



29 hypothesized that MS decomposition within separate, narrow  
30 frequency bands could provide more fine-grained information  
31 for capturing the spatio-temporal complexity of multichannel  
32 EEG. In this study using a large open-access dataset (n=203),  
33 we pre-filtered EEG recordings into 4 classical frequency bands  
34 (delta, theta, alpha, beta) in order to compare their individual  
35 MS segmentations using mutual information as well as  
36 traditional MS measures. Firstly, we confirmed that MS  
37 topographies were spatially equivalent across all frequencies,  
38 matching the canonical broadband maps (A, B, C, and D).  
39 Interestingly however, we observed strong informational  
40 independence of MS temporal sequences between spectral  
41 bands, together with significant divergence in traditional MS  
42 measures (e.g. mean duration, time coverage). For instance, MS  
43 sequences in the alpha-band exhibited temporal independence  
44 from sequences in all other frequencies, whilst also being  
45 longer on average (>100 ms). Based on a frequency vs. map  
46 taxonomy (e.g.  $\theta_A$ ,  $\alpha_C$ ,  $\beta_B$ ), narrow-band MS analyses revealed  
47 novel relationships that were not evident from the coarse-  
48 grained broadband analysis. Overall, our findings demonstrate  
49 the value and validity of spectral MS analysis for decomposing  
50 the full-band EEG into a richer palette of frequency-specific  
51 microstates. This could prove useful for identifying new neural  
52 mechanisms in fundamental research and/or for biomarker  
53 discovery in clinical populations.

54

55

## 56 **1 Introduction**

57 Multi-channel Electroencephalography (EEG) is a long-established tool for  
58 exploring the human brain’s spatio-temporal activities. Microstate (MS)  
59 analysis [1], first introduced by Lehmann [2] in 1971, takes advantage of  
60 EEG’s high temporal resolution to segment EEG signals into short  
61 successive periods of time characterized by metastable scalp  
62 topographies. Initially applied to narrow-band alpha oscillations (8 -12  
63 Hz)[2], microstate analysis is nowadays usually performed on broadband  
64 EEG signals (1 – 40Hz) [1], [3]. Historically, only a limited number of  
65 studies [4]–[6] have focused on applying MS analysis to the traditional  
66 frequencies associated with cortical oscillations (e.g. delta, theta, alpha,  
67 beta etc.). For example, in the 1990’s, Merrin et al [4] were the first to  
68 report on a significant difference in MS segments between schizophrenic  
69 patients and controls specifically in the theta EEG band. On the other hand,  
70 more recent work in healthy subjects found that MS dynamics were  
71 independent of EEG power fluctuations across the frequency spectrum [7],  
72 which technically supported the rationale for performing broadband MS  
73 analysis. Neuroimaging studies have nevertheless emerged showing that  
74 anatomically-distinct cortical regions display different dominant EEG  
75 frequencies, with occipito-parietal regions more active in the alpha band,  
76 and prefrontal regions being biased more toward delta or theta power  
77 [8]–[10]. Moreover, ongoing cortical dynamics have been reported to  
78 fluctuate from a local resting/idling alpha oscillatory state to task-specific  
79 active mode(s) dominated by other rhythms (e.g. theta [11], gamma [12]  
80 ). As a consequence, cortical regions could combine different frequencies  
81 for integrating/segregating information across large-scale networks, a  
82 phenomenon termed “oscillatory multiplexing” [13]. Finally, of more  
83 clinical significance, a growing body of work has indicated abnormal EEG

84 spectral power in distinct frequencies across cortical regions in a variety  
85 of brain disorders [14], [15]. Therefore, given that different spatial  
86 topographies uncovered by MS analysis imply anatomically-distinct  
87 cortical generators (according to the forward-model of EEG generation  
88 [1]), it is reasonable to hypothesize that distinct MS topographies may  
89 display different spatial and/or temporal profiles across the frequency  
90 spectrum.

91 To investigate this question as well as gain a deeper understanding of  
92 frequency-specific MS signature(s), we sought to explicitly decompose MS  
93 spatio-temporal dynamics within *discrete, narrow-band frequency bands*  
94 (i.e. delta, theta, alpha, and beta), with the aim of comparing them to the  
95 classical analysis of the broadband signal.

96 Here, we employed a validated, open-source dataset [16] of resting-  
97 state EEG recordings from 203 healthy subjects during both eyes opened  
98 and eyes closed conditions. These were then filtered in the classical EEG  
99 bands (delta: 0-4 Hz, theta: 4-8 Hz, alpha: 8-12 Hz, beta: 15-30 Hz) to  
100 obtain band specific signals. These narrow-band signals, in addition to the  
101 broadband (1-30 Hz) signal, were then independently subjected to  
102 standard microstate analysis [17]. Map topography, mean duration,  
103 occurrence, time coverage, and global explained variance (GEV) were used  
104 as quantitative measures of spatiotemporal microstate dynamics. In  
105 summary, and using spatial correlation analysis, we firstly demonstrate  
106 remarkably similar microstate topographies across frequencies, closely  
107 matching the classical broadband maps. Interestingly, however, we  
108 observed strong informational independence of microstate sequences  
109 between frequencies, in addition to significant differences in established  
110 measures of temporal dynamics (mean duration, occurrence, and time  
111 coverage).

112 In conclusion, our results support a more diverse, frequency-specific  
113 application of microstate analysis compatible with the narrow-band MS  
114 analyses of early pioneers [2], [4]. We anticipate this approach to provide  
115 a more fine-grained spectral information not visible to the standard  
116 broadband analysis, for example in the identification of biomarkers in  
117 clinical populations or for understanding the mechanisms underlying EEG  
118 microstates.

