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Published online: 13 Nov 2019.

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# Analysing the Importance of Localness for MP Campaigning and Legislative Performance

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**ABSTRACT**

Understanding how MPs use ties to their constituency, or localness, is important for understanding the nature of the MP-constituency relationship. MPs are expected to actively focus on their constituency in their work to help their campaign and gain re-election. To explore the relationship between MPs and the use of localness we examine the use of localness in their legislative activity. Combining the focus on constituency and parliamentary behaviour data is not often done and we utilise a dataset allowing us to test the impact of localness on parliamentary behaviour. We support the quantitative findings with qualitative interviews with MPs. We find that, above all, MPs with local ties will seek to signal their localness to the electorate in terms of constituency focus, but not in their parliamentary contributions.

How elected representatives are linked to those they represent is one of the classic questions in political science. While locally elected MPs also act nationally (Flinders, 2010, p. 21), local issues nevertheless vary between constituencies and between the national party campaign (Clarke, Stewart, Sanders, & Whiteley, 2004, p. 131), and the cross-pressure that MPs can feel between national and local issues are well-documented (e.g. Campbell & Cowley, 2014; Childs & Cowley, 2011; Chiru, 2017). Much of the existing research on MPs and representation has focused on campaigns and elections (e.g. Evans, Arzheimer, Campbell, & Cowley, 2017; Fisher, Cutts, & Fieldhouse, 2011; 2014; Hartman, Pattie, & Johnston, 2017), or what MPs do in relation to their constituency once elected (e.g. Bowler, 2010; Kellermann, 2016; Martin, 2011). As noted by the Speaker's Conference of Parliamentary Representation (House of Commons, 2010, p. 38) the responsibility of MPs lie jointly in Westminster and their constituencies. However, a necessary precondition for an MP to be able to devote their time and resource to constituency issues is to be elected and keep being re-elected as highlighted by André and Depauw (2013) and Strøm (1997). This necessitates that the electoral and legislative perspectives are combined and this has seen surprisingly little focus. It is only recently that Chiru (2017) presented the first attempt to link individual MP campaign efforts with behavioural data from a parliament. In this article, we analyse the extent to which the localness of an MP is presented by

the MPs through their website affects their behaviour in parliament in relation to mentioning of their constituency. We expect that the more focus an MP has on presenting local ties on their website, the more often will they mention their constituency in the chamber of the House of Commons in order to increase their connection to the constituency for use in a later election campaign.

Empirically, there are several perspectives at play in the relationship between representative and constituency service. One is the balance between party-specific issues and career goals that impacts behaviour once elected (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1979). Another perspective is the role-orientation between local and national issues (Norris, 1997; Norton, 1994). How MPs act once elected matters for their subsequent electoral performance (Bowler, 2010; Kellermann, 2013), although not all forms of activity are constituency based. For instance, there is no increase in constituency related questions regardless of seat security (Kellermann, 2016). While the legislative scholarship discussed finds a less clear connection between constituency and legislative behaviour, it is very different to the scholarship on electoral behaviour where Fisher et al. (2011; 2014) have established that a strong constituency campaign can alleviate part of a less than optimal national performance.

Furthermore the number of local candidates is increasing in the United Kingdom (Childs & Cowley, 2011). Although limited scholarship exists on whether localness is an electoral asset (Arzheimer & Evans, 2012; Evans et al., 2017), survey experiments have shown that residency matters for the electoral performance (Campbell & Cowley, 2014). Recently, Collignon and Sajuria (2018) found that a voter with higher regional identification prefers local candidates, although this is also dependent on the context of party competition. Hennl and Zittel (2011) show that campaign efforts of individuals can help mediate the effect of the electoral system. Strøm (1997) argued that activity in the parliament and electoral performance should be understood jointly. A candidate needs to be elected as an MP and once elected must be re-elected to pursue the preferred role-orientation. In this respect, we should expect that MPs will seek to enhance any trait that might improve their re-election chances.

