0.00002)
Age	0.002
	(0.003)
Male	−0.048
	(0.071)
Tenure	−0.109***
	(0.030)
Rapporteur	−0.749***
	(0.095)
Gov. office	−0.105
	(0.150)
Leg. office	−0.225*
	(0.115)
Gov. party	−0.394***
	(0.055)
Local	0.660***
	(0.088)
South	0.245***
	(0.075)
Majoritarian tier	0.195**
	(0.085)
N	24861
Log Likelihood	−10497.350
AIC	21062.690
BIC	21338.810

$^{***}p < .01$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{*}p < .1$

Table C.3. Floor rules and number of geographical mentions in speeches, random effects negative binomial

	(1)	(2)
Open access	0.479***	0.468***
	(0.045)	(0.048)
Speech length		0.001***
		(0.000)
Rapporteur		-0.800***
		(0.102)
Government party		-0.183**
		(0.061)
Fixed effects		
MP	Yes	Yes
CAP topic	No	Yes
Year	No	Yes
Num. Obs.	27,499	27,499
R^2 Marginal	0.017	0.214
R^2 Conditional	0.332	0.458
AIC	45,329.6	43,659.4
BIC	45,362.5	43,939.0
ICC	0.3	0.3
RMSE	2.52	1115.88

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table C.4. Floor rules and number of geographical speeches, MP-level

	Geographical speech
Open-access	0.34***
	(0.06)
Age	−0.00
	(0.00)
Male	0.24***
	(0.07)
Tenure	0.08**
	(0.03)
Gov. office	−0.88***
	(0.14)
Leg. office	−0.15
	(0.11)
Local	0.38***
	(0.08)
South	−0.14*
	(0.07)
Majoritarian tier	−0.07
	(0.08)
Days office	0.00***
	(0.00)
AIC	8394.50
BIC	8463.26
Log Likelihood	−4185.25
Deviance	2275.75
Num. obs.	2276

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table C.5. Floor rules and share of geographical speeches, MP-level

	Geographical speech
Open-access	0.043***
	(0.010)
Age	0.0002
	(0.0005)
Male	0.004
	(0.010)
Tenure	−0.003
	(0.004)
Gov. office	−0.043**
	(0.019)
Leg. office	−0.035**
	(0.017)
Local	0.067***
	(0.013)
South	0.036***
	(0.011)
Majoritarian tier	0.012
	(0.013)
N	2276
R-squared	0.033
Adj. R-squared	0.030
Residual Std. Error	0.234 (df = 2266)
F Statistic	8.693*** (df = 9; 2266)

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

D Heterogeneous effects

To investigate whether the effects of open rules are heterogeneous across groups of legislators or debates, I run four sets of models. First, I test models where parliamentary rules are interacted with the MP's alignment with the party leadership to check whether the effect of open rules is limited to rebel MPs (Table D.1). To capture this dimension, I use the proportion of final votes where the MP voted in line with their party (*loyalty*).[17] [18] This represents a behavioural measure of how likely a member is to voice dissent in parliament (Alemán et al. 2017). Members of the mixed group (which includes legislators affiliated to parties that do not have the minimum number of MPs required to form a parliamentary group and independent MPs) are excluded, as the heterogeneous composition of the group makes it hard to compute a behavioural measure of MP-group alignment. The second model (Table D.2) investigates the interaction of permissive rules with district debates (*district topic*) to test whether parliamentary procedures matter only for the debates most suitable for geographical representation. As detailed in the manuscript, district topics include the CAP codes that identify agriculture, transportation, and housing and urban policies. Finally, the third model (Table D.3) interacts open rules with a dummy variable indicating whether the MP has been elected in the *majoritarian tier* of the mixed system to check whether the effects are present only for MPs with stronger personal vote incentives.

For the first and the third models, I leverage across-MP variation using logit models without fixed effects, as the moderators do not vary within MPs. In these cases, the set of control variables includes biographical information about the speaker (age, gender), information regarding political office such as government (ministers, junior ministers and undersecretaries) and legislative offices (committee chairs, party whips), the number of terms served in parliament (tenure), a dummy for legislators elected in southern regions (where local representation was historically more prevalent, Marangoni and Russo (2018)), and a dummy for localness (MPs elected in the region where they were born). The second model, instead, uses individual fixed effects. For each set of models, in line with the manuscript, I run two specifications: without (Model 1) and with control variables (Model 2). As displayed in the manuscript, marginal effects plots show that the effect of open rules is positive and significant (and also similar in size) for different values of the moderators. Hence, the relationship is robust and not influenced significantly by the party loyalty, the localness of the issue of the bill, or the electoral tier of the MP.