## 119 **2 Methods**

### 120 **2.1 Dataset**

121 EEG recordings were obtained from 203 anonymized participants  
122 enrolled in the Mind-Brain-Body study [16]. Detailed protocol and  
123 inclusion criteria are reported in [16]. The overall sample consisted of 227  
124 participants divided into 2 groups: the younger adults group with  
125 participant age ranging between 20 and 35 years ( $N = 153$ , 45 females,  
126 mean age = 25.1 years,  $SD = 3.1$ ) and an older adults group with age  
127 ranging between 59 and 77 years ( $N = 74$ , 37 females, mean age = 67.6  
128 years,  $SD = 4.7$ ). Medical and psychological screening was conducted on all  
129 participants at the Day Clinic for Cognitive Neurology of the University  
130 Clinic Leipzig and the Max Planck Institute for Human and Cognitive and  
131 Brain Sciences in order to include only healthy patients. The study  
132 protocol was approved by the ethics committee of the University of  
133 Leipzig (reference  
134 154/13-ff). Data were obtained in accordance with the Declaration of  
135 Helsinki.

## 136 **2.2 Recordings**

137 Resting state EEGs were recorded using 61 scalp electrodes (ActiCAP,  
138 Brain Products GmbH, Gilching, Germany), and one additional VEOG  
139 electrode for recording right eye activity. All electrodes were placed  
140 according to the international standard 10–20 extended localization  
141 system with FCz reference, digitized with a sampling frequency of  $f_s=2500$   
142 Hz, an amplitude resolution of 0.1 microV, and bandpass filtered between  
143 0.015 Hz and 1 kHz. The ground was located at the sternum and scalp  
144 electrode impedance was kept below 5 K $\Omega$ . Recordings took place in an  
145 electrically shielded and sound-attenuated EEG booth. Here, 60s blocks  
146 alternated between eyes open (EO) and eyes closed (EC) conditions for a  
147 total recording of 16 min (8 blocks EC, 8 blocks EO, starting with EC).  
148 During the EO condition, participants were asked to stay awake while  
149 fixating their eyes on a black cross presented on a white background.

## 150 **2.3 Preprocessing**

151 The preprocessing steps are extensively described in [16], which we  
152 summarize below. All EEG recordings were down-sampled from 2500 to  
153 250 Hz and filtered between 1 and 45 Hz (8th order, Butterworth filter).  
154 Blocks sharing the same condition were concatenated leading to the  
155 creation of 2 datasets per subject. After visual inspection, outlying  
156 channels were rejected and EEG segments presenting noise and/or  
157 artefacts were removed (except eye movements and eye blinks that were  
158 kept for further preprocessing). PCA was used to reduce data  
159 dimensionality, by keeping PCs ( $N \geq 30$ ) that explain 95% of the total data  
160 variance. Then, independent component analysis (ICA) was performed

161 using the Infomax (runica) algorithm. Components reflecting eye  
162 movement, eye blink or heartbeat related artefacts were removed.

163 Before performing microstate analysis, the following additional  
164 preprocessing steps were conducted using MNE-python [18]: missing/bad  
165 channels were interpolated using spherical spline interpolation, the  
166 reference was re-projected to average and recordings were down-  
167 sampled to 100Hz. Finally, each recording was filtered into broadband  
168 plus the 5 traditional EEG frequency bands: broadband (1-30 Hz), delta (1-  
169 4 Hz), theta (4-8 Hz), alpha (8-12 Hz), beta (15-30 Hz). Filter design  
170 consisted of a two-pass forward and reverse, zero-phase, non-causal band-  
171 pass FIR filter with the following parameters.

172 **Broadband:** - Lower passband edge: 1.00 - Lower transition  
173 bandwidth: 1.00 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 0.50 Hz) - Upper passband  
174 edge: 30.00 Hz  
175 - Upper transition bandwidth: 7.50 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 33.75 Hz)  
176 Filter length: 331 samples (3.310 sec)

177 **Delta:** - Lower passband edge: 1.00 - Lower transition bandwidth: 1.00  
178 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 0.50 Hz) - Upper passband edge: 4.00 Hz -  
179 Upper transition bandwidth: 2.00 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 5.00 Hz) -  
180 Filter length: 331 samples (3.310 sec)

181 **Theta:** - Lower passband edge: 4.00 - Lower transition bandwidth: 2.00  
182 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 3.00 Hz) - Upper passband edge: 8.00 Hz -  
183 Upper transition bandwidth: 2.00 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 9.00 Hz) -  
184 Filter length: 165 samples (1.650 sec)

185 **Alpha:** - Lower passband edge: 8.00 - Lower transition bandwidth: 2.00  
186 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 7.00 Hz) - Upper passband edge: 12.00 Hz -  
187 Upper transition bandwidth: 3.00 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 13.50 Hz) -  
188 Filter length: 165 samples (1.650 sec)

189       **Beta:** - Lower passband edge: 15.00 - Lower transition bandwidth: 3.75  
190       Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 13.12 Hz) - Upper passband edge: 30.00 Hz -  
191       Upper transition bandwidth: 7.50 Hz (-12 dB cutoff frequency: 33.75 Hz) -  
192       Filter length: 89 samples (0.890 sec)

193       For all filters, a Hamming window with 0.0194 passband ripple and 53  
194       dB stopband attenuation was used to reduce border effects.

