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The Constituency as a Focus of Representation: Studying the Italian Case through the Analysis of Parliamentary Questions

FEDERICO RUSSO

Parliamentarians differ widely in the degree to which they devote attention to their geographical constituency. An analysis of parliamentary questions offers a precious opportunity to look at the role of individual parliamentarians even where, as in the European case, political parties enforce strict discipline in roll-call voting. This paper analyses the constituency focus of Italian deputies elected to the 15th legislature, through the analysis of their parliamentary questions. According to the mainstream literature, the closed list proportional system adopted in Italy since 2005 should provide little incentive to cultivate a personal vote. However, observing the territorial focus of many parliamentary questions, we learn that some parliamentarians do play the role of 'constituency servant' even in a context which is not expected to reward this choice. Why does this happen? To answer this, hypotheses related to the career profile of Italian parliamentarians are developed and tested empirically against alternative explanations.

Keywords: *Italy; representative roles; constituency service; parliamentary questions; electoral system.*

According to the literature on representative roles (Wahlke *et al.* 1962), parliamentarians can have a local or a nationwide focus of representation. Recent studies (Searing 1994) have shown that parliamentarians differ considerably in the extent to which they focus on their constituency, and this variation cannot be completely explained by looking at electoral systems (Martin 2011). Although important, the electoral system is just one of the factors influencing the relationship between representatives and their constituencies.

Italy constitutes a crucial case in shedding some light on the other factors that favour the emergence of a local focus of representation. As a matter of fact, the closed list proportional system introduced in 2005 and first adopted in the 2006 general election does not provide any incentive to cultivate a personal vote. However, looking at parliamentarians elected through this system, it appears that some of them still spend time and effort to champion the interest of the district they come from. In fact, there is an interesting variation to be explained. This can be taken as a proof that beyond macro institutional variables (such as electoral systems) there are also individual factors to take into consideration: relying on the analytical framework introduced by Strøm (1997), this paper will evaluate the impact of parliamentarians' career paths on their likelihood to

choose their geographic constituency as a relevant focus of representation. An analysis of parliamentary questions (PQs) provides the means to test empirically the theoretical expectations developed.

Dependent Variable: The Constituency Focus

In the seminal analysis of Wahlke and colleagues (1962), the concept of role orientation was divided into two dimensions: the focus and the style of representation. The term 'focus' refers to the interest(s) defended by representatives, while the expression 'style of representation' refers to the modalities with which such interest is defended. The literature on representative roles is now sharply divided into two competing traditions. Some scholars define roles in terms of representatives' self-perceptions and self-definitions (Searing 1994), while others consider them as strategic plans for actions (Strøm 1997). This paper relies on the second research tradition, and assumes a close correspondence between 'representative roles' and behaviours: it follows that observing parliamentarians' activities is the most direct way to measure their strategic plans. In fact, a representative who decides to play the role of constituency servant will actually focus on his/her constituency with observable actions. According to the perspective adopted in this paper the variability in the behaviours of representatives can be understood by considering that parliamentarians have different objectives (individual preferences) and operate under different conditions (institutions). Strøm (1997) suggests that parliamentarians may have an ordered set of preferences: being re-selected, re-elected, acquiring party and legislative offices.

In the Italian case there are no strong reasons to think that constituency service may be an extremely useful strategy to reach any of those objectives. The power to select candidate lists has traditionally been in the strong hands of central parties, with the partial exception of the Christian-Democratic Party (DC) where candidatures were decided in negotiations among different factions and between centre and periphery (Gallagher and Marsh 1988). The new electoral law adopted since the 2006 general election is a closed list PR which leaves no room for voters to choose among candidates of a given party. However, provided that voting behaviour of a share of the electorate depends on the quality of the candidates, there are good reasons to think that parties will try to select those who have the right attributes. Then, as long as locally oriented candidates are a valuable electoral resource, parties will be ready to endorse them (Marangoni and Tronconi 2011). In turn, parliamentarians who aim to be re-selected will have an incentive to demonstrate their commitment to the constituency. However, this process will only work as long as candidates within the lists are visible and recognisable, and the wide and high magnitude regional districts formed by the 2005 Italian electoral law seem not to fulfil this requirement.