We analyse a dataset comprising of all Conservative and Labour MPs who secured election at the 2015 General Election in England. We determine their degree of locality based on their projection of local identity in their official communication, thus setting our approach apart from the self-reporting measures used by most scholars (see, e.g. Chiru, 2017). Next, we test this measure in relation to the amount of attention MPs give to their constituencies when speaking in the House of Commons. We support our quantitative analysis with a number of interviews with MPs, strengthening our findings and placing them in a broader perspective.

## Representation, Constituency and Localness in the UK

The type of electoral system has an impact on the relationship between the constituency and its elected representative with first-past-the-post electoral systems creating a strong link between constituency and elected representative. A recent anthropological study of MPs at work suggests that the roles of constituency representation versus country representation should at this point be seen as combined roles, but also acknowledging that no MP can afford to ignore the demands of their constituents (Crewe, 2015). This

cross-pressure naturally means that any relationship between MPs and their constituents in such a system must be seen as a two-level structure. The top-level being the national level, both in terms of policy between elections and the national campaign at the time of an election. While the lower level is the local issues dealt with by the MP when in office, and the specific constituency campaign at the time of an election and this creates a potential for great variation within and between the two levels. What is nevertheless the goal of both levels – national or local – is to secure the election of the MP to act as the representative of the particular constituency, and we argue that what the MP does when in Parliament is likely to be influenced by their relationship with the constituency in which they are elected. This follows the argument given by Childs and Cowley (2011:, p. 12) that all major British parties have broadly signed up to the idea that political institutions should somewhat reflect the social characteristics of the people they have been elected to represent.

Hence, the question is a matter of how MPs should represent their constituents. Here it is first and foremost important to note that there is no clear job description for MPs and what MPs are held accountable for in their constituencies might be outside their control, for instance, manifesto pledges (House of Commons, 2010; Norton, 1994, p. 715). The electorate also holds different views on how an MP should represent them; a report from the Hansard Society (2010) had nearly 50% of respondents believing that MPs should represent the views of local people, though only 10% thought they did. This suggests that exploring the link to the local constituency is the first step in understanding how MPs use constituency in their legislative efforts, though at the same time this needs to be understood in relation to their role-orientation.

Using data covering more than 20 years, Johnson and Rosenblatt (2007) report that localness is either the most important or second most important characteristic that voters find desirable for their MP and this has also been corroborated more recently by Childs and Cowley (2011). Building on work by Rush (2001), Childs and Cowley (2011) demonstrate that for all other parties than the Conservatives, there has been an increase in MPs with a direct constituency connection. Most of the research on the demand-side focusing on localness can, according to Evans et al. (2017), be categorised into the perceptual approach, i.e. measuring the importance of localness for voters through survey data (see e.g. Childs & Cowley, 2011; Cowley, 2013; Johnson & Rosenblatt, 2007), and the behavioural approach using electoral results and geolocation of candidates and voters (see e.g. Arzheimer & Evans, 2012, 2014; Evans et al., 2017). Recent survey experiment work has corroborated the positive effect of local ties for a candidate (Campbell & Cowley, 2014). Yet the effect appears to be different geographically, and the stronger the regional identification, the more preferred local candidates are (Collignon & Sajuria, 2018).

The role of MPs can also be viewed from the supply-side, as Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina (1984) reported that MPs view constituency service as helpful for being re-elected. Campbell and Lovenduski (2015) found that the smaller the majority, the more constituency-oriented a role the MPs took in comparison to those elected in 'safer seats'. This is not surprising given Strøm's (1997) assertion that MPs are being motivated to act depending on their objectives, i.e. the political institutions limit elected representatives in their choices. What Strøm (1997) also highlights is the need for election and re-election for an MP to pursue either policy or office, in this respect incumbency and length of

tenure is an important aspect to take into account when it comes to representation. Indeed, Klein and Umit (2016) conclude that the desire for re-election is the most important motivation for an MP and that to fulfil ministerial ambition MPs from 'safer' seats are more likely to be rewarded with a senior ministerial office than those with smaller majorities.