## 195       **2.4 MS segmentation**

### 196       **2.4.1 Segmentation**

197       Microstate segmentation was applied to each combination of frequency  
198       band (broadband, delta, theta, alpha, beta) x behavioural condition (EO,  
199       EC) leading to the computation of 10 optimal clusters using the  
200       methodology described below. First, local maxima of the Global Field  
201       Power (GFP) known to represent portions of EEG data with highest signal  
202       to noise ratio [19], were extracted from each individual recording. Then,  
203       20 epochs of 500 time points randomly drawn from the previous  
204       extraction were submitted to a modified k-means cluster analysis using  
205       the free academic software Cartool [20]. For each number of cluster  
206       centers K ranging from 1 to 12, 50 k-means initialisations were applied to  
207       each epoch. The initialisation with highest global explained variance  
208       (GEV) was selected and kept for further processing. A meta-criterion [21]  
209       was used to choose the optimal number of cluster centers k for each epoch.  
210       Individual optimal clusters were then merged within conditions and  
211       within frequencies to form 10 groups of 4060 clusters. Each group was  
212       then randomly re-sampled into 100 epochs of 5000 time points, and  
213       submitted to the same clustering algorithm (50 initialisations, with meta  
214       criterion selection), leading to the extraction of 100 optimal clusters per  
215       group. Finally, these 100 clusters were submitted to the modified K means



216 clustering algorithm to extract, for each number of cluster centroids  $k$ , a  
217 set of maps which best represent the spatiotemporal variance of  
218 frequency specific EEG data within each condition.

#### 219 Selection of “common” MS maps

220 Given that we found high spatial correlations between MS maps across all  
221 frequencies and EO/EC conditions, we fitted the broadband maps directly  
222 to all the frequency bands in order to have a common reference. This may  
223 be considered a heuristic approach for the sake of simplicity. An  
224 alternative approach we explored was to perform subject-level (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>  
225 level) clustering on all data concatenated *within-subject* (across  
226 frequencies, and/or conditions), followed by group-level (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup>-level )  
227 clustering. We found this to once again produce identical maps to the  
228 broadband decomposition. This method could theoretically be used to find  
229 the most “common” clusters across different datasets, in case of variable  
230 k-means outputs (e.g. visually similar MS maps at different  $k$ -values). Since  
231 it is beyond the scope of this paper, we leave it to future studies to validate  
232 this method more rigorously.

#### 233 **2.4.2 Fitting**

234 The common topographic maps selected above were then assigned to  
235 every time point from all individual recordings using the traditional MS  
236 back-fitting method [22]. First, the spatial correlation was computed  
237 between every timepoint and map. Using the so called ‘winner takes all’  
238 algorithm, each timepoint was labelled according to the map with which it  
239 shared the highest absolute spatial correlation. Timepoints were labelled  
240 as “non-assigned” when the absolute spatial correlation was below  $r < 0.5$   
241 threshold. To ensure temporal continuity of MS segmentation, a

242 smoothing step [17], [20] was applied. Finally, segments with duration  
243 shorter than 3 samples (30ms) were assigned to neighbouring segments  
244 using the following rule: the segment was split into two parts, where each  
245 part was assigned to the neighbouring segment with the higher spatial  
246 correlation. With backfitting completed, we extracted 4 spatiotemporal  
247 parameters for each microstate map, namely:

248 **Global explained variance** (Gev) described as the sum of variances of  
249 the original recording explained by the considered microstate map  
250 weighted by the Global Field Power at each moment in time. Units are  
251 percentages (%) between 0 and 1.

252 **Mean spatial correlation** (MeanSpatCorr) defined as the mean spatial  
253 correlation value between the assigned MS map and actual scalp  
254 topography at each timepoint. This results in a correlation coefficient  $0 \leq r$   
255  $\leq 1$ .

256 **Mean duration** (MeanDurs), defined as the mean temporal duration of  
257 segments assigned to each MS map. Units are in seconds (s).

258 **Time coverage** (TimeCov) is the ratio of time frames assigned to each  
259 MS map relative to the total number of time frames from the recording.  
260 Results are Units are percentages (%) between 0 and 1.

## 261 **2.5 Adjusted Mutual information score**

262 Scikit-learn [23] implementation of the adjusted mutual information score  
263 (AMI) [24] was used to quantify the mutual information (MI) shared  
264 between different MS temporal segmentations, whilst simultaneously  
265 accounting for random overlap due to chance. This metric, bounded  
266 between 0 and 1, is used to evaluate the statistical (in)dependence of two  
267 variables. In our case, AMI is estimated between the symbolic sequences  
268 of two different microstate segmentations (e.g. ABDCADB vs ABDBDAC).