In the light of these considerations one would not expect many parliamentarians to choose to play the role of constituency servant. However, looking at their questioning behaviour, it appears that there are a certain number of

parliamentarians with a clear territorial focus, and there is considerable variation in the territorial focus of different parliamentarians. Understanding the sources of this variation is the major puzzle that this paper aims to solve.

Measuring the Dependent Variable: Constituency-Targeted PQs

The study of non-legislative activities has been relatively neglected by political scientists (Russo and Wiberg 2010). All parliamentary procedures which are not intended to introduce new pieces of legislation or to modify existing laws can be classified as 'non legislative activities'. Parliamentary questions, interpellations, motions and resolutions are clearly non-legislative activities, but also amendments and private bills with no hope of approval could be classified in the same way. Recent comparative analyses have shown that from the 1970s onwards there has been a clear growth in the number of non-legislative activities produced by western European parliaments (Wiberg 1995, Green-Pedersen 2010). There is no agreement on the causes of this growth, which has been alternatively explained with the increasing scope of governments (Wiberg 1995), or with the utility of non-legislative activities to influence the public agenda (Green-Pedersen 2010).

The study of these activities represents an innovative strategy to answer some classic questions of parliamentary studies. For instance, in recent years several scholars focused on non-legislative activities to study the 'dyadic' relationship between parliamentarians and their territorial constituency, overcoming the difficulties encountered in the European context (Thomassen and Andeweg 2003, Soroka *et al.* 2009, Martin 2011). This paper operates in the same tradition.

Whilst there are a number of studies on the American Congress regarding the relation between congressmen and their constituencies (the classic being Miller and Stokes 1963), in Europe this stream of research had only limited fortune (Converse and Pierson 1986). As a matter of fact, American studies look at the voting behaviour of congressmen to see whether they vote for or against the interest of the place in which they have been elected. However, when it comes to voting, European parties enforce strict discipline and parliamentarians almost always vote with their group (Thomassen 1994). We argue that in this context it is more useful to look at the content of non-legislative activities which offer plenty of opportunity to defend the interests of territorial or sectoral defined constituencies. Moreover, analysing parliamentary questions offers another advantage over analysing voting behaviour: drafting and tabling a question is not a costless exercise in terms of time and opportunity costs (Martin 2011). As a consequence, the number of constituency-focused questions tabled by a parliamentarian reveals how much time he or she takes from other activities.

In the Italian Chamber of Deputies there are five procedures that allow parliamentarians to question the government: written questions (*interrogazione a risposta scritta*), oral questions (*interrogazione a risposta orale*), oral questions for question time (*interrogazione a risposta immediata*), interpellations

(*interpellanza*) and urgent interpellations (*interpellanza urgente*). Written questions can be presented by any member of the Chamber and should receive a reply in 20 days. This article only analyses written questions, which are the least constrained by party leadership control (Russo 2010). In the 15th legislature Italian deputies tabled 6067 written questions. Each of them is classified by parliamentary staff according to its content and its geographical focus, using a thesaurus of descriptors (TESEO). Therefore it is possible to associate each single question in the database, with the region(s) it refers to: in this article a question is considered as being constituency oriented when it concerns the region of election of its first signatory.

This study analyses all the questions tabled in the 15th Chamber of Deputies, dividing them into two groups: those with constituency focus and those without. The Speaker of the house and government ministers, who do not ask parliamentary questions, are excluded from the analysis. Excluded also are those deputies who did not serve for the entire duration of the legislature due to resignation or premature death. As a result, the dataset includes 581 members of the 15th Chamber of Deputies (2006–08) who served for the whole period and did not participate in the government.

The first unexpected result is that more than one-third of all questions tabled between 2006 and 2008 can be classified as ‘constituency-oriented questions’ (2383 out of 6067). The frequency distributions of the number of parliamentary questions and of constituency-oriented questions tabled by Italian representatives shows that there are 131 (22.5 per cent) parliamentarians who did not ask any questions, and 240 (42.1 per cent) who never tabled a constituency-oriented question. Compared with Irish parliamentarians (Martin 2011), Italian deputies definitely show a lower level of constituency orientation. The distribution of constituency-focused questions is highly abnormal, instead resembling the usual shape of count data with a peak on the left of the distribution and a long right tail: this indicates that most parliamentarians asked only a few questions during their mandate, while few of them can be described as great questioners.

