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Civil liberties or economic freedom? The political space of Internet policy in the European Parliament, 1999–2014

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has become central to economic exchange and political communication, placing regulatory initiatives high on European policy agendas. What cleavages shape the political conflicts surrounding Internet policy? I argue that proposals to regulate the Internet frequently affect not only economic interests but also the civil liberties of citizens in the online environment. Political parties must therefore balance their stance on market regulation and their socio-cultural preferences on the 'liberal-authoritarian' dimension of political contestation. To explore party competition on Internet policy in the European Union, I analyse all Internet policy roll-call votes in the European Parliament from 1999 to 2014. Ideal point estimation shows that political competition in this policy field is best explained by the 'liberal-authoritarian' dimension. Reinforcing this finding, two case studies illustrate how civil liberty concerns motivate left-wing parties and the liberal party group to form voting coalitions despite diverging economic preferences.

KEYWORDS Internet governance; digital policy; cleavage; European Parliament; roll-call votes

Introduction

In the three decades since the invention of the World Wide Web, electronic commerce, digital communication, and online media have profoundly altered our economic, social, and political lives. This transformation entails many political challenges, from unequal access to the Internet, to the misuse of personal data and the spread of hate speech and misinformation. At the start of the 2020s, governments worldwide, both democratic and autocratic, have firmly placed Internet policy on their political agendas. In the European Union (EU), Internet policy has been a political priority at least since the European Commission first published its 'Digital Agenda for

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Europe' in 2010. Yet growing regulatory activity has also brought political conflict. Observers and politicians have called the 'General Data Protection Regulation' (GDPR), adopted in 2016, and the 'Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market', adopted in 2019, the most intensely lobbied legislative files in the history of the EU (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2018; Ebbinghaus et al., 2014).

A blossoming political science literature studies the effects of online political communication (e.g., Farrell, 2012; Jungherr et al., 2020; Tucker et al., 2018). Likewise, scholars increasingly investigate the political processes producing the rules and regulations for the digital age (e.g., Kalyanpur & Newman, 2019; Laurer & Seidl, 2021; Perarnaud, 2021; Sell, 2013). Much of this work, however, consists of case studies focusing on publicly salient events. Moreover, relatively little research has explored how parties position themselves in this emerging policy field (for an exception, see König & Wenzelburger, 2019). This article moves beyond case studies to investigate the structure of party competition in the field of Internet policy. Drawing on cleavage theory, it asks: What are the underlying dimensions of political contestation of Internet policy in the European Parliament? How have those dimensions evolved? I argue that Internet policy can be seen either as the economic regulation of private businesses active in the digital economy, or as a question of civil rights vs. law-and-order when governments attempt to govern the online behaviour of their citizens. Whereas the first perspective speaks to the classical socio-economic left-right dimension, the second perspective implies that it is instead a socio-cultural libertarian-authoritarian cleavage that structures Internet policy-making. But which of the two theoretically plausible dimensions can better explain observed party behaviour in the EU? In other words, is Internet policy about economic freedom (vs. government regulation) or civil liberties (vs. law-and-order)?

The European Parliament (EP) is an ideal venue for studying these questions. In the EU's separated-powers system, EP voting does not follow government-opposition dynamics but is instead ideologically driven (Hix & Noury, 2016). This facilitates the identification of the ideological underpinnings of party competition in Internet policy. More generally, the EU is an important actor in the field of Internet policy. It is widely perceived to be a global frontrunner in regulating the online economy. Given the political will, the EU's large market size and high regulatory capacity, European rules have demonstrated their potential to influence global regulatory trends and firm behaviour, not least on issues such as data protection (Bradford, 2020). Analysing Internet policy-making in the EU therefore helps us to understand global regulatory developments in the digital age.

Analysing EP roll-call votes (RCVs) from three legislative periods (1999-2014), this article uncovers the basic space of Internet policy in the EU and identifies the dominant voting coalitions. The evidence suggests that while

Internet policy is best depicted as a two-dimensional political space, voting in the EP during this period has been structured mainly by party preferences on the socio-cultural liberal-authoritarian dimension. A second dimension reflects party positions on European integration, speaking to the question whether Internet policy should be made at the EU level in the first place. The quantitative analysis is complemented by two short case studies, exploring the mechanisms of party competition. The case studies show that civil liberty concerns may cause voting coalitions between parties with otherwise diverging economic preferences.

The article proceeds as follows: I first review previous literature on political contestation over Internet policy. Combining these insights with the literature on party politics in the EU, I subsequently advance my theoretical argument on the political space of Internet policy. In section 4, I introduce the EP as the venue for my empirical analysis and develop venue-specific expectations concerning voting behaviour. Following the description of the RCV data set and the methodology, the empirical analysis proceeds in three steps: First, I present the results of the RCV scaling and related regression analyses. Second, I explore the overall patterns of voting coalitions in the policy field. Finally, two short case studies zoom into important legislative debates. Taking into account limitations resulting from the studied time frame, the article concludes with a call for future research on this evolving policy field in-the-making.

Internet policy and political contestation

Political scientists have long studied the Internet as a challenge for global governance: How can sovereign states accommodate a global, borderless information network (e.g., Cogburn, 2016; DeNardis, 2014; Drezner, 2004; Flonk et al., 2020; Mueller, 2010)? This *Internet governance* literature investigates how a complex network of intergovernmental organisations, private actors, and civil society groups coordinate the technical standards and protocols that make the Internet work. Empirically, this research focuses on the international organisations and summits where these debates take place. The main dimension of conflict identified by this work is the appropriate level of rule-setting. Whereas liberal democracies defend the transnational governance structure that evolved bottom-up in the early years of the Internet, authoritarian states, led by Russia and China, seek more discretionary powers for national governments (Flonk et al., 2020).

I use the term *Internet policy* to distinguish domestic (and EU) legislation from those global governance processes. Internet policy serves as an umbrella label for all public policies that aim to structure, facilitate or regulate the Internet's infrastructure and the services provided via the Internet (Stier, 2017, p. 33). While the *Internet governance* literature considers domestic

Internet policy mainly with regard to its impact on the global network, political scientists are also increasingly studying the political processes leading to the adoption of such national policies.

This is unsurprising, as domestic contestation over the appropriate regulation of the Internet has increased within Western democracies since the late 2000s, calling into question an exclusive focus on regime-type driven patterns of conflict between nation-states and governments (cf. Farrell & Newman, 2019). For instance, attempts to strengthen the enforcement of copyrights in the face of online piracy have been met with public protests (Haunss, 2013; Sell, 2013). Edward Snowden's revelations concerning US intelligence agencies' Internet surveillance have created transatlantic disputes about government surveillance between the EU and the US. Farrell and Newman (2019) show how struggles between different actors within government bureaucracies, as well as judicial interventions can account for the outcomes of these disputes (see also Kalyanpur & Newman, 2019). Moreover, recent studies address the regulatory challenges and political conflicts resulting from the rise of large platforms such as Facebook and Google (e.g., Culpepper & Thelen, 2020; Gorwa, 2021; Schmitz & Seidl, 2022).

Surprisingly absent in these studies is the role of political parties in Internet policy (exceptions are discussed below). Serving as the main aggregator of societal interests in modern democracies, parties play a vital role in the formulation of public policies. Most importantly, studying how political parties position themselves on Internet policy helps us understand how conflicts over Internet policy relate to the broader cleavages structuring societies and party systems (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). I address this research gap by uncovering the basic space of party competition in Internet policy in one important legislative venue, the EP.