Finally, I explore whether the effects of open rules are conditioned by membership in party groups. Figure D.1 indicates that the effect is present for all major parties in the period considered. Curiously, open rules seem to matter more for more institutionalised parties (such as Partito Democratico and Fratelli d'Italia).

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17. For members that switched party during the term, I consider loyalty to the party they were members of at the time of delivering the speech.
18. These data have been kindly made available by the independent organisation Openpolis.

Table D.1. MPs' loyalty and geographical speeches, logit

	Geographical speech	
	Model 1	Model 2
Variables		
Open rules	-0.9168	-0.6660
	(1.969)	(1.975)
Loyalty	-3.008**	-4.135***
	(1.191)	(1.216)
Open rules $\times$ loyalty	1.434	1.088
	(1.982)	(1.988)
Speech length		0.0005***
		(1.66×10^{-5})
Rapporteur		-0.8233***
		(0.0876)
Gov. office		-0.0853
		(0.0952)
Leg. office		-0.1917***
		(0.0609)
Gov. party		0.0011
		(0.0371)
Local		0.5151***
		(0.0484)
South		0.1620***
		(0.0393)
Male		-0.0149
		(0.0391)
Age		-0.0050***
		(0.0018)
Tenure		-0.0735***
		(0.0163)
2018–2022		0.3362***
		(0.0384)
Fit statistics		
Observations	24,861	24,861
Squared Correlation	0.00967	0.07684
Pseudo R^2	0.01010	0.07727
BIC	23,385.8	22,095.2

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Table D.2. Debate topics and geographical speeches, fixed-effects logit

| | Geographical speech | |
	Model 1	Model 2
Variables		
Open rules	0.0562***	0.0565***
	(0.0060)	(0.0062)
District topic	0.0929***	0.0788***
	(0.0143)	(0.0139)
Open rules × district topic	-0.0239	-0.0012
	(0.0200)	(0.0194)
Speech length		7.84×10^{-5}***
		(4.02×10^{-6})
Rapporteur		-0.0870***
Fixed-effects		
MP	✓	✓
CAP topic	✗	✓
Year	✗	✓
Fit statistics		
Observations	27,499	27,499
Squared Correlation	0.13676	0.17515
Pseudo R^2	0.15823	0.20718
BIC	33,525.5	32,376.7

Clustered (MP) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Table D.3. Electoral incentives and geographical speeches, logit

| | Geographical speech | |
	Model 1	Model 2
Variables		
Open rules	0.5069***	0.4759***
	(0.0364)	(0.0456)
Majoritarian tier	0.0876	0.0514
	(0.0767)	(0.0859)
Open rules × majoritarian tier	-0.0581	-0.0623
	(0.0938)	(0.1002)
Speech length		0.0005***
		(1.68×10^{-5})
Rapporteur		-0.8240***
		(0.0879)
Gov. office		-0.1465
		(0.0957)
Leg. office		-0.2152***
		(0.0612)
Gov. party		-0.0593
		(0.0374)
Local		0.5339***
		(0.0486)
South		0.1686***
		(0.0395)
Male		-0.0165
		(0.0392)
Age		-0.0041**
		(0.0017)
Tenure		-0.0778***
		(0.0164)
2018-2022		0.0071
		(0.0937)
Fit statistics		
Observations	24,861	24,861
Squared Correlation	0.00936	0.08323
Pseudo R^2	0.00989	0.08298
BIC	23,390.9	22,041.5

Clustered (MP) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*
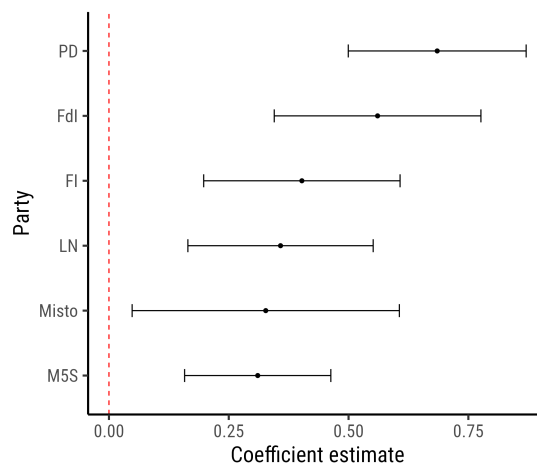
Figure D.1. Effects of open rules for different party groups
Note: PD: Partito Democratico; FdI: Fratelli d'Italia; FI: Forza Italia; LN: Lega (Nord); Misto: MPs not affiliated with any PPG; M5S: Movimento 5 Stelle.
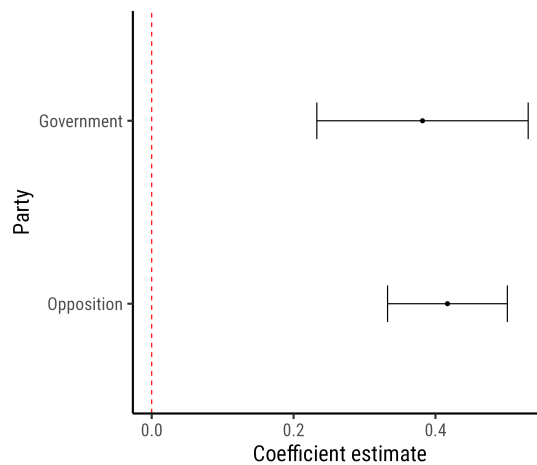
Figure D.2. Effects of open rules for government/opposition party groups