Political Career and Other Motivations of Constituency Service

The framework commonly adopted by rational choice institutionalism (Strøm 1997) suggests that parliamentarians choose the role that maximises their chances to achieve their career prospects. Under the closed list proportional system adopted in the 2006 general election both candidate selection and election are in the hands of party organisations. In 2006 no Italian party adopted inclusive methods to form the electoral lists, and the closed list proportional system made it completely useless for parliamentarians to cultivate a personal vote and to campaign on personal reputation. If there are not many reasons to think that selection and election could be enhanced by focusing on constituency service, this is even truer with regard to leadership positions. Notwithstanding these considerations, the existence of a considerable number of constituency targeted questions

reveals that, at least to a certain extent, parliamentarians play the role of constituency servants. What can explain this paradox?

With regard to career prospects, there are two competing arguments that may be relevant: first, it might be the case that parties favour the selection of locally oriented candidates; second, doing constituency service might be useful to achieve a local elected position. The fact that voters and party activists do not have a direct influence on candidates' selection and election does not automatically mean that their preferences have no role at all. On the contrary, parties might find it useful to give incentives and reward constituency service as far as they think that it would benefit their electoral success: in other words, parties can be the mediators between electors' and activists' preferences and the behaviour of parliamentarians (Marangoni and Tronconi 2011). As a consequence, focusing on their constituency can be a successful strategy for some representatives to obtain re-selection from their own parties. If this is the case, who are the parliamentarians most likely to profit from this strategy? The literature does not give many hints to formulate strong hypotheses. However, there are sensible reasons to think that junior parliamentarians, without national visibility or recognised policy expertise, can try to reinforce their credibility by championing the interests of the constituency. On the contrary, politicians who already have a prominent role do not need to worry much about selection and election: in fact, their main aim will be to defend their position or acquire a more prominent one. These parliamentarians have very few career-related incentives to perform constituency service, as other skills are required to play a national role (such as, for example, demonstrating competence on certain issues, being able to communicate with public opinion).

However, in the context of the progressive devolution of the Italian State the political value of local elected positions has increased remarkably: since the introduction of the direct election for mayors (1993) and presidents of regions (1999), these positions have acquired more appeal and visibility than in the past. Nowadays, being mayor of one of the main Italian cities or being a president of one of the 21 Italian regions is probably preferable to being a simple backbencher in parliament. In the light of this change, it is not surprising to discover that political careers in Italy may follow different paths. Verzhicelli (2010) shows that while many politicians still arrive in parliament after having held some elected positions in local government, there are also several parliamentarians who follow the opposite path (that is, from parliament to local politics). Performing constituency service might be a strategic way of preparing for election to one of these local positions. If this is the case, constituency service would not be useful only (or mainly) for the most junior parliamentarians, but for those whose main objective is to pursue a local career.

For the purpose of this study, parliamentarians can be divided into three groups according to the kind of political office that they hold or have held in the past. In order to build this classification, three types of office are considered: party office, legislative office or governmental office. *Upper level*

parliamentarians are those who hold (or have held) leadership positions in the party (party leader, member of the national executive committee, president and vice-president of the parliamentary party group) or in the parliament (president or vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate) or have been a member of government (ministers and junior ministers). *Medium level parliamentarians* are those who have never held any of the above offices but hold (or have held) a minor party office at national level (member of the national assembly or other specialised committees) or a medium level legislative office (president or vice-president of a permanent committee, member of office of the president). Finally, *lower level parliamentarians* are all those parliamentarians who have never held any of these offices. Among the 581 parliamentarians included in this analysis, 148 (25.47 per cent) can be classified as *upper level*, 154 (26.51 per cent) as *medium level*, and 279 (48.02 per cent) as *lower level*. Relying on the theoretical argument which links constituency service to the selection process, it can be suggested that focusing on geographical constituency might be especially suitable for *lower level MPs*: though the electoral system does not require incumbents to cultivate a personal vote, having a large consensus at local level can be a valuable asset to gain selection by the party. By contrast, this incentive should be less relevant for *medium level parliamentarians*, who are more likely to be selected for other reasons, and even less important to *higher level parliamentarians*. In fact, those MPs who have a prominent leadership role are expected to bring a different contribution to the party and doing constituency service is not likely to enhance the possibility of acquiring a new position or maintaining their status. However, *medium and* (though less likely) *high level parliamentarians* might pursue a career in local politics: in this case they will also have an incentive to perform constituency service.