Towards a basic space of Internet policy

The label 'Internet policy' comprises a variety of public policy issues including but not limited to the rollout of new telecommunications networks, the protection of computer systems against malicious hackers, the enforcement of copyright, the protection of personal data and the fight against the online diffusion of illegal content (Schünemann, 2019). The term Internet policy thus bundles a variety of policy issues, some new, some predating but newly challenged by the Internet.

Even though these are diverse issues, basic space theory suggests that they can be collapsed into a low-dimensional political space (Downs, 1957; Hinich & Munger, 1997). Political contestation is generally expected to occur among no more than two or three dimensions of disagreement along which political parties compete for voters. Due to humans' limited

cognitive capabilities, parties bundle their policy preferences into packages that fit into a low-dimensional space and link them to broader ideological stances: 'In exchange for sacrificing the specificity of voters' ideal positions in a multi-dimensional space, voters gain predictability over the legislative or executive actions promoted by their chosen party' (Kitschelt et al., 1999, p. 63). From this perspective, party systems themselves are a reflection of durable cleavages in societies (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Correspondingly, the study of parliamentary voting shows that parliamentarians vote very similarly across very different bills, turning parliaments into low-dimensional political spaces (e.g., Hix & Noury, 2016; Poole & Rosenthal, 2000).

The basic space of European politics in the twenty-first century is generally described as two-dimensional. First, the socio-economic left-right dimension reflects conflict over redistribution and government intervention in markets. The second, cross-cutting dimension captures conflicts over socio-cultural issues, including civil liberties and law-and-order, immigration and minority rights. Different scholars have proposed different names for this second dimension. This article follows Hooghe et al. (2002) encompassing diction in calling the second dimension GAL/TAN for green/alternative/libertarian vs. traditional/authoritarian/nationalist orientations.

Internet policy cannot be easily subsumed exclusively into either of the dimensions. At first glance, Internet policy is clearly related to the socio-economic left-right dimension as it addresses the appropriate level of state intervention in the (globalised) digital economy. However, the Internet also affects the socio-cultural trade-off between civil liberties and law-and-order. Digital communication and social media facilitate citizens' exercise of their freedoms of expression and (virtual) assembly, even in countries with otherwise limited press freedom. On the flip side, the Internet provides governments with unprecedented possibilities to spread propaganda and to surveil not only individuals but large populations. The question of how much control governments should exert over citizens' online activities relates to the socio-cultural dimension.[1] This raises the question: Is Internet policy-making characterised primarily by a political contest over market regulation or by a dispute over civil liberties and law-and-order?[2]

Previous research provides evidence that both the economic and the socio-cultural dimensions matter for Internet policy-making. Measuring the relative emphasis on Internet policy in party manifestos from eight European countries between 2010 and 2018, König and Wenzelburger (2019) show that both economically liberal (i.e., economically right-wing) and socio-culturally liberal parties are more likely to give room to Internet policy in their manifestos. The authors argue that the emphasis on Internet policy strengthens those parties' core competences: economic innovation in the case of economic liberals and international openness and civil rights in the case of GAL parties.

But the perceived importance of one dimension vis-à-vis the other varies over time and context. Analysing plenary debates in the German Bundestag, Reiberg (2018) illustrates the changing perception of Internet policy by German elites. He shows that the early Internet policy debates of the 1990s were characterised by an optimistic focus on economic development, while in the early 2000s, security concerns ranging from the protection of critical infrastructure to child safety gained prominence. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, civil society activists increasingly problematised newly proposed state interventions from a civil rights perspective. König (2018) shows that while a civil rights perspective on Internet policy featured prominently in the election manifestos of German parties in 2009, by 2017, attention had shifted back to an economic and consumer protection perspective. The present study must therefore also be seen in its temporal context.

It could be argued that whether political conflict occurs on one dimension or the other depends on the specific policy issue at hand. However, I argue that a distinct characteristic of Internet policy is the close linkage of the two dimensions *within* single (legislative) issues. A policy designed to serve an economic motivation may have repercussions on the balance between civil rights and law-and-order. For example, initiatives to strengthen the enforcement of copyrights online may harm Internet users' freedom of expression, especially if algorithmic filtering procedures are employed. Data-driven business models based on the tracking of users raise privacy concerns. Targeted advertising may contribute to the spread of disinformation and enable voter manipulation. Encryption protects businesses against corporate espionage supporting economic growth, but also impedes efficient law enforcement. Moreover, in recent years, geopolitical concerns have arisen. Some governments worry that the participation of the Chinese firm Huawei in the build-up of wireless 5G networks gives the Chinese government access to Western networks. This example illustrates that even in the case of network rollout, economic interests must be balanced with other concerns.

Policy-makers thus face trade-offs: Should they decide based on their economic or their socio-cultural preferences? Economically left-wing but culturally liberal parties might oppose regulation if they think it restricts the freedom of Internet users. Meanwhile, culturally conservative parties might favour strict rules on online content even if they would typically prefer less regulation. Likewise, parties who are at the same time economically right-wing and culturally liberal must prioritise one ideological dimension over the other. For example, in the case of data protection, economic freedom conflicts with the right to privacy. Liberals therefore must decide whether to opt for a higher regulatory burden for businesses to protect citizens' privacy or whether to create a more laissez-faire economic environment.

Studying Internet policy in the European Parliament

This article studies the implications of Internet policy's close linkage between the socio-economic and the socio-cultural dimensions for political contestation between parties in one important legislative venue, the EP. It does not address political contestation between member states in the Council, the EU's other legislative organ (cf. Perarnaud, 2021).

The main advantage of studying party competition in the EP as opposed to national parliaments is that the EU is a separated-powers system in which the executive does not rely on a permanent parliamentary majority. In contrast to member state parliaments, in the EP, ideological positions are 'stronger predictors of legislative voting than government-opposition status' (Hix & Noury, 2016, p. 263). Rather than forming a permanent coalition, majorities are organised on a vote-by-vote basis and vary across policy fields (Hix & Høyland, 2013, p. 179). Moreover, it has been argued that parties in the EP are policy-seeking rather than vote-seeking actors (Klüver & Spoon, 2015, p. 554). This argument is based on the second-order nature of EP elections: Voters use the elections to signal disapproval of their national governments instead of voting based on MEPs' actual parliamentary behaviour (Reif & Schmitt, 1980). These characteristics make the EP an ideal venue to identify ideologically-driven policy coalitions for Internet policy.

Previous research has identified a general left-right dimension as the primary competitive dimension in the EP, without, however, explicitly disentangling its economic and socio-cultural components (Hix et al., 2007).[3] A second dimension reflects preferences concerning European integration and has gained in importance following the Eurozone crisis, especially for fiscal issues (Hix et al., 2019; Otjes & van der Veer, 2016). While European integration is often subsumed under the socio-cultural dimension (e.g., Hooghe et al., 2002), empirical analyses of party and voter positions show that these are distinct dimensions (Costello et al., 2012; McElroy & Benoit, 2012).

The EP's two-dimensional nature should also hold for the Internet policy field. Since parties may disagree over whether Internet policy should be addressed at the EU or at the national level, it is reasonable to expect that the second dimension reflects conflicts over EU authority and integration. I expect the EP's first dimension to reflect either national party delegations' socio-economic or socio-cultural preferences.