Local orientation is therefore important, and we should expect MPs to take constituency into account in their legislative work. However, the empirical evidence on this is somewhat of a mixed bag. Bowler (2010) finds that MPs with smaller majorities are more likely to engage in the introduction of private member bills in the House than those with larger majorities and that there is a payoff in terms of increased vote share at the next election. Johnston, Pattie, and Rossiter (2014) found that when MPs responded to a suggested change in their constituency boundaries, they predominantly used local ties and communities as an argument. A relationship between sponsorship of Early Day Motions and improved electoral performance was found by Kellermann (2013). However, when it comes to the use of questions in the House of Commons, Kellermann (2016) finds a relationship between the size of majority and use of questions; when members are electorally weak, they use more parliamentary questions. Interestingly, Kellermann (2016) finds the focus of the question does not take on a constituency focus and concludes that questions are used to signal effort rather than constituency attention, a similar relationship was also observed in Ireland by Martin (2011). Chiru's (2017) work on the Hungarian case finds that constituency campaigning matters for the amount of constituency related questions asked in parliament, but that other variables such as party affiliation are more important.

These findings lead us to propose the following relationship between the localness of MPs and their work in the House of Commons. The expectation is that once MPs are elected to the House of Commons their focus on emphasising their localness will be important for their work in the chamber, thus we hypothesise:

> H1: MPs with a strong degree of localness will refer to their constituency more often in their parliamentary speeches compared to MPs with a lesser degree of localness.

We analyse this question quantitatively and support our results with qualitative interviews with MPs. By relying on both types of data, we believe we can provide a thorough answer to the question posed and move our understanding of the influence of localness on MP behaviour – in both campaigning and legislatively. In the next section, we discuss the data used and the methodology employed.

## Data and Methodology

The focus of this study is all English MPs from the Labour and the Conservative parties elected at the 2015 General Election. Firstly, focusing on these particular MPs allows for the optimal test of the question posed, as including nationalist MPs from Scotland and Wales could bias the findings towards an underlying dimension of regional versus national identity (see also Collignon & Sajuria, 2018), and not the local issue that is the focus of this article. Minor parties after the 2015 General Election, i.e. Liberal Democrats with six MPs in England, UKIP and the Green Party with one MP each have also been excluded making it possible to focus on the relationships across the two major parties.

The dependent variable measure the number of times the MP has brought up the constituency in Parliament in the 2015/2016 Parliamentary session.[1] This time frame was chosen to measure the relationship to the constituency at a point in time where no general election was expected. The variable was created by searching on the actual constituency name in the Hansard database so that each time an MP speaks and mentions the name of their constituency, we count this as one instance. We do not include the instances where the MP solely talks about 'constituency' without mentioning the actual name of the constituency, or those times where the MP mentions 'constituents' as the vast majority of these cases will refer to specific casework. This is arguably important, as specific casework does not apply to the entire constituency and can therefore not be classified as a local issue. This also eliminates the instances where Ministers or Junior Ministers are replying to an oral question regarding another MP's constituent's specific issue. This filter was applied to the constituency name and the Member of Parliament in question; to see how many times the Member themselves had brought up the constituency in the chamber during the parliamentary session across all their contributions.

Our main independent variable deal with the perception of localness. While MP surveys often include questions on MPs locality, it is self-reported (e.g. Chiru, 2017), which could mean that MPs have a very different perception of their locality in contrast to what we propose: a coding of their expressed locality connection. Here we take a different approach to many of the existing studies of localness who either utilise voter surveys of their preference in relation to geography (e.g. Campbell & Cowley, 2014) or geolocation and spatial analysis (e.g. Evans et al., 2017). Given that our approach does not take its point of departure from MP survey data, we need to utilise a different measure for localness. Here we turn to their online presence, and we argue that the image the politicians' project online is arguably an accurate representation, as it is used to bond with and reach out to voters (Stanyer, 2008). This obviously is a relatively new occurrence that all MPs can be expected to have a full online presence and present themselves to their constituency, however as Zittel (2003) argued this new type of representation could not be ignored, and indeed could be seen to change the way that representation happens. Southern (2015) reported that at the 2010 British General Election candidate websites were the normal occurrence. For the German case, Zittel (2015) presents evidence that candidates generally rate websites as important to have and use them to seek to increase their personal vote share. For this analysis, we explore how MPs present their local ties on their websites and how they present themselves. To accommodate this, all MPs online biographies have been read, and their explicitly stated local ties have been documented and four categories of a locality index have been created, see Table 1.