Beyond career-related factors, there are some competing arguments that deserve to be considered. Scholars have described post-war Italy as a political system with strong opportunities for cultivating personal votes. A badly designed and ineffective public administration gave to parliamentarians opportunities to offer themselves as 'mediators' between citizens and the state (Golden 2003). This likelihood was more compelling in southern Italy, dominated by a tradition of political patronage and plagued by endemic unemployment. Until the abolition of the open list proportional system adopted in the post-war period, preference voting was mainly a southern phenomenon that revealed a high degree of intraparty competition.¹ Despite the introduction of a closed list proportional system, there are good reasons to think that (intraparty) competition still exists to be placed high on the party list. Moreover, the effectiveness of the Italian public administration and the economic conditions of southern Italy have not dramatically improved over the last two decades. For these reasons, it is reasonable to assume that northern and southern parliamentarians still operate under a very different structure of opportunities. As a consequence, southern parliamentarians might find it more practical to champion local interests.

Secondly, after the collapse of the traditional post-war party system new parties became the central actors of Italian politics. Among these new parties it is especially relevant to consider the *Lega Nord* – a regionalist party which defined itself as the champion of northern regions. Campaigning against the excessive cost of the inefficient central bureaucracy and against the growing fiscal pressure placed on the northern regions, the *Lega Nord* never claimed to be a ‘national’ party and, until very recently, did not present any candidate outside the borders of the north.

In summary, when trying to explain the constituency focus of Italian parliamentarians three broad sets of explanations need to be examined. The first has to do with parliamentarians’ career record. The second relates to the different political cultures, or, as Golden (2003) would say, the different structure of opportunities, that prevails in different geographical areas. Beyond any doubt this was reinforced by the adoption of an open list PR that boosted intra party competition: it is interesting to test whether southern parliamentarians are still more attentive to their local constituency now that the electoral system does not request them to cultivate a personal vote. Finally, the third factor to look at is the party. As mentioned above, the emergence of a regional party such as the *Lega Nord* has brought a new north–south cleavage in the Italian party system. On the one hand it is to be expected that parliamentarians belonging to that party are more focused than others on their constituencies. However, the story is even more complicated. How have other parties reacted to the emergence of this new cleavage? In principle, it can be expected that parties with strong roots in the south exploited the opportunity to counterbalance the *Lega Nord* defending the interests of the South.

Data Analysis

The distribution of parliamentary questions, which is generated by a count process, does not recommend using OLS regression. A specific model for count data should be employed, and as data are overdispersed² ($\alpha > 0$) a negative binomial regression seems to satisfactorily match the distribution of the data. To test the three sets of hypotheses described in the previous paragraph, four different models have been estimated: all of them include a measure of questioning activism (parliamentary questions without reference to the constituency). Beyond that variable, the first model tests the role of geographical factors, the second model tests the role of partisan differences and the third model tests the role of career based explanations. Finally, the fourth model includes all the variables.

The variable ‘Non-Constituency-Related Questions’ is the total number of non-constituency targeted written questions tabled by each deputy. This variable is meant to capture all the factors that can influence questioning activism without relation to constituency orientation: using the language of economics one may say that it measures the general cost of questioning for each parliamentarian. ‘Northern Italy’, ‘Southern Italy’ and ‘Islands’³ are three dummy variables

measuring whether parliamentarians are elected in the mentioned area. The baseline category, which is excluded from the model and serves as a reference category, is 'Central Italy'. 'RC', 'ULIVO', 'IDV', 'FI', 'UDC', 'AN', 'LEGA'⁴ are seven dummy variables indicating the parliamentary party group to which parliamentarians belong. The baseline category excluded from the analysis is 'MISTO'. 'Tenure XV' refers to the number of previous parliamentary mandates held by each parliamentarian. 'Born and Lives in Constituency' is a dummy variable that measures the localness of each parliamentarian, taking the value of 1 when he/she was born and currently lives in his/her constituency. 'Lower Level' and 'Medium Level' are dummy variables where 1 indicates that the MP belongs to the respective category. 'Upper Level' is excluded from the analysis and represents the baseline category against which is assessed the effect of having a different profile.