> ***Dimensionality Expectation:*** *The political space of Internet policy is two-dimensional. The second dimension is explained by party positions on European integration.*

> ***Socio-economic Expectation:*** *Party positions on the socio-economic dimension have a stronger effect on MEPs' Internet policy ideal points than party positions on the socio-cultural dimension.*

Socio-cultural Expectation: *Party positions on the socio-cultural dimension have a stronger effect on MEPs' Internet policy ideal points than party positions on the socio-economic dimension.*

A key challenge for disentangling the relative influence of socio-economic and socio-cultural preferences is that in European party systems, the positions of parties on the economic and the cultural dimension are highly correlated. In Western Europe, parties combine left-wing economic positions with socially liberal policies. In contrast, in Central Eastern Europe, parties frequently couple left-wing economics with social conservatism (Rovny & Edwards, 2012). The exception is the liberal party family which combines economically right-wing and socially liberal positions. This pattern is reflected in the EP's plenary debates where McElroy and Benoit (2012) find that the left-right and GAL-TAN dimensions are congruent for all party groups except for the ALDE group, which is composed of liberal parties from across the EU and which is socially liberal but economically right-wing.[4] Consequently, in the field of Internet policy, liberal parties should – more than other party families – be forced to balance their economic and socio-cultural preferences. As discussed above, these parties also tend to put greater emphasis on Internet policy in their manifestos (König & Wenzelburger, 2019).

ALDE's ideological configuration is reflected in its policy-specific coalition patterns. Depending on the policy area, ALDE votes either with the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) group or with the Christian Democrats of the European Peoples Party (EPP). Given its economically right-wing preferences, ALDE is more likely to vote with the EPP on economic policy, including the internal market, foreign trade, and monetary issues. In contrast, on the socio-cultural dimension, ALDE is closer to the S&D group. 'Centre-left' voting coalitions between ALDE and the S&D therefore occur 'more often than a centre-right coalition on environment and public health, gender equality, civil liberties, and justice and home affairs', issue areas associated with the socio-cultural dimension (Hix & Høyland, 2013, p. 180). These coalition patterns are important to consider because EP voting is generally dominated by a grand coalition between the EPP and the S&D that frequently also includes ALDE MEPs (ibid.). Accordingly, if no consensus between the two largest groups can be build, the ALDE votes are decisive for the policy outcome (ibid.). Therefore, ALDE's decision to vote with either the S&D or the EPP on Internet policy issues is a signal whether the liberal group perceives Internet policy to be about economics or about civil liberties. It does not necessarily follow from this 'test' that all party groups base their voting decisions on the same ideological dimension. In fact, losing parties may strategically chose to reframe an issue (cf. e.g., Rovny & Edwards, 2012). A comprehensive picture of party motivations and strategies would require in-depth case

studies using interviews and discourse analyses. Nevertheless, ALDE's swing vote is a strong indicator of which dimensions tipped the scale in determining the legislative outcome.

> ***Observable implication ALDE (a):*** *If economic party preferences structure MEPs' voting behaviour in Internet policy, the liberal ALDE group is more likely to form voting coalitions with the EPP group.*

> ***Observable implication ALDE (b):*** *If socio-cultural economic party preferences structure MEPs' voting behaviour in Internet policy, the liberal ALDE group is more likely to form voting coalitions with the S&D group.*

Internet policy RCVs in the EP

My dataset includes all RCVs from the EP's fifth (1999-2004), sixth (2004-2009) and seventh (2009-2014) legislative period (EP5-7). Out of this universe of RCVs, I manually selected all RCVs associated with Internet policy. To do so, I relied on the titles (and if necessary, contents) of each – legislative and non-legislative – bill. I included all RCVs associated with the selected bills (Table 1).

RCVs on Internet policy issues have steadily increased over the three legislatures, both in absolute and relative terms, pointing to the EU's increasing legislative activity in this field. Between EP5 and EP6, Internet policy's share of all RCVs more than doubled. Further qualitative inspection reveals that across all three parliamentary terms, most of the selected bills can be attributed to one of three issue areas: copyright, privacy or telecommunications. Other votes relate to issues such as cybersecurity, e-commerce and e-government (*Appendix A2*). This reflects the variety of issues in the Internet policy field during this time frame.

Methods

Vote scaling and statistical analysis

To determine the political space of Internet policy, I estimate the ideal points of each MEP for each legislative period, using the non-parametric Optimal Classification (OC) procedure by Poole (2000). The OC procedure is related to the widely-used parametric W-NOMINATE technique but does not rely on assumptions regarding the distribution of classification errors, which makes it a preferable solution for the EP (Hix et al., 2019; Rosenthal &

Table 1. Description of the data set.

	EP5 (1999 - 2004)	EP6 (2004 - 2009)	EP7 (2009 - 2014)
RVCs (total)	5745	6199	6961
Internet Policy RCVs	72	206	275
Internet Policy as share of all RCVs	0.0125	0.0332	0.0395

Voeten, 2004). Results for scaling with the W-NOMINATE algorithm are reported in *Appendix A6*.

As a necessary identification restriction in the OC procedure, I fix the polarity of each dimension with a MEP known to be right-wing on each dimension to the positive value on each dimension to make sure that right-wing parties appear on the right side of the space. For every estimation, I select a MEP from the Italian Lega Nord to represent both economically and socially conservative as well as Eurosceptic positions.[5]

The scaling generates 'voting maps' in which each MEP is represented as an ideal point. Individual RCVs are depicted as lines 'cutting through' the estimated political space separating MEPs voting 'yes' and 'no'. The dimensions of these maps are inductively generated and have no predefined meaning. Assuming that MEPs' ideal points correlate with their ideological position, I use linear regressions to explain their location in the political space. Because there are no ideological measures for individual MEPs, I use the party positions as measured by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015). For this purpose, I calculate as the dependent variables the mean OC scores for each national party delegation on each dimension in the respective legislative period.

The main independent variables are two ideological scores provided by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), the 'economic left-right' and the 'GAL-TAN' variables. As these variables are conceptually aggregated measures, I include two more narrow 'policy' scores from the CHES in separate models: The 'deregulation' variable substitutes the 'left-right' variable. This narrows the scope of the economic dimension conceptually to a question of regulation, excluding issues of redistribution which do not play a direct role in Internet policy. To substitute the 'GAL-TAN' variable, I use the 'civil liberties vs. law-and-order' variable. This narrower variable captures more accurately the theoretical expectations, leaving aside other socio-cultural issues such as immigration. As control variables, I include national party positions on the pro-/anti-EU dimension, whether the party is a member of the national government coalition in their respective member state, as well as regional dummies. I use the values collected by the CHES waves of 1999 (for EP5), 2004 (for EP6) and 2010 (for EP7). While the ideological structure of the European party system means that the economic and socio-cultural variables are highly correlated[6], vector inflation factors – a standard control for multicollinearity – show only low multicollinearity (*Appendix A3*). I report three models: two including only one of the two explanatory variables and one including both.

Voting coalitions and case studies

To better disentangle the economic and the socio-cultural dimensions, I descriptively assess the coalition patterns of the three main party groups,

EPP, S&D and ALDE. I define a voting coalition between two parties to be established if the majorities of each party vote the same way. I check how often the following four coalition configurations occur: EPP and S&D without ALDE ('grand coalition') and with ALDE ('grand coalition +'), a 'left-wing' coalition of ALDE and S&D and a 'right-wing' coalition of ALDE and EPP.

Finally, I complement the large-N quantitative analyses with two short case studies to further explore the mechanisms behind the formation of these voting coalitions. Do we find economic and/or civil rights-based arguments in plenary debates and legislative amendments? I selected two politically salient and controversial cases from EP7, the 'Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement' (ACTA) and the 'European Single Market in Electronic Communications' regulation. These cases vary with respect to their substantive issue area; the former concerns copyright, the latter telecommunications. At first glance, both cases seem to be about market regulation but they entail policy instruments that also impact on civil rights and thus the socio-cultural cleavage. They thus pose trade-offs between economic and cultural considerations, especially for ALDE. The cases will be introduced in greater detail in section 7.