We include a number of control variables that are specifically related to the MPs and their constituency. These control variables are among those traditionally used in similar studies also from other contexts (see, e.g. Chiru, 2017); size of MP majority, seniority of MP measured in year of service since first elected, party affiliation taking the value 1 if Conservative and 0 if Labour, whether the constituency the MP represents is a rural constituency (value 1) or an urban constituency (value 0), and finally whether the MP is a minister or not. The latter variable is only used in the second part of the analysis as serving as a minister traditionally prevents an MP from speaking unless in government capacity. The size of MP majority was collected from the official 2015 General Election

**Table 1.** Examples of locality index coding.

| Category | Example |
| --- | --- |
| (4) Born and raised/lives in the constituency | *I am St Helens born and bred. I grew up in a working-class family in the Gerrards Bridge area of St Helens. I went to local schools [ … ]*[a] |
| (3) Outspoken local ties, but no specifics were given | *In Wantage and Didcot, Ed is President of Didcot Town Football Club; a board member of Didcot First; Vice-President of the Friends of the Ridgeway; Patron of the Friends of St Mary's Church, Buckland; President of SUDEP Action, a local epilepsy charity; patron of the Friends of OSCAR; and patron of Didcot TRAIN.*[b] |
| (2) Outspoken stated local work but no ties specified | *This site tells you about what I have been doing for Telford as its MP and my campaigns to improve life for everyone here. [ … ] I want to ensure that Telford's identity is respected and that Telford is a town we can all be proud of.*[c] |
| (1) No ties, and no mentions of local work | Locality index one is given to those MPs who did not mention the constituency and had more of a national profile in statements of how they performed their role. The MPs within locality index one did not mention a place of residence but usually focused their personal section on their education, their professional experience, their marital status and number of children. |

[a]Website of Marie Rimmer MP.
[b]Website of Ed Vaizey MP.
[c]Website of Lucy Allen MP.

results published by the BBC. Seniority was collected from the MP biographies, and party affiliation and constituency status were taken from the British Election Study 2015 (Fieldhouse et al., 2016). Following Johnston, Cutts, Pattie, and Fisher (2012) the size of the majority will be categorised to provide a more effective overview of the results, i.e. marginal majority is a win by 0–10 percentage points, a safe majority is won by 10–20 percentage points, and ultra-safe seats are those won by more than 20 percentage points.

We supplement the quantitative analysis with interviews with five serving MPs all representing various urban areas, but at different points in their career. Supplementing the quantitative work with interviews ensures that we contextualise issues where relevant. Only interviewing urban MPs is obviously limiting the inferences that can be drawn from the interviews, and we are not claiming that these MPs are in any way representative of all English MPs. On the contrary, we follow the advice by Seawright and Gerring (2008) that it is better to intentionally select the cases used based on various factors which are of interest in the study. This is because a smaller case study usually will not endeavour to be a representative sample. Thus, we have limited ourselves to five urban MPs to allow us to provide a deeper understanding of exactly how urban MPs react to the localness question while controlling for this aspect in our quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, the interviewed MPs are also used to place our results into a broader context, and although their own experience might be limited as MPs serving only urban constituencies they have all served with members for rural constituencies and it is expected that MPs, like any other profession, share experiences with one another and the information they can provide does help in placing our results into a context.