269 A high score (approaching 1) indicates that the two segmentations agree  
270 on the temporal order of all labels while a low score (approaching 0)  
271 indicates that the segmentations' labels are not temporally aligned. We  
272 selected the corrected version of this metric in order to control for the  
273 impact of differences in label distribution due to chance (for example  
274 differences in overall time coverage between labels).  
275

## 276 **2.6 Statistics**

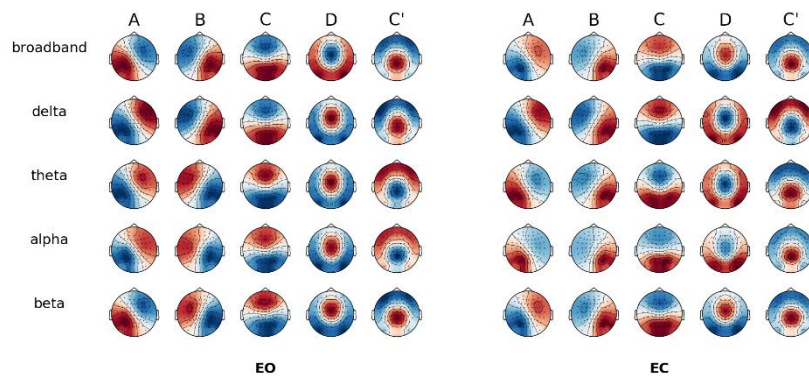
277 Statistical analyses were performed on the 4 main spatiotemporal  
278 parameters (Global explained variance, Mean spatial correlation, Mean  
279 duration, Time coverage). Tests were conducted using a two sided  
280 permutation test for equality of means on paired samples (same subject,  
281 either between condition, either between frequencies) under the H0  
282 hypothesis that both frequency (i.e. condition) share the same mean  
283 against the alternative H1 that the distributions come from two different  
284 populations. P-values were estimated by simulated random sampling with  
285 10000 replications. As a large number of statistical tests were carried out  
286 without specific pre-planned hypotheses [25], P values were corrected for  
287 multiple comparisons using the Bonferroni method. Corrected P-values  
288 are reported in the Results section, as well as the observed means ( $m$ ) of  
289 both samples together with observed standard deviations. Effect sizes are  
290 reported as the standardised difference of means using Cohen's  $d$  ( $d$ ).

291

## 292 **3 Results**

### 293 **3.1 Spatial Similarity Analysis of Microstate Maps**

294



295

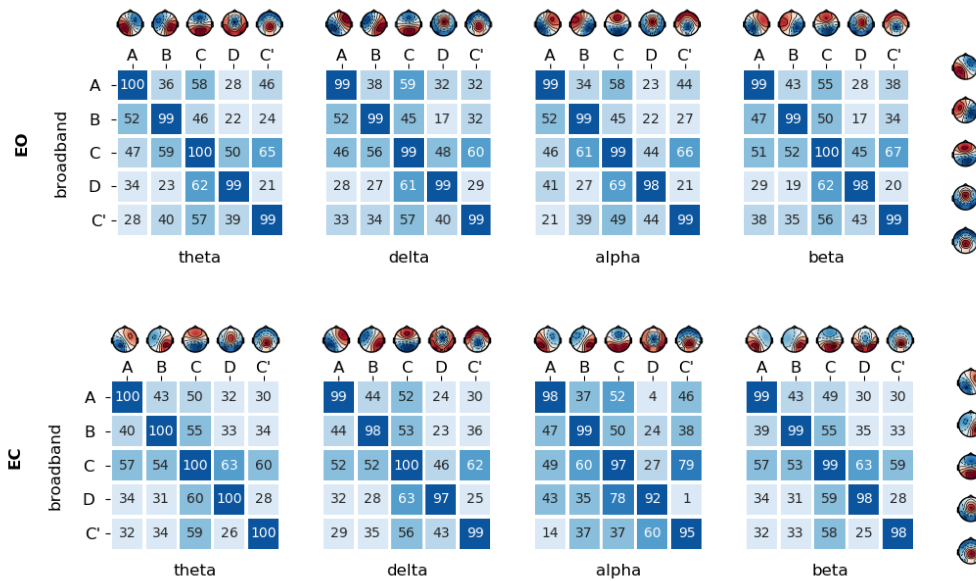
296 **Figure 1: MS segmentation parameters of MS topographies.**

297 Global cluster centroids of each frequency band within each condition. Note  
298 that polarity inversion is ignored in the classical analysis of spontaneous EEG.  
299

300 Figure 1 illustrates the topographic results of MS segmentations in the  
301 different conditions and frequency bands. After visual inspection of  
302 optimal clusters at different cluster numbers (k), we identified that a value  
303 of k=5 revealed five MS topographies that were similar across all EEG  
304 bands and behavioural conditions, consistent with recent findings from  
305 our laboratory [21], [26], [27]. MS maps were designated in line with the  
306 canonical prototypes from the literature and their respective symbols,  
307 featuring a left-right orientation (A), a right-left orientation (B), an  
308 anterior-posterior orientation (C), fronto-central maximum (D) and  
309 occipito-central (C') maximum.

310 Given the additional frequency dimension, we labelled the MS maps  
311 firstly according to the Greek letters traditionally used for narrow-band

312 EEG (i.e.  $\delta$ ,  $\theta$ ,  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ) and then the Latin alphabet for the canonical map  
 313 symbols (i.e. A, B, C, D). For example,  $\alpha A$  denoted the left-right diagonal  
 314 map from the alpha band ( $\alpha$ ) segmentation, and  $\delta C$  the anterior-posterior  
 315 map from the delta band ( $\delta$ ) segmentation. The broadband segmentation  
 316 was designated with the prefix 'bb'  
 317



318

319 Figure 2: MS segmentation parameters of MS topographies.

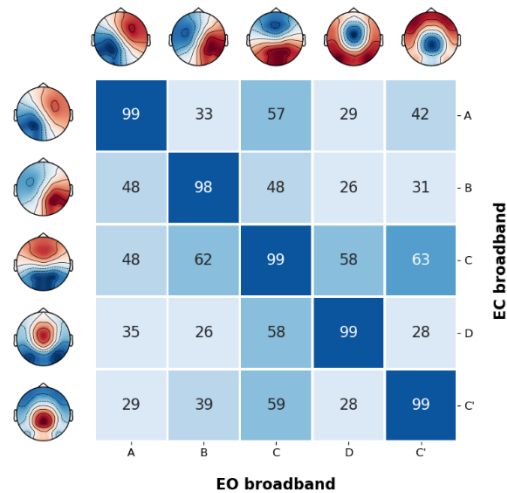
320 Spatial correlation of cluster centers of each sub-frequency bands compared to  
 321 broadband for eyes opened (EO) and eyes closed (EC) condition.