The dimensionality of Internet policy

This section analyses the political space of Internet policy resulting from the scaling of RCVs.[7] The substantive interpretation of the dimensions proceeds in two steps: First, a descriptive visual inspection of MEPs' ideal points reveals how different political parties align in Internet policy. Second, the regression analysis substantiates the descriptive analysis.

The upper row of Figure 1 plots MEPs' estimated ideal points in a two-dimensional space for each of the three parliamentary terms. The lower row depicts the aggregated ideal points of each national party delegation.[8] A first visual inspection shows no marked divergence of the Internet policy space from the established patterns of EP politics. The three main pro-EU party groups, EPP, S&D and ALDE form one main cluster at the centre of the space, underlining the importance of grand coalitions in EP voting. The placement of the other party groups supports the interpretation of a second dimension capturing parties' stances towards European integration.

Across the three terms, an ongoing differentiation within the pro-European cluster can be observed. Distinct party group clusters only emerged by the seventh legislative period. While the EPP had clearly occupied the right-end of the main cluster in EP5 and EP6, there had not been clear-cut demarcations between the three groups. The differentiation points to growing contestation among the three party groups over what EU Internet policy should look like.

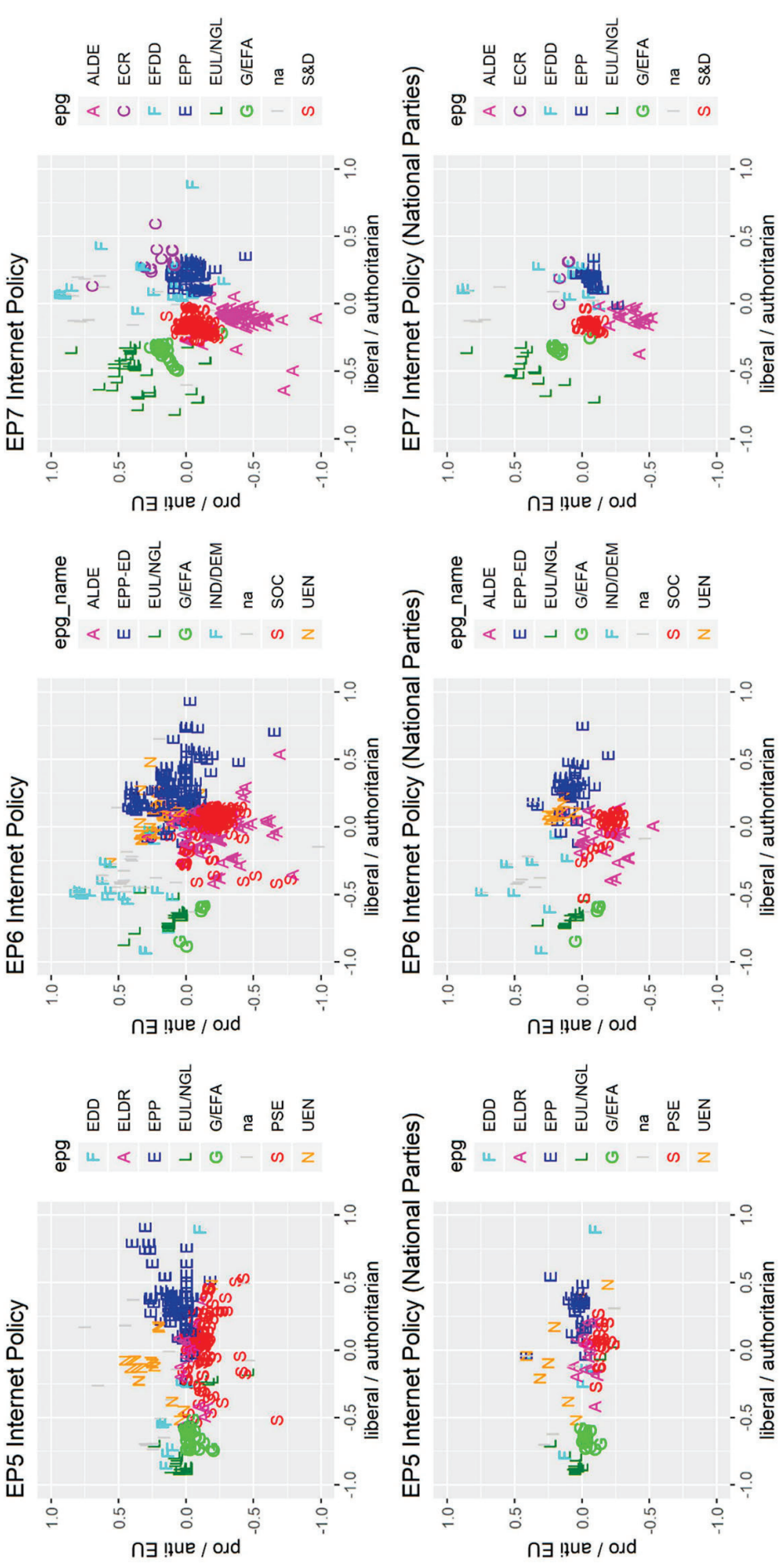

Figure 1. Estimated OC ideal points for MEPs (first row) and ideal points aggregated to national party delegations (second row). Colours denote membership in transnational party groups. For abbreviations see Appendix 1.

Looking at the relative positions of the ALDE parties and the S&D parties, it is noticeable, that some liberal parties are consistently placed to the left of most social democratic parties. Since ALDE has more right-wing preferences on economic issues, this is a first indication that the first dimension captures socio-cultural rather than economic preferences.

In EP5, there is little variation along the second dimension, but Eurosceptic positions appear to separate the national-conservative UEN from the main cluster. The second dimension becomes more polarised in EP6 and EP7, with national parties belonging to the Eurosceptic group IND/DEM (later renamed EFDD) and ALDE at the respective ends of the dimension. Notably, in EP7, the second dimension seems to split the radical left EUL/NGL group. Previously, this group was very cohesive and closely aligned with the Greens/EFA. However, in EP7, the Greens remain much closer to the three main pro-EU groups. Another noticeable change in EP7 is that the EPP parties are more consistently clustered around the centre of the second dimension. This results from the exit of the British Conservatives from the EPP after the 2009 European elections. The ECR group, newly founded by the Tories, includes some parties previously part of the then dissolved UEN and takes a somewhat more Eurosceptic position than the EPP. In summary, the distribution of ideal points along the second dimensions indicates that across the three legislative periods, attitudes towards EU integration have become more pronounced.

The next step of the analysis is to explain the position of national party delegations in the political space by their ideological and policy preferences as measured by the CHES (Tables 2–4). The regression results for all three legislatures correspond to the interpretation outlined above.

For the first dimension, I find significant positive effects for both the economic and socio-cultural variables. This stems from the high correlation between the explanatory variables. The 'GAL-TAN' variable has a larger – or, in EP6, roughly similar – effect size than the 'economic left-right' variable, both when tested separately (Model 1 and 2) and when taken together (Model 3). In the separate models, the 'GAL-TAN' variable displays a smaller residual standard error and a higher R^2. Conceptually, both the 'GAL-TAN' and the 'economic left-right' variable are broad measures. Left-right includes regulation, taxation and redistribution, while 'GAL-TAN' captures all kinds of cultural values. For the years of the sixth and seventh legislative periods, the CHES provides more disaggregated policy positions. In Models 4-6, the 'deregulation' and 'civil liberties vs. law-and-order' scores replace the 'left-right' and 'GAL-TAN' scores. In these models, the difference in effect sizes between the economic and socio-cultural measures become much larger. The regression results thus lend support to the socio-cultural interpretation of the x-axis.