## Local Work and MP Performance

Among MPs, there is broad agreement that local constituency work is important, as MP2 said in the interview: ' … I think it is becoming more important for most MPs now, because the public if you like have a more consumerist approach to politics', suggesting that constituencies prefer MPs who are locally focused. This was also remarked upon by MP5: 'Although we are quite a cynical bunch in this country I think that […] they

[voters] would appreciate someone who is locally accountable'. The importance of local ties is further highlighted by one of the MPs interviewed who argued that the expectation management was of key importance: '… we see the rise of the localism because people have felt that unless you have a local connection, you are less able to represent because you are an outsider somehow'. MP5 further argued that the role-orientation of MPs is at times in conflict with the perceived importance of localness by the constituents:

> … there are two very different sides to being an MP. There is as a national legislator, looking at broad bits or be that those will still affect the constituents but then there is very much having a deep understanding of the local area and trying to influence things here, because I don't have power over local planning, over local healthcare or local transport but I have a reasonable amount of influence, and it is about trying to use that. But you need an understanding to be able to use that effectively.

The need for presenting a local profile was also highlighted by MP4, who warned against the possible opening for opposition candidates if localness was not found:

> You also don't want to be seen as somehow not interested in the constituency because that will play out in the leaflets that are then produced by those against you and handed out for the next election. So if you were not visible and did not live in the constituency that would definitely appear on opposition literature... So there is a politics to that which isn't necessarily about good constituency politics, but what are the weak points when you try to win something or defend something in your constituency.

Localism may, therefore, be used not only to boost the candidates own chances but to get ahead of opposing party candidates. This is also something that is used in the electoral campaign. Data from the study of Constituency Campaigning in the 2015 General Election (Fisher, Cutts, Fieldhouse, & Rottweiler, 2015) show that the agents of MPs generally agreed that when it was possible, the localness of the MP was highlighted. Having a local candidate is seen as important by many, not least those in the local party, as stated by MP2:

> I wasn't particularly planning [on running for MP], but because the seat was there and since the amount of colleagues locally suggested I should stand for it, I think it was a feeling from a number of people in the constituency that they didn't want anyone parachuted in from outside. So I said okay, I will do that.

The importance of majority was also highlighted by the interviewed MPs, MP2 argued: 'I am sure that if you have a marginal seat, you are going plan out your campaigning very much on a constituency focus. It is almost like a permanent campaign'. Similarly, MP4 commented: 'The narrower you win by, the more you need to do in your constituency that is a fairly safe rule of thumb'. This resonates with the analysis presented by Campbell and Lovenduski (2015), showing that the MPs who won by a slimmer margin were more constituency focused.

What the interviews alone does not capture is the extent to which the MPs are using their constituency when they speak in parliament. For this, we need to use a quantitative approach and our dependent variable which is a count of the number of times the constituency is mentioned by the MP can help us examine this. A candidate selected for a seat by their party may have party support and may even be considered for additional roles when elected, but if local support is lacking, they will have to mention their constituency more often to build their profile of caring for local issues. Given the dependent variable is the

number of times a constituency is mentioned in parliament and therefore is a count variable we have to use an estimator suitable for count models. We find strong evidence for over-dispersion in our data and based on this use a negative binomial estimator. The main independent variable is the locality index, and we include controls for the size of majority, the seniority of the MP, and whether it is an urban or rural constituency and in one model include party affiliation and in another model leave party affiliation out and include a variable capturing whether the MP is also a minister.

Table 2 includes both the raw coefficients and the incident rate ratios to help the interpretation of the results, i.e. a negative incident rate ratio would mean that if the variable were to increase by one point or change from zero to one, the corresponding rate for constituency mentions would decrease by the factor of the negative number holding all other variables constant, and vice versa for a positive incident rate ration. We have included a plot of the marginal effect of our main independent variable, locality index, in Figure 1 to help facilitate the interpretation of the results.[2] Overall, we have to reject our hypothesis. There is no significant relationship between the degree of localness of an MP and how many times they mention their constituency in the House of Commons. This can be seen from the non-significant coefficients for the locality index variable as presented in Table 2 and in the effect plots in Figure 1.