322

323 As shown in Figure 2, when comparing topographies between  
 324 broadband and each narrow-band (i.e. the diagonal entries in the  
 325 correlation matrix), all spatial correlations were  $r > 0.98$ . Consequently,  
 326 we fitted the broadband maps directly to all the frequency bands in order  
 327 to have a common reference.

328

329



330

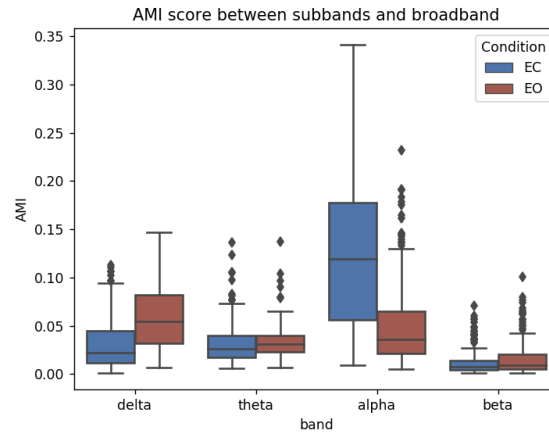
331 Figure 3: MS segmentation parameters of MS topographies.

332 Spatial correlation of broadband cluster centers between eyes opened (EO) and  
333 eyes closed (EC) condition.

334

335 We similarly observed common MS maps when comparing broadband  
336 topographies between EO and EC conditions (Figure 3), with all intraclass  
337 spatial correlations exceeding  $r > 0.98$ , thus providing justification for  
338 comparing microstate parameters between behavioural conditions while  
339 fitting condition specific broadband maps.

### 340 3.2 Mutual information

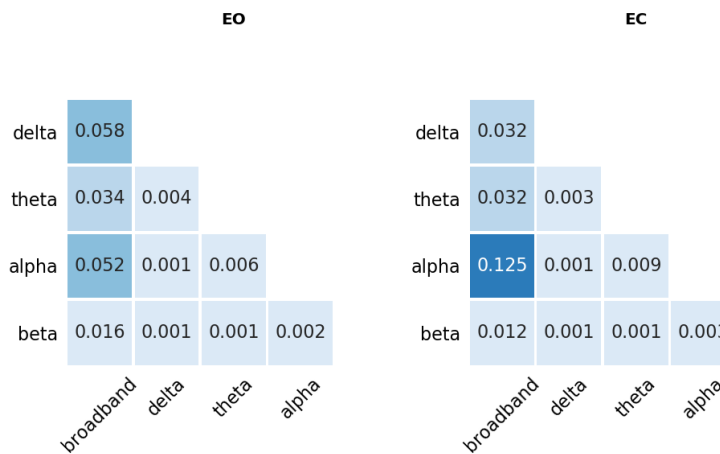


341

342 Figure 4: Adjusted mutual information between band segmentations.

343 Mean adjusted mutual information is depicted between broadband and narrow-

344 band segmentations, for each behavioural condition. n = 203 subjects.



345 Figure 5: Mean adjusted mutual information between band  
346 segmentations.

347 Mean (n = 203 subjects) adjusted mutual information for all frequency pairs.

348

349       Concisely, Adjusted Mutual Information (AMI, bounded between 0 and  
350 1) is an index of how similar two separate MS segmentations are, by  
351 estimating the degree of shared information (i.e. the number of time  
352 points assigned with the same MS) between their symbolic sequences (e.g.  
353 ABCD vs ABDA). The 'adjusted' aspect ensures the measure is unbiased for  
354 symbolic overlap(s) due to chance when cluster numbers are low (as is the  
355 case here given  $k=5$ ) [24]. Higher AMI (approaching 1) indicates nearly  
356 identical MS temporal sequences, while lower AMI (approaching 0)  
357 indicates temporally independent sequences. (i.e. low overlap)

358       As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the AMI between broadband and narrow-  
359 band segmentations in the EO condition showed a value of  $s = 0.06$  for  
360 delta,  $s = 0.03$  for theta,  $s = 0.05$  for alpha, and  $s = 0.01$  for beta. These  
361 values are surprisingly low and we can conclude that the broadband  
362 segmentation is comparatively independent of the narrow EEG bands. A  
363 similar conclusion can be made by examining the AMI between the  
364 narrow-bands *themselves*, with a maximum AMI value between theta and  
365 alpha bands (EO:  $s = 0.006$ , EC:  $s = 0.009$ ), and a minimum AMI value of  $s$   
366  $= 0.001$  for non-adjacent EEG bands (delta-alpha, delta-beta, theta-beta)