The analysis also supports the interpretation of the y-axis as the pro/anti-EU integration dimension. While there are also significant effects for the

Table 2. Linear regression models for estimated ideal points of national party delegations in EP5.

	EP5 National Party Delegations (Internet Policy RCVs)					
	OC Score					
	Model1, Dim1	Model1, Dim2	Model2, Dim1	Model2, Dim2	Model3, Dim1	Model3, Dim2
Economic Left-Right	0.149***	0.016***			0.079***	0.013*
	(0.016)	(0.006)			(0.017)	(0.007)
GAL-TAN			0.153***	0.012**	0.106***	0.004
			(0.014)	(0.005)	(0.017)	(0.007)
EU Integration	0.062***	−0.028***	0.124***	−0.022***	0.097***	−0.027***
	(0.020)	(0.007)	(0.018)	(0.007)	(0.017)	(0.007)
In National Government	0.035	−0.050*	0.023	−0.055**	0.058	−0.049*
	(0.075)	(0.025)	(0.068)	(0.026)	(0.062)	(0.026)
Northern MS	0.170**	−0.061***	0.196***	−0.061***	0.206***	−0.059**
	(0.066)	(0.022)	(0.060)	(0.023)	(0.055)	(0.023)
Constant	−1.318***	0.123***	−1.662***	0.115**	−1.697***	0.109**
	(0.122)	(0.042)	(0.129)	(0.049)	(0.118)	(0.049)
Observations	93	93	93	93	93	93
R^2	0.561	0.378	0.632	0.356	0.701	0.380
Adjusted R^2	0.542	0.350	0.615	0.326	0.684	0.345
Residual Std. Error	0.307 (df = 88)	0.105 (df = 88)	0.281 (df = 88)	0.107 (df = 88)	0.255 (df = 87)	0.105 (df = 87)
F Statistic	28.168*** (df = 4; 88)	13.365*** (df = 4; 88)	37.761*** (df = 4; 88)	12.138*** (df = 4; 88)	40.850*** (df = 5; 87)	10.679*** (df = 5; 87)

Note:*$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$

Table 3. Linear regression models for estimated ideal points of national party delegations in EP6.

	EP6 National Party Delegations (Internet Policy RCVs)											
	OC Score											
	Model1, Dim1	Model1, Dim2	Model2, Dim1	Model2, Dim2	Model3, Dim1	Model3, Dim2	Model4, Dim1	Model4, Dim2	Model5, Dim1	Model5, Dim2	Model6, Dim1	Model6, Dim2
Economic Left Right	0.075***	0.034***			0.045***	0.018***						
	(0.011)	(0.006)			(0.011)	(0.006)						
GAL TAN			0.076***	0.037***	0.057***	0.029***						
			(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.010)	(0.005)						
Deregulation							0.074***	0.031***			0.044***	0.020***
							(0.011)	(0.006)			(0.011)	(0.007)
Civil Liberties Law&Order									0.080***	0.031***	0.062***	0.023***
									(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.006)
EU Integration	0.055***	−0.078***	0.121***	−0.047***	0.093***	−0.058***	0.052***	−0.078***	0.113***	−0.054***	0.086***	−0.066***
	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.009)
In National Government	0.150***	−0.004	0.092*	−0.035	0.082	−0.039	0.159***	0.002	0.063	−0.033	0.063	−0.033
	(0.055)	(0.030)	(0.053)	(0.029)	(0.050)	(0.028)	(0.055)	(0.031)	(0.054)	(0.032)	(0.051)	(0.031)
Northern MS	−0.081	0.020	−0.031	0.045	−0.039	0.042	−0.119**	0.004	−0.073	0.023	−0.092*	0.014
	(0.056)	(0.031)	(0.054)	(0.029)	(0.051)	(0.028)	(0.057)	(0.032)	(0.053)	(0.031)	(0.051)	(0.030)
Eastern MS	0.139**	0.058*	0.113*	0.045	0.118**	0.047	0.121*	0.051	0.138**	0.058*	0.125**	0.053
	(0.061)	(0.034)	(0.058)	(0.031)	(0.054)	(0.030)	(0.062)	(0.035)	(0.058)	(0.034)	(0.055)	(0.033)
Constant	−0.783***	0.224***	−1.136***	0.044	−1.112***	0.053	−0.751***	0.242***	−1.105***	0.111*	−1.082***	0.121**
	(0.090)	(0.049)	(0.104)	(0.056)	(0.098)	(0.055)	(0.090)	(0.050)	(0.103)	(0.060)	(0.097)	(0.058)
Observations	122	122	122	122	122	122	122	122	122	122	122	122
R^2	0.551	0.447	0.600	0.525	0.651	0.557	0.537	0.418	0.597	0.438	0.646	0.479
Adjusted R^2	0.531	0.423	0.583	0.504	0.633	0.534	0.517	0.393	0.580	0.414	0.627	0.451
Residual Std. Error	0.244 (df = 116)	0.134 (df = 116)	0.230 (df = 116)	0.124 (df = 116)	0.216 (df = 115)	0.120 (df = 115)	0.248 (df = 116)	0.137 (df = 116)	0.231 (df = 116)	0.135 (df = 116)	0.218 (df = 115)	0.130 (df = 115)
F Statistic	28.454*** (df = 5; 116)	18.741*** (df = 5; 116)	34.831*** (df = 5; 116)	25.601*** (df = 5; 116)	35.716*** (df = 6; 115)	24.104*** (df = 6; 115)	26.887*** (df = 5; 116)	16.691*** (df = 5; 116)	34.423*** (df = 5; 116)	18.105*** (df = 5; 116)	34.938*** (df = 6; 115)	17.587*** (df = 6; 115)

Note: *$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$

Table 4. Linear regression models for estimated ideal points of national party delegations in EP7.

	EP7 National Party Delegations (Internet Policy RCVs)											
	OC Score											
	Model1, Dim1	Model1, Dim2	Model2, Dim1	Model2, Dim2	Model3, Dim1	Model3, Dim2	Model4, Dim1	Model4, Dim2	Model5, Dim1	Model5, Dim2	Model6, Dim1	Model6, Dim2
Economic Left Right	0.078***	0.030***			0.038***	0.025**						
	(0.007)	(0.009)			(0.007)	(0.011)						
GAL TAN			0.076***	0.020***	0.055***	0.007						
			(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.009)						
Deregulation							0.077***	0.036***			0.035***	0.034***
							(0.008)	(0.009)			(0.008)	(0.011)
Civil Liberties Law&Order									0.079***	0.019**	0.061***	0.002
									(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.010)
EU Integration	−0.018*	0.094***	0.047***	0.112***	0.028***	0.100***	−0.033***	0.087***	0.045***	0.110***	0.023**	0.088***
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.014)
In National Government	0.056	0.077*	0.099***	0.104***	0.057**	0.077*	0.073**	0.073*	0.076**	0.101**	0.047	0.073*
	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.029)	(0.039)	(0.027)	(0.040)	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.030)	(0.040)	(0.028)	(0.040)
Northern MS	−0.019	0.035	0.0001	0.038	−0.002	0.037	−0.035	0.028	−0.006	0.036	−0.013	0.029
	(0.034)	(0.040)	(0.030)	(0.041)	(0.027)	(0.040)	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.030)	(0.041)	(0.028)	(0.039)
Eastern MS	0.116***	0.146***	−0.033	0.101**	0.018	0.133***	0.103**	0.143***	−0.012	0.108**	0.021	0.141***
	(0.041)	(0.047)	(0.036)	(0.049)	(0.034)	(0.050)	(0.043)	(0.046)	(0.036)	(0.049)	(0.035)	(0.048)
Constant	−0.392***	−0.701***	−0.730***	−0.756***	−0.706***	−0.741***	−0.299***	−0.683***	−0.759***	−0.747***	−0.705***	−0.695***
	(0.060)	(0.069)	(0.065)	(0.089)	(0.059)	(0.088)	(0.060)	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.092)	(0.065)	(0.090)
Observations	123	123	123	123	123	123	123	123	123	123	123	123
R^2	0.566	0.566	0.675	0.550	0.734	0.568	0.512	0.579	0.663	0.544	0.712	0.579
Adjusted R^2	0.547	0.548	0.661	0.530	0.721	0.546	0.492	0.561	0.648	0.525	0.697	0.557
Residual Std. Error	0.158 (df = 117)	0.183 (df = 117)	0.137 (df = 117)	0.186 (df = 117)	0.124 (df = 116)	0.183 (df = 116)	0.168 (df = 117)	0.180 (df = 117)	0.140 (df = 117)	0.187 (df = 117)	0.129 (df = 116)	0.181 (df = 116)
F Statistic	30.499*** (df = 5; 117)	30.570*** (df = 5; 117)	48.519*** (df = 5; 117)	28.566*** (df = 5; 117)	53.474*** (df = 6; 116)	25.468*** (df = 6; 116)	24.585*** (df = 5; 117)	32.197*** (df = 5; 117)	45.947*** (df = 5; 117)	27.915*** (df = 5; 117)	47.866*** (df = 6; 116)	26.615*** (df = 6; 116)