This result is corroborated by research on parliamentary questions where it has been established comparatively that MPs with smaller majorities might increase their use of questions, but not the local emphasis of these questions (Kellermann, 2016; Martin, 2011). Though this result does not conform with the findings of Campbell and Lovenduski (2015) and with recent survey experiments of voter preference of MPs (Campbell &

**Table 2.** Effects on constituency mentions.

| Variables | Model 1 – Raw coefficients | Model 1 – Incident rate ratios | Model 2 – Raw coefficients | Model 2 – Incident rate ratios |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low Locality Index | 0.16 | 1.17 | 0.11 | 1.12 |
| | (0.19) | (0.22) | (0.16) | (0.18) |
| Medium Locality Index | −0.17 | 0.85 | −0.09 | 0.91 |
| | (0.18) | (0.15) | (0.15) | (0.14) |
| Strong Locality Index | 0.11 | 1.12 | 0.17 | 1.19 |
| | (0.14) | (0.16) | (0.12) | (0.15) |
| Male | 0.03 | 1.03 | 0.03 | 1.03 |
| | (0.12) | (0.12) | (0.10) | (0.10) |
| Seniority | −0.04*** | 0.97*** | −0.03*** | 0.97*** |
| | (0.01) | (0.01) | (0.01) | (0.01) |
| Seat Security | −0.22*** | 0.80*** | −0.18*** | 0.83*** |
| | (0.07) | (0.05) | (0.06) | (0.05) |
| Rural Seat | −0.22* | 0.80* | −0.13 | 0.88 |
| | (0.12) | (0.10) | (0.09) | (0.08) |
| Conservative MP | −0.14 | 0.87 | - | − |
| | (0.13) | (0.11) | | |
| Minister | − | − | −2.21*** | 0.11*** |
| | | | (0.15) | (0.02) |
| Constant | 3.25*** | 25.79*** | 3.12*** | 22.76*** |
| | (0.23) | (6.02) | (0.19) | (4.42) |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | .02 | | .07 | |
| Log Likelihood | 1723.29 | | 1639.25 | |
| Observations | 523 | | 523 | |

Standard errors in parentheses; ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

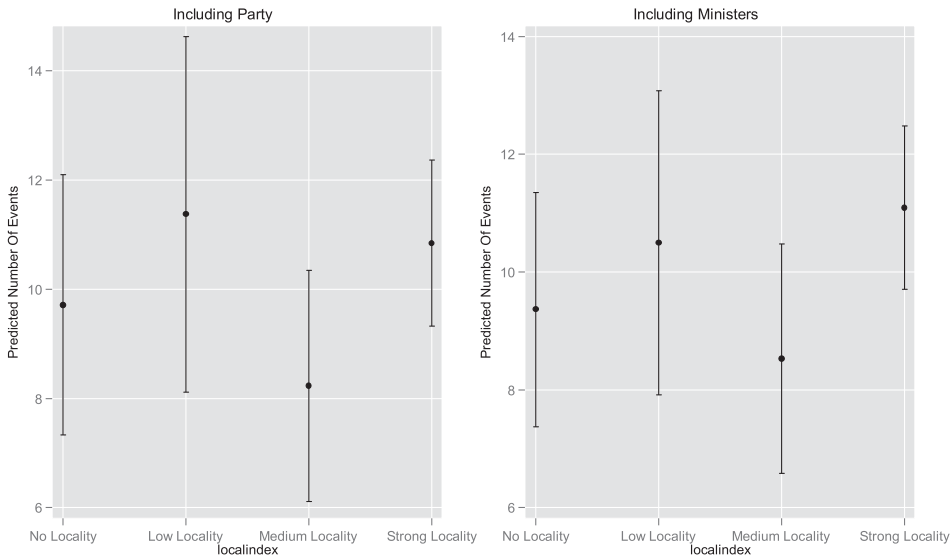Marginal Effect of Local Connection on Local Mentions in the Chamber