The results are reported in Table 1. The models are remarkably stable, as the magnitude and direction of all the effects estimated in Model 1, 2 and 3 resist the introduction of all other variables (Model 4).⁵ Moreover, it seems that the global model has the best specification with virtually all the coefficients improving their level of significance if compared with more specific models. At the same time, the global model has the best fitting. According to Model 4, five variables reach the conventional levels of statistical significance: Non-Constituency-Related Questions, Southern Italy, AN, Lega Nord, Born and Live in Constituency and Medium Level.

The coefficients of negative binomial models are expressed in expected change in log count for a one-unit increase of the independent variable. To make these results more intuitive it is possible to calculate the percentage effect of a one-unit increase of the independent variables on the dependent variable: results are reported in Table 2. The number of constituency targeted questions heavily depends on the general level of questioning activism of each parliamentarian: the marginal effect of asking one additional question not related to the constituency is a 6.9 per cent increase in the number of constituency targeted questions. However, taking into account parliamentarians' activism, many other variables still have a significant influence. With regard to general political factors, it is confirmed that members elected in the south are more oriented towards their constituency than other members: they ask 68.5 per cent more questions than members elected in central Italy. A great impact is exerted by parties: members of *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Lega Nord* are clearly more inclined towards their constituency than members of the mixed group. *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Lega Nord* were in opposition at the time, and this might have strengthened their already pronounced attention to the local dimension of politics.

Career-related factors seem to matter for constituency service, though the results need to be interpreted with some care. Tenure, which is a measure of seniority that might also be considered as a proxy for the capacity of a parliamentarian to defend his or her seat, does not correlate with constituency service. However, it is clear that parliamentarians with a leadership profile (*upper*

Table 1: Negative Binomial Models for Constituency-Targeted Questions

Independent Variables	Model 1 (Geography)	Model 2 (Parties)	Model 3 (Career)	Model 4 (Global)
Non-Constituency- Related Questions	0.076*** (0.007)	0.064*** (0.008)	0.079*** (0.008)	0.067*** (0.007)
Northern Italy (Baseline category: Central Italy)	-0.132 (0.187)			-0.242 (0.185)
Southern Italy (Baseline category: Central Italy)	0.578*** (0.190)			0.522*** (0.181)
RC (Baseline category: mixed group)		0.332 (0.320)		0.454 (0.129)
ULIVO (Baseline category: mixed group)		0.019 (0.229)		-0.093 (0.217)
IDV (Baseline category: mixed group)		-0.071 (0.430)		-0.217 (0.405)
FI (Baseline category: mixed group)		0.133 (0.239)		-0.063 (0.229)
UDC (Baseline category: mixed group)		-0.259 (0.331)		-0.335 (0.319)
AN (Baseline category: mixed group)		0.895*** (0.265)		0.852*** (0.252)
LEGA (Baseline category: mixed group)		0.686* (0.361)		1.038*** (0.358)
Tenure			0.048 (0.052)	-0.019 (0.050)
Born and Live in Constituency			0.946*** (0.145)	1.007*** (0.142)
Medium Level (Baseline category: High Level)			0.604*** (0.192)	0.493*** (0.189)
Lower Level (Baseline category: High Level)			0.392** (0.193)	0.280 (0.191)
Constant	0.415** (0.167)	0.460** (0.203)	-0.527** (0.216)	-0.629** (0.286)
Log likelihood	-1215,299	-1214,962	-1203,052	-1172,607
<i>N</i>		567		

Note: Table entries are unstandardised regression coefficients. Standard errors are shown in brackets. See endnote 4 for full names of parties.

* $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$.

Source: Author's own.

Table 2: Percentage Effect of a One Unit Change of the Independent Variables on the Dependent Variable (Global Model)

Independent Variables	Effect of 1 Unit Change (%)
Non-Constituency-Related Questions	6.9
Southern Italy	68.5
AN	134.4
LEGA	182.4
Born and Live in Constituency	173.7
Medium Level	63.7

level) are less constituency oriented than *medium* or *lower level* MPs. With regard to these two types of parliamentarians, it is striking to note that those belonging to the medium category are even more constituency oriented than pure backbenchers: in fact, in the fourth model the effect of belonging to the *lower level* category fails to achieve the conventional levels of statistical significance. Finally, as was expected, localness is an important predictor of constituency orientation: being born and living in the constituency of election more than doubles the number of constituency-oriented questions (+173.7 per cent). This last result indicates that 'parachuted' candidates – those who are placed by the party in a safe district in which the parliamentarian does not have strong roots – hardly develop any relationship with the territory of election. In the 15th Chamber of Deputies more than one-third of all parliamentarians (36 per cent) have been elected in a district where they were not born and did not live, without substantial differences among the parties.