Note:*$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$

economic variables in all three legislatures and for the socio-cultural variables in EP5 and EP6 (but not EP7), these effects shrink or lose statistical significance in the full models (Models 3 and 6).

To sum up, the analysis so far provides evidence for a two-dimensional political space: The first dimension structures political competition along national parties' socio-cultural preferences. The second dimension captures parties' preferences towards European integration.

Voting coalitions in Internet policy

I now turn towards voting coalitions. The EP generally tends towards grand or extra grand coalitions between the three main pro-European groups. Internet policy is no exception (Table 5). However, in EP7, the relative number of grand coalitions decreased, compared to centre-right or centre-left coalitions. This corresponds with the more clearly discernible party group clusters observed above. Internet policy has become less consensual even among the pro-EU party groups.

Comparing centre-left and centre-right coalitions – defined as ALDE voting in line with either the S&D or the EPP – there are overall more instances of centre-left than centre-right coalitions. This finding is particularly pronounced in EP7. Recalling the findings of previous studies – ALDE votes with the S&D on civil rights issues and with the EPP on economic issues (Hix & Høyland, 2013) – these results strengthen the idea that the socio-cultural dimension is dominant in EP Internet policy-making, at least when it comes to the winning coalitions. This finding speaks to first o*bservable implication ALDE (a)*.

Is it valid to infer the prevalence of the socio-cultural dimension from the coalition patterns of EP groups? In the following, two short case studies illustrate how civil liberty concerns shape voting coalitions.

ACTA

In 2011, the EU was one of the signatories of ACTA, a multilateral treaty to strengthen the enforcement of intellectual property rights. ACTA has been one of the most visible controversies in EU Internet policy, triggering large public protests against its ratification by the EP and the Council (Dür &

Table 5. Coalition Patterns in Internet policy. Number of RCV coalitions for Internet Policy files per coalition configuration. Configurations are not exhaustive.

	Grand coalition *(EPP + S&D)*	Grand coalition + *(EPP + S&D + ALDE)*	Centre-left coalition *(S&D + ALDE)*	Centre-right coalition *(EPP + ALDE)*
EP5	6	50	11	4
EP6	36	129	24	16
EP7	23	150	78	21

Mateo, 2014; Rone, 2018; Sell, 2013). Reflecting its public salience, ACTA accounts for most copyright-related votes in EP7. ACTA's critics problematised first, provisions on patents in the field of medicine and seeds that they perceived to adversely affect developing countries and second, measures against online piracy. The latter included provisions on the deployment of technology to restrict the use of digital media (so-called digital rights management technologies) and obligations for online services to detect and filter copyright infringements by their users. ACTA thus contained rules regarding Internet services and sections unrelated to Internet policy, introducing within-case variation. When it comes to 'offline' patents, I would expect an economic left-right conflict. Conversely, I argue that online content filtering constitutes a most-likely case for civil liberties-driven voting coalitions. In fact, all instances of left-wing voting coalitions on copyright policy in EP7 pertained to ACTA.

The EP engaged three times with ACTA. It first adopted a non-legislative resolution in March 2010. A second resolution was drafted in November 2010 but did not pass the plenary. Both resolutions were intended to influence the position of the European Commission, which negotiated ACTA on behalf of the EU. Finally, following the public protests, the EP rejected ACTA in the ratification vote on July 4, 2012.

The first EP resolution supported ACTA. An amendment to restrict the European Commission's negotiation mandate introduced by the radical-left EUL/NGL was rejected by an extra grand coalition. At this stage, the most divisive treaty provision was the sanctioning of illegal downloads. The proposal to suspend Internet access for repeated offenders split the EP between the EPP and the ECR on the one side and ALDE and the left-wing party groups on the other side. The left-wing coalition won the vote, as the black cutting line in the first panel of Figure 2 illustrates.

The second resolution was hotly debated. The first version was drafted by a broad centre-left coalition of MEPs from ALDE, S&D, Greens/EFA and EUL/NGL. The plenary voted on 44 amendments to this text, an extraordinary number for a plenary session. The closest amendment vote (315:312 votes) rejected a proposal to make Internet service providers (ISPs) liable for their customers' copyright infringements. Such liability would have effectively required ISPs to monitor and filter the Internet traffic of their customers, a practice prohibited by the EU's 2001 'E-Commerce Directive'. In this vote, ALDE sided with the centre-left (see the black cutting line in the second panel of Figure 2). It appears that liberal MEPs put the privacy and speech rights of citizens above the economic interests of right-holders. A closer look at the other amendment votes supports this interpretation: ALDE supported three recitals – non-binding 'explanations' of the bill's intention – explicitly referring to fundamental rights considerations.