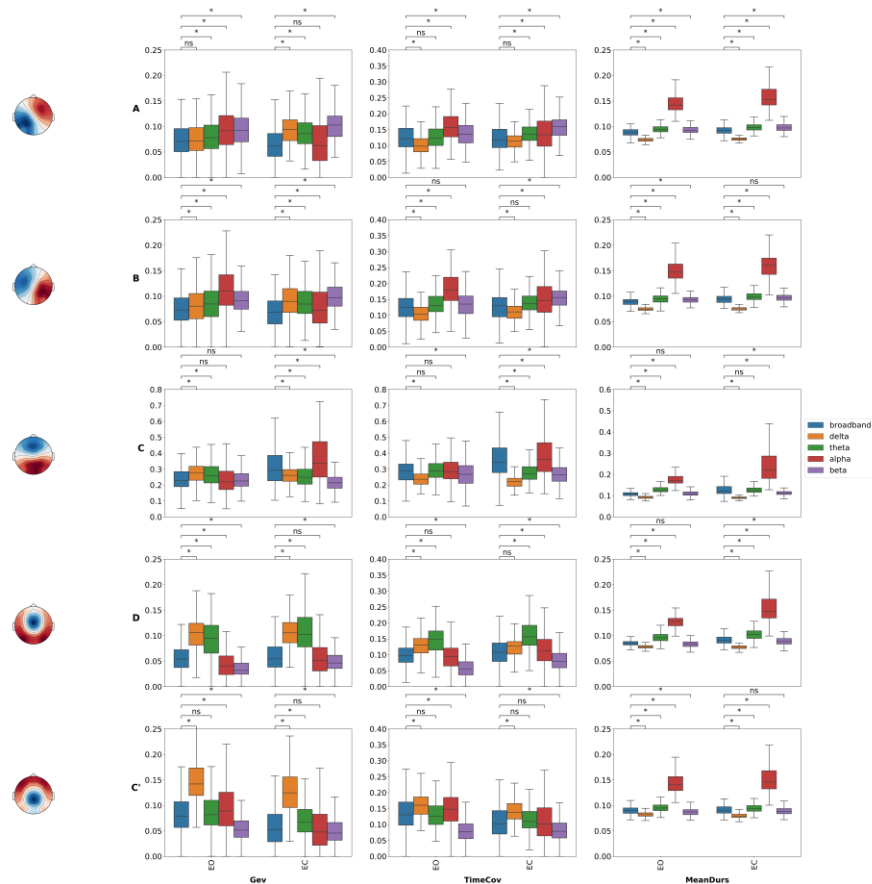
367       As a sanity check, inspecting the EO vs EC transition, shared  
368 information with broadband decreased for the delta band ( $s = 0.03$ ) but  
369 increased for the alpha band ( $s = 0.12$ ). The latter is in line with  
370 predictions, as alpha oscillations are known to increase considerably  
371 during eye closure, which would amplify their contribution to the  
372 broadband signal and consequently their shared dynamics.



373

### 374 3.3 Across Frequency comparison

375



376

377 Figure 6: MS segmentation parameters of MS topographies.

378 Mean global explained variance (Gev), microstate time coverage (time coverage)

379 and mean segment duration (MeanDurs, in s) within each microstate

380 configuration (A – C') for each frequency band (broadband, delta, theta, alpha,

381 beta) for both eyes closed condition and eyes opened condition. Significance

382 values are indicated from paired permutation test on mean between conditions.  
383 ns:  $0.05 < p$ , \*  $0.01 < p \leq 0.05$ .

384 Boxplots consist of median (Q2), first quartile (Q1), third quartile (Q3),  
385 maximum ( $Q3 + 1.5*(Q3 - Q1)$ ), minimum ( $Q1 - 1.5*(Q3 - Q1)$ ). Scales of  
386 Microstates C metrics are different from others states due to difference of order  
387 of magnitude.

388

389 All subsequent results were computed using paired permutation tests and  
390 Bonferroni correction for  $c = 120$  comparisons. In addition to Fig 6,  $p$ -  
391 values and effect sizes are reported in Table 1 of the Supplementary  
392 Results.

393

394 In summary, only 23 of the 120 pairwise comparisons between  
395 broadband and narrow-band MS measures (Global explained variance  
396 (Gev), Mean spatial correlation, Mean duration (MeanDurs), Time  
397 coverage (TimeCov) *did not* meet the threshold for a statistical significant  
398 effect. As can be seen from Fig 6, these include Gev for  $\delta A$ ,  $\alpha C$ ,  $\beta C$ ,  $\theta C'$ , in  
399 EO and  $\alpha A$ ,  $\alpha D$ ,  $\alpha C'$ , in EC.

400 TimeCov for  $\theta A$ ,  $\beta B$ ,  $\theta C$ ,  $\alpha C$ ,  $\alpha D$ ,  $\theta C'$ , in EO and  $\delta A$ ,  $\theta B$ ,  $\delta D$ ,  $\theta C'$ ,  $\alpha C'$ , in EC.

401 MeanDurs for  $\beta C$ ,  $\beta D$ , in EO and  $\beta B$ ,  $\theta C$ ,  $\beta C'$ , in EC.

402

403 The majority of pairwise comparisons with broadband (97) were found  
404 to be statistically significant, some of them with large effect sizes, in  
405 particular:

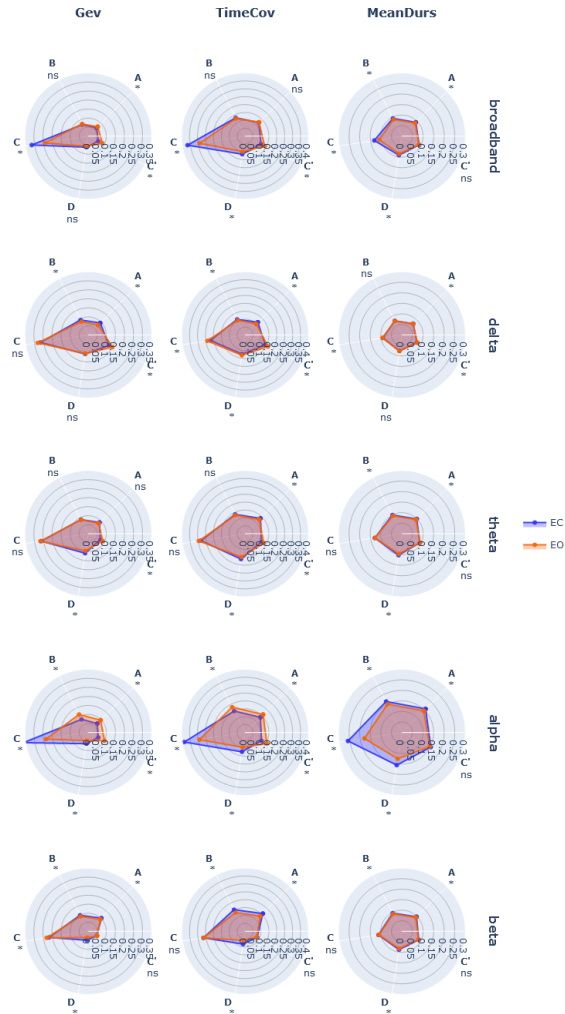
406 In the EC condition, mean duration of map A was longer ( $d = 3.38$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )  
407 in alpha ( $\alpha A$ , 150 ms) compared to broadband (bbA, 90 ms). On the other  
408 hand, mean duration of map B was shorter ( $d = -2.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in delta  
409 ( $\delta B$ , 80 ms) compared to broadband (bbB, 90 ms), while map C duration  
410 was longer ( $d = 1.33$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in theta ( $\theta C$ , 130 ms) compared to

411 broadband (bbC, 110 ms). Relative time coverage of map D was lower (d  
412 = -1.14,  $p < .05$ ) in beta ( $\beta_D$ , 6 %) compared to broadband (bbD, 10%).  
413  
414 In the EO condition, mean duration of map B was shorter (d = -1.69,  $p <$   
415 0.05) in delta ( $\delta_B$ , 74 ms) compared to broadband (bbB, 89 ms), but was  
416 longer (d = 3.25,  $p < 0.05$ ) in alpha ( $\alpha_B$ , 151ms). In terms of time coverage,  
417 map D had a lower (d = -1.14,  $p < 0.05$ ) presence in the beta band ( $\beta_D$ , 5%)  
418 compared to broadband (bbD, 10%) while its presence was increased (d =  
419 1.02,  $p < 0.05$ ) in theta frequencies. ( $\theta_D$  15%) *Microstate C'* demonstrated  
420 more explained variance (d = -1.44,  $p < 0.05$ ) in the delta band ( $\delta_{C'}$ , 11%)  
421 compared to broadband ( $bb_{C'}$ , 6%)  
422

423

424 **3.4 Within Frequency comparison**

425



426

427 **Figure 7: MS segmentation parameters of different frequency bands.**

428 Mean global explained variance (Gev), microstate time coverage (time  
429 coverage) and mean segment duration (MeanDurs, in s) for each microstate (A –  
430 C') within each frequency band (broadband, delta, theta, alpha, beta) for both

431 eyes closed condition (EC, blue) and eyes opened condition (EO, red).  
432 Significance values are indicated from paired permutation test on mean between  
433 conditions.

434  $ns : 0.05 < p, * \text{ for } 0.01 < p \leq 0.05$

435

436 In this section, we directly compared EO vs EC condition within each  
437 frequency band, and only relevant cases where narrow-band measures  
438 were distinctly different compared to the broadband analysis are reported  
439 (Figure 7). The full results are documented in Table 2 of the  
440 Supplementary Results.

441 For time coverage (TimeCov), map A was relatively more prevalent in  
442 EO vs EC in the alpha band ( $d = 0.57, p < .05$ ) than for broadband ( $d = 0.24,$   
443  $p < .05$ ). Conversely, map C coverage was less prevalent in alpha ( $sd = -$   
444  $1.00, p < .05$ ) than broadband ( $d = -0.71, p < .05$ )

445 Some narrow-band effects were found to be opposite compared to  
446 broadband :  $\beta A$  TimeCov had decreased prevalence ( $d = -0.48, p < .05$ ) in  
447 EO vs EC , while  $bbA$  TimeCov showed an increase ( $d = 0.24, p < .05$ ).  $\beta C$   
448 TimeCov had increased prevalence ( $d = 0.21, p < 0 .05$ ) in EO vs EC, while  
449  $bbC$  TimeCov showed a decrease ( $d = -0.71, p < .05$ ).

450 Finally significant EO vs EC effects were found in the narrow-band  
451 analyses which were not evident in the broadband case: a decrease ( $d = -$   
452  $0.31, p < 0.05$ ) in *Gev of map B was observed in the beta band* while no  
453 significant effect was found for broadband. Likewise in beta, map A  
454 TimeCov was decreased ( $d = -0.51, p < 0.05$ ) in EO vs EC, while broadband  
455 TimeCov was non-significant ( $p = 1.0, n.s.$ ).