Conclusions

This paper has shown that despite the lack of electoral incentives to cultivate a personal vote, there exists significant variation in the focus of representation chosen by Italian parliamentarians. Building on the assumption that the choice of 'representative role' depends on the set of constraints and opportunities faced by parliamentarians, this article has hypothesised that parliamentarians may have two career-related reasons to engage in constituency service: to achieve re-election and to pursue a career in local politics. Parliamentarians with a prominent leadership role were expected to develop different strategies and to devote fewer resources to constituency service. The behavioural data gathered for this work provided clear evidence for these arguments. Moreover, rather independently from their political career, this research demonstrates that candidates who are elected in a district where they do not have strong personal roots do not devote much effort to representing their constituency. Parachuted candidates are usually selected by national level organisations by virtue of their competence or political prominence and then 'distributed' among districts (or even presented in more than one district): as a consequence their re-selection is not in the hands of the local party and they have virtually no rational reason to engage in locally oriented behaviour.

In the Italian context, there are other causes that influence the degree to which parliamentarians are involved in constituency service beyond career-related factors. When it comes to parliamentarians' behaviour, the geographical divide between northern and southern Italy has proved to be relevant: this phenomenon could be explained either by the well-known particularism (Banfield 1958) that dominates southern Italy, and that still influences its politics, or (for those preferring an explanation based on actors' rationality) by the different structure of opportunities faced by southern politicians who need personal consensus to be selected by their parties. Regardless, by affecting parliamentarians' structure of

opportunities, local factors can have a significant impact on members' behaviour and should not be underestimated.

Despite the significant variation that exists at the individual level, this research has shown that parties do matter: members of different parliamentary party groups differ considerably in the degree of attention they devote to their constituencies. It is worth noting that both *Lega Nord* and *Alleanza Nazionale* share some distinctive characteristics that might explain the behaviour of their members: they have strong territorial organisations,⁶ a somehow less centralised candidate selection process and they were in opposition in the period covered by this study.

This study has some limits that can be overcome by future research. The most important point to bear in mind when measuring role behaviour through parliamentary questions is that parliamentarians have several other instruments that they may use, such as private members' bills, amendments to governmental bills, and other non-legislative activities (for example, motions and resolutions). Some parliamentarians might even represent territorial interests behind the scenes, without initiating any public activities but by contacting members of the government privately: obviously this is more likely for MPs belonging to parties which are in government.

Note on Author

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Notes

1. In 1993 the open list proportional system was replaced by a system in which 75 per cent of all parliamentarians were elected in single member districts and the remaining 25 per cent in national proportional lists. In 2005 a new closed list proportional system was introduced.
2. Count data are often modelled with Poisson models. However, the Poisson model assumes that the standard deviation of the distribution is equal to its mean. Distributions with high numbers of zeros violate this assumption, being 'overdispersed': the negative binomial distribution includes a new parameter (alpha) to represent the level of overdispersion.
3. Northern regions include Val'dAosta, Piemonte, Liguria, Lombardia, Trentino Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Emilia Romagna. Central regions include Toscana, Marche, Umbria and Lazio. Southern regions include Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sardegna and Sicilia.
4. The extended names of these parliamentary groups are: *Rifondazione Comunista-Sinistra Europea* (RC), *Partito Democratico-L'Ulivo* (ULIVO), *Italia dei Valori* (IDV), *Forza Italia* (FI), *UDC-Unione dei democratici cristiani e dei democratici di centro* (UDC), *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), and *Lega Nord Padania* (LEGA). Only the first group joined has been considered for each parliamentarian, without taking into account later party switching.
5. All models have been estimated with and without robust standard errors. As results were extremely similar, only non robust standard errors are shown.
6. These considerations can be applied also to *Rifondazione Comunista*, though its organisational structure is smaller and concentrated in central Italy.

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