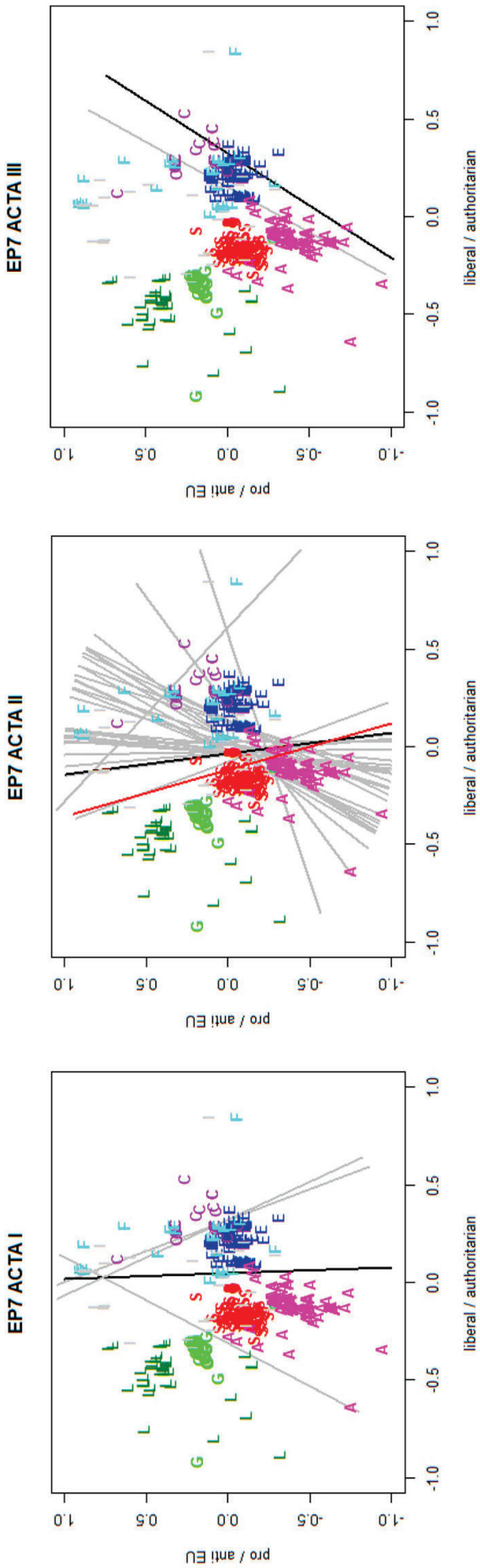

Figure 2. ACTA-related cutting lines in EP7. Each line represents a RCV cutting the estimated political space in 'yes' and 'no' votes. Points represent estimated ideal points of MEPs. Colours denote membership in transnational party groups.

That said, ALDE was overall less critical of ACTA than the more left-wing parties. On the issue of medical patents – heavily criticised by many on the political left – ALDE voted with the centre-right. This comparison shows that ALDE was not generally supportive of weakening intellectual property protections, but rather specifically opposed to forms of copyright enforcement that were perceived to threaten civil liberties online.

The amended resolution was very critical of ACTA. However, it was then narrowly defeated with 306:322 votes. In this final vote, a minority of liberal and social democratic MEPs sided with the EPP and ECR, as did the Eurosceptic EFDD (see the red cutting line in the second panel of Figure 2). There was not yet a majority to reject ACTA.

Following the anti-ACTA protests in late 2011 and 2012, the EP voted against ratifying the treaty. The ECR, a majority of EPP members, as well as a minority of ALDE MEPs hoped to save ACTA by amending the treaty text. Their request to refer the matter back to the EP's committees was, however, rejected by a centre-left majority. The EP then voted to reject ACTA with a broad majority. Only 39 MEPs voted in favour of ratification (see the black cutting line in the third panel of Figure 2).

Journalistic as well as academic work (e.g., Dür & Mateo, 2014; Sell, 2013) has stressed the importance of the successful mobilisation of public protests for the rejection of ACTA. However, the votes on the two parliamentary resolutions show that a centre-left majority already opposed those provisions of the treaty, which threatened to harm civil rights online. While ALDE MEPs had joined the left-wing groups on these issues, they supported the right-wing groups on provisions related to medical patents. This shows that ALDE did not oppose the economic rational of strict protection of intellectual property as such, but rather recognised the potential negative effects in the context of the Internet. The protests themselves mainly changed the position of the pro-ACTA EPP, whose MEPs now either abstained or voted against the ratification.

The European Single Market in Electronic Communications Regulation

Compared to copyright, telecommunications policy might arguably seem less likely to be contested on the socio-cultural dimension. Nevertheless, left-wing voting coalitions can be observed in this issue area as well. The second case study sheds light on how MEPs connect telecommunications regulation to civil rights.

For EP7, a central legislative priority in telecommunications was the 'European Single Market in Electronic Communications' bill, which sought to facilitate the cross-border provision of telecommunication services by harmonising regulatory standards. This legislative proposal bundled different issues, including wireless spectrum development, roaming costs

and net neutrality. At the committee stage, the EP built a broad consensus on most of these issues. In particular, the end to roaming surcharges for citizens using their mobile phones in another EU country was celebrated by MEPs as a major success of European integration (European Parliament, 2014). However, when the draft regulation reached the EP plenary in early April 2014, one contested issue remained: 'net neutrality'. According to the principle of 'net neutrality', all Internet traffic should be treated equally (Wu, 2003). ISPs should not artificially increase or decrease the speed with which a user can access different websites and services. However, ISPs frequently attempt to bypass net neutrality by offering so-called 'specialised services' with guaranteed speeds such as video conferencing or by excluding services such as music streaming from their data limits.

MEPs disagreed about the exact definition of 'net neutrality' and about the question which kinds of specialised services should be allowed. Proponents of a strict net neutrality regime criticised the draft prepared by rapporteur Pilar del Castillo Vera (EPP) as too lax. Consequently, at the plenary stage, thirteen amendments aiming at strengthening the net neutrality definition and restricting specialised services were introduced by MEPs from the S&D, the Greens, the EUL/NGL and ALDE. In a series of eight RCVs, all amendments were adopted by a coalition of these four party groups (see cutting lines in Figure 3). The amended text was then adopted by a large majority of 534:73 votes.

The plenary debate clarifies the positions of the two opposing camps (European Parliament, 2014). Both sides proclaimed their support for the principle of net neutrality. But while EPP and ECR MEPs argued that specialised services were compatible with this principle, MEPs from the other groups disagreed. The centre-right MEPs employed economic arguments, arguing that specialised services would enable new services and business models (e.g., MEPs Pilar del Castillo Vera, Gunnar Hökmark, Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz). Moreover, they claimed that telecom providers needed the additional revenue from such services to increase their investment in new broadband infrastructure. European Commissioner Neelie Kroes sided strongly with these arguments: 'Blocking strangles innovation and, despite what you may have been told in the last few days, that is what some of the plenary amendments will do – block specialized services.'

In contrast, opponents of specialised services criticised them as forms of profit maximisation at the cost of an 'open' Internet free of discrimination (e.g., Petra Kammerevert, S&D, Green MEP Amelia Andersdotter and Marisa Matias, EUL/NGL). They combined civil rights frames and arguments about fair competition. Green MEP Sandrine Bélier summarised their worries: 'The prioritization of flows is an attack on equal access to information, freedom of expression or, in economic terms, a brake on the emergence of start-ups that create jobs.' Liberal MEPs stressed the economic benefits of regulation

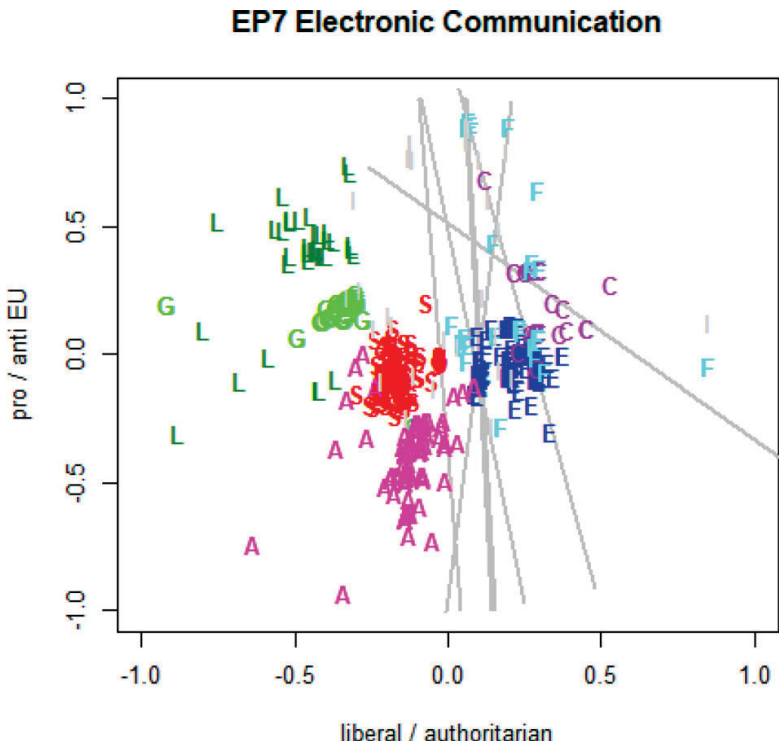

Figure 3. Votes on the European Single Market in Electronic Communications Regulation. Each line represents a RCV cutting the estimated political space in 'yes' and 'no' votes. Points represent estimated ideal points of MEPs. Colours denote membership in transnational party groups.