**Figure 1.** Marginal effects of locality index.

Cowley, 2014). There is also no significant effect found for party affiliation. Although when we leave out the party variable and substitute it with a variable for ministerial office, then we see a highly significant and strong effect size on the number of mentions with ministers mentioning their constituency nine times fewer than MPs on the backbenches. The estimates also suggest a negative effect of length of tenure on the number of mentions an MP makes of their constituency, though likewise a very small effect size, though nevertheless identical to what we should expect given the three phases of a legislator's life (Bailer & Ohmura, 2018). Majority has a higher effect size and the larger the majority, the fewer mentions of the constituency by the MP. This is also in line with what the literature has found in other studies using different methodologies, suggesting that where an MP holds a large majority they will mention their constituency less (e.g. Kellermann, 2016), and MPs with a smaller majority will simply need to spend more time outside of the parliamentary chamber maximising the chances of the all-important re-election (see also André & Depauw, 2013; André, Depauw, & Martin, 2016; Strøm, 1997).

The results also partially support the difference between urban and rural seats, i.e. urban MPs are mentioning their constituency approximately 20% more often than MPs representing rural seats, although this relationship is only marginally significant ($p$ = .065). This relationship is well established in the literature (e.g. Monroe & Rose, 2002) and is corroborated by the various qualitative evidence. Although the marginally significant relationship disappears when the ministerial variable is included suggesting that the Conservative ministers are more likely to represent rural seats than urban seats.

## Concluding Remarks

Overall, the empirical analysis leads us to reject our hypothesis regarding the connection between localness and work in parliament; MPs are not mentioning their constituency

more in parliamentary speeches regardless of the degree of localness they present to their constituent. We did corroborate existing findings that MPs with a larger majority over the next candidate in the constituency were less likely to mention their constituency. MPs who had been in office for a longer time were less likely to mention their constituencies. In addition to this, urban MPs also mentioned their constituencies more than rural MPs, although this relationship is only marginally significant. We did not find a relationship between party affiliation and mentioning the constituency.

The results point to the fact that local mentions are not a priority for MPs once elected and that MPs are likely to spend their time on other factors important to their electorates, such as national issues, party policies, or furthering their own political or private career. If this is an accurate representation of reality, one may question whether an MP is truly a representative of the people in the constituency and their specific issues. Instead, the question may be asked as to whether this type of representation is only present in constituencies where the local focus is favoured by the majority of the electorate. There is a substantial possibility that there are several constituents having an opposing expectation to that of their current representative, but as they remain in the minority, they also remain somewhat powerless in changing the status quo. As a final point, each constituency elects an MP based on their expectations of the type of representation the MP will provide. An MP who is local to the area and who has projected this image is therefore expected to be vocal about local issues in Parliament as this will mean that they continue to meet the expectations of the constituency and increase their chance of being re-elected in future elections. To establish the exact nature of this relationship more work is needed, not least work that also incorporates previous political experience, for instance by examining the impact of local government experience (see Norris, 1997) or positions held in the national party as an example of potential parachutage of candidates into particular constituencies.

The degree to which MPs need to cater to the expectations of the constituency is also dependent on how long they have been in the seat and how large their margin against the next candidate was in the last election as this makes the candidate more or less safe in a future election. To fully establish the nature of this relationship, it would be necessary to replicate this work on a longitudinal scale. What this study has produced is a systematic analysis incorporating both campaign and legislative behaviour, thus linking the two elements that had primarily been studied independently until now. This article is among the first with Chiru (2017) to argue that it is necessary to include both campaign and legislative aspects if we are to increase our understanding of how MPs use their local connection and how they present the link with their constituency. There is a need for further studies of single cases, but certainly also for a truly comparative analysis of the question across electoral systems for us to fully gauge the link between electoral campaign and legislative activity.

## Notes

1. Two Members of Parliament resigned or passed away during the parliamentary session this paper is covering and were, therefore, removed from the data set. These Members of Parliament were Michael Meacher Member of Parliament for Oldham West and Royton (21 October 2015, replaced by Jim McMahon 3 December 2015) Harry Harpman Member of

Parliament for Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough (4 February, replaced by Gill Furniss 5 May 2016).

2. The plots are made using a Stata graphics scheme by Bischof (2017).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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