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E Speech complexity and first-person language

To investigate whether parliamentary rules affect the comprehensibility of their speeches, I employ three different indicators. The first variable captures the average number of syllables per word, following Slapin and Kirkland (2020). A second variable is used to measure lexical diversity. A straightforward measure to capture this dimension is the type-token ratio (TTR), that is the number of unique words divided by the total number of words. However, TTR is sensitive to text length, which makes it unsuitable to analyse texts with different lengths (Bestgen 2024). Therefore, to account for this problem I employ the Guiraud index, which divides the number of types by the square root of the number of tokens. Finally, I consider text readability. While the most popular reading ease score, the Flesch-Kincaid index, is calibrated on the English language, the Gulpease index has been extensively used to analyse Italian texts (Bigi 2013; Decadri 2020). The index ranges from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating more readable texts. The results shown in Table E.1 indicate that speeches delivered under open-access rules tend to use shorter but more diverse words. Overall, readability is not affected by the types of floor rules employed.

Table E.1. Floor rules and language complexity

	Syllables per word		Diversity		Readability	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Open-access	−0.011***	−0.008***	0.228***	0.160***	0.100*	0.013
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.063)	(0.043)	(0.059)	(0.065)
Speech length		−0.00000		0.004***		−0.001***
		(0.00000)		(0.00002)		(0.00003)
Rapporteur		0.081***		−2.093***		3.338***
		(0.003)		(0.085)		(0.130)
Fixed-effects						
MP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CAP topic	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Year	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
N	27,499	27,499	27,499	27,499	27,499	27,499
R-squared	0.003	0.053	0.001	0.633	0.0001	0.047

***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$

To investigate whether speeches delivered under open-access rules emphasise the individual speaker vis-à-vis the party group, I constructed a short dictionary of first-person language. While existing studies have exclusively relied on first-person pronouns (Liu 2022; Slapin and Kirkland 2020), this seems an

Table E.2. Floor rules and first-person language

	Count		Dummy (conditional logit)	
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Open-access	0.171*	−0.065	0.128***	0.058
	(0.103)	(0.095)	(0.040)	(0.047)
Speech length		0.005***		0.002***
		(0.00004)		(0.00005)
Rapporteur		−2.928***		−0.783***
		(0.189)		(0.094)
Fixed-effects				
MP	✓	✓	✓	✓
CAP topic	✗	✓	✗	✓
Year	✗	✓	✗	✓
N	27,499	27,499	27,499	27,499
R-squared	0.0001	0.341	0.0004	0.067
Adj. R-squared	−0.044	0.311		
Max. R-squared			0.460	0.460
Log Likelihood			−8458.800	−7510.226
F Statistic	2.751*	468.725***		
Wald Test			10.240***	1237.650***
LR Test			10.251***	1907.398***
Score (Logrank) Test			10.249***	1148.948***

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

inadequate solution for Italian texts as subjects are not grammatically required. Thus, I have decided to include, in addition to first-person pronouns, a short list of first-person verbs that express opinions (e.g.,, I think, I believe, etc.). The dictionary includes *io, mio, mia, miei, mie, ho, penso, ritengo, credo, vorrei, voglio*. In the models reported in Table E.2, the dependent variables are a count of first-person linguistic expressions (Models 1 and 2) and a dummy variable indicating whether the speech contains first-person language or not (Models 3 and 4). The results indicate that, while there is a positive and significant bivariate relationship between open rules and first-person language, consistent with the idea that MPs personalise more under open rules, the effect disappears with the inclusion of controls and topic and year fixed effects.

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