safeguarding net neutrality; Marietje Schaake said: 'By ensuring clear rules of the road for the EU digital single market and the open Internet, competition, innovation and Internet users will benefit.' While her speech did not explicitly invoke civil rights, the reference to an 'open Internet' signals that liberal support for net neutrality also comes from a principled vision of what the Internet should be. Indeed, Schaake (2013) had previously justified the need for net neutrality on civil rights grounds: 'The key driver of this unprecedented innovation has been the simple fact that all information flows and services are treated equally, without discrimination; conform the principle of net neutrality. Through its open nature, the internet has become an increasingly important enabler of human rights. Freedom of expression in particular, but press freedom, access to information and freedom of association as well.'

Discussion

The two case studies illustrate how in Internet policy questions of market regulation can raise civil liberty concerns and consequently shape voting coalitions. Safeguarding citizens' rights sometimes requires more regulation, as in the case of net neutrality. However, some regulatory initiatives may have adverse effects on civil rights, as was the case with ACTA. Socio-cultural liberals may then oppose more regulation. Internet policy is therefore a likely field

for the emergence of socio-culturally liberal coalitions, which – in the EP – unite ALDE MEPs and left-wing parties.

The coalition patterns are a strong indicator for the importance of the socio-cultural cleavage at least for the winning coalitions. In the two cases, the losing parties unsuccessfully tried to frame the policies as primarily 'economic', downplaying civil rights concerns. Of course, arguments about user rights may be made strategically to mask or complement economic motives. In the net neutrality debate, economic arguments about fair competition between online services featured prominently alongside concerns about freedom of expression and access to information. This is not a contradiction. Both individual citizens as well as small firms and start-ups are supposed to benefit from the liberal vision of an 'open Internet'. In contrast, telecom providers are powerful gatekeepers who can exploit their position for their own material gain; regulation may prevent that. In contrast, in the case of ACTA, governments sought to take advantage of the gatekeeping positions of ISPs and online platforms, to detect copyright infringements. Such a mandate would be a regulatory burden for the platforms and a threat to their users.[9] This brief discussion indicates that, from a civil rights perspective and depending on the policy intervention at hand, businesses with gatekeeping positions in the online ecosystem may sometimes be allies and at other times opponents of civil rights advocates.

This entanglement of economic interests and socio-cultural preferences is difficult to resolve in a large-N perspective. Future research can help answer this question on a case-by-case basis by investigating the decision-making processes within political parties. To uncover how preferences on and the salience of the two dimensions determine MEPs' voting behaviour, future research could study party group cohesion and the determinants of intra-group dissent. Moreover, investigating the connection of interest groups and parties can help assess the importance of economic motives compared to cultural dispositions in forming party positions in Internet policy.

Conclusion

What cleavages structure Internet policy in Europe? This article has argued that when it comes to the regulation of the Internet, questions of civil liberties and economic freedoms are closely entangled. Policy-makers thus face trade-offs between economic and socio-cultural objectives when setting rules for online services. Analysing RCVs in the European Parliament (1999-2014), it is the first study to systematically assess party contestation over a wide range of different Internet policy issues, irrespective of issue salience.

Scaling RCVs shows that party competition over Internet policy is best captured by a socio-cultural liberal-authoritarian dimension. A second dimension reflecting parties' position towards European integration is less important for

the correct classification of votes. It nevertheless indicates that the Internet – despite its global nature – is not immune from conflicts over the appropriate level of rule-setting in the EU's multi-level system.

Over the three legislative periods, Internet policy has become increasingly contested among the pro-EU party groups leading to a decline in grand coalition voting. Instead, a rising proportion of centre-left voting coalitions supports the interpretation that political actors in the EP perceive Internet policy to be about the rights of citizens in the digital sphere rather than purely about economic questions of market regulation. A closer look at individual cases illustrates this general pattern. In the case of ACTA, centre-left coalitions opposed rules for Internet businesses to monitor and filter online content. In the net neutrality case, the economically right-wing ALDE group supported stricter rules to safeguard an 'open Internet'.

The 15 years studied in this article mark the period in which Internet policy emerged as an important and contested policy field at the EU level. At the onset of the 2020s, the issues which dominated the political agenda during this time – copyright, government surveillance, the rollout and regulation of broadband networks – remain prominent. But as information technologies and online markets evolve, so do problem perception and regulatory approaches. Internet policy therefore remains an evolving policy field, which requires on-going research. In particular, the public debates over the negative impacts of social media platforms on democratic processes may challenge the cohesion of the socio-culturally liberal coalition. Moreover, the growing global influence of Chinese tech companies, such as Huawei and TikTok, has foregrounded geopolitical concerns. Finally, industrial policy ideas are gaining new prominence in the EU, as illustrated by the forthcoming Chips Act, which is supposed to enable public subsidies for semiconductor manufacturing (Schmitz & Seidl, 2022). European policy-makers now regularly call for 'digital sovereignty', a framing which appeals to both security concerns and industrial policy aims (Lambach & Oppermann, 2022). These developments suggest a continued entanglement of economic and socio-cultural motivations in Internet policy. At the same time, they may create new political coalitions as conservatives, free marketeers and socially liberal leftists re-evaluate their preferences.

With this in mind, it is clear that the power of states, private businesses and the rights of citizens remain closely entangled. The Internet is not just another market to be regulated for growth and consumer welfare but also a public arena where citizens exercise their liberties and where states seek to impose their order. Internet policy therefore provides plenty of opportunities for policy entrepreneurs and lobbyists to (re-)frame policies according to their interests. Understanding these dynamics is important given the potential impact of global information flows on political communication and the

functioning of democratic debates. This is especially the case in times, in which policy-makers in Europe and North America are debating new laws to reign in the power of 'Big Tech'.

Notes

1. Domestic security issues relate to the civil rights vs. law-and-order trade-off captured by the socio-cultural dimension. International/geopolitical security issues don't fit neatly into either the economic or the socio-cultural dimension. I'll return to the geopolitical concerns regarding Internet policy in the conclusion.
2. Economic and socio-cultural considerations are not mutually exclusive. Protecting civil rights, such as privacy, online may build trust in the integrity of digital service thus increasing consumer demand.
3. A recent working paper by Hix et al. (2019) makes a first attempt to differentiate between economic left-right and GAL-TAN when assessing the EP's first dimension.
4. In 2019, the ALDE group renamed itself 'Renew Europe'. As this article analyses prior legislative periods, it sticks to the old name.
5. *Appendix A5* reports ideal points for an alternative polarity anchor.
6. The correlation between the 'deregulation' and the 'civil liberties vs. law-and-order' variables is somewhat lower than the correlation between the 'left-right' and 'GAL-TAN' variables.
7. Statistical information on the estimated number of dimensions are reported in *Appendix A4*.
8. As a computational artifact, the OC algorithm inverses the y-axis in EP7, putting pro-EU MEPs in the upper half of the map and anti-EU MEPs in the lower half. To ensure consistency for the three legislatures, I have inversed the y-axis by multiplying the second dimension values of the estimated ideal points with -1.
9. The EU eventually took a similar approach with the adoption of the 2019 Copyright Directive.

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Data availability statement

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Disclosure statement

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