456

## 457 **4 Discussion**

458

459 Historically, the first microstate (MS) analysis was applied by Lehmann  
460 and colleagues to narrowband (alpha) oscillations [2], yet this “frequency-  
461 specific” approach appears to have been overlooked during the last  
462 decades of MS research in favour of decomposing broadband (e.g. 2-40  
463 Hz) EEG signals. Hence, the present study specifically explored the MS  
464 characteristics of narrow-band EEG signals, their quantitative  
465 interrelationship, and whether they provide any novel information  
466 compared to course-grained broadband dynamics. This was done by first  
467 filtering the broadband EEG signal into several narrow-band frequencies  
468 (delta, theta, alpha, and beta), with the goal of comparing MS symbolic  
469 sequences and classical measures (explained variance, mean duration,  
470 time coverage) between them, as well as across different behavioural  
471 conditions (eyes open (EO) vs eyes closed (EC)).

472

### 473 **4.1 Topographic patterns**

474 We first investigated whether analogous MS scalp topographies would be  
475 produced by segmenting broadband versus narrow-band EEG signals  
476 (including the alpha band [28]). Interestingly, we observed highly similar  
477 MS topographies (with minimum spatial correlations of  $r > 0.98$ ) across all  
478 investigated broad- and narrow- band frequencies (broadband, delta to  
479 beta), as well as between EO/EC conditions. This is compatible with recent  
480 work by Brechet and colleagues [27], who observed that states of sleep  
481 and wake exhibited significantly different spectral content (e.g. delta vs  
482 beta power) but very similar MS maps. Moreover, these maps  
483 corresponded to the canonical (broadband) topographies previously  
484 described in the literature [1], [29]. It is therefore tempting to assume that

485 identical neuronal sources are involved in generating the same  
486 topographies across frequencies. However, although different maps imply  
487 different generators (forward problem), same topographies do not  
488 necessarily imply identical generators (inverse problem). Due to the ill-  
489 posed nature of EEG signals (constructive and destructive electromagnetic  
490 fields), similar scalp potentials can still be generated by different  
491 underlying brain mechanisms [30]. Hence, although we cannot  
492 unequivocally conclude that MS maps across the EEG spectrum are  
493 generated by the same brain sources operate, this would be the most  
494 probable and parsimonious interpretation. Moreover, we must juxtapose  
495 our findings with work from other groups [6] which applied a similar  
496 approach but didn't necessarily find the same topographies across the EEG  
497 spectrum. From a methodological point of view, it should be kept in mind  
498 that narrow-band MS analysis does not *per se* require similar topographies  
499 between frequencies. In this case, although cross frequency comparisons  
500 would not be possible due to dissimilar maps, it would remain valid to  
501 study and quantify spatiotemporal MS parameters within each frequency  
502 band separately, for example, in the service of clinical biomarker  
503 discovery [4]. Reassuringly, the MS maps of our study replicate the ones  
504 derived from independent work utilising the same EEG dataset [3], further  
505 supporting the reproducibility of MS analysis despite methodological  
506 variations between studies (e.g. absence of resampling).

## 507 **4.2 Mutual information**

508 Milz and colleagues [28] recently proposed that alpha oscillations were  
509 the major component driving microstate dynamics. In general, adjusted  
510 mutual information (AMI) analyses reported in our work reveal low  
511 values (near or below 0.1) of information shared between the narrow-  
512 band segmentations, including alpha, and that of the broadband

513 decomposition. However, consistent with the work of Milz and colleagues  
514 [28], the alpha-band during eyes-closed (EC) did indeed have the highest  
515 shared information with broadband (around 0.125). Importantly  
516 however, this relationship did not necessarily hold during eyes-open  
517 (delta being highest). This indicates specific narrow-band contribution(s)  
518 to broadband dynamics heavily depend on behavioural state. Moreover, if  
519 narrow-band(s) topographies were directly responsible for the origin of  
520 the spatial distribution of the broadband signal, one would expect much  
521 higher AMI values (at least 0.5) than those, we observed. In view of the  
522 results presented, it would be inaccurate to claim that alpha band, or any  
523 other narrow-band as the dominant source of broadband topographies.

524 In contrast, our results appear to support the ideas of Croce and  
525 colleagues [31], who suggested that broadband MS dynamics could not be  
526 extrapolated from one or a subset of EEG frequency bands. It remains  
527 unclear how the interaction of several narrow-band-components leads to  
528 a substantially different broadband MS decomposition. We speculate that  
529 this might stem from the fact that i) different narrow band signals could  
530 cancel each other at specific time points and ii) microstate assignment is  
531 non-linear given the winner-takes all approach.

532 Lastly and most intriguingly, no significant informational interrelations  
533 were found between the narrow-band topographical dynamics  
534 themselves (e.g. delta vs beta, theta vs alpha), indicating that each EEG  
535 band appears to have has its own independent dynamics. This may not be  
536 surprising, considering that spontaneous EEG oscillations have been  
537 reported to dynamically switch from a resting signatures (e.g. alpha) to  
538 task-specific active mode(s) dominated by theta [11], beta [32] or gamma  
539 activities [12]). In this context, our observations of spatiotemporal  
540 independence between narrow-band EEG components support the  
541 operation of “oscillatory multiplexing” [13] mechanisms in the cortex,



542 whereby brain regions could combine different frequencies for  
543 integrating/segregating information across large-scale networks [33]  
544

### 545 **4.3 Classical microstate parameters**

546 Microstates are defined as short periods of time during which the scalp  
547 electric field remains quasi-stable. Traditional microstate analysis does  
548 not suggest specific frequency filtering, thus resulting in various filters  
549 settings across studies [1]. Our findings show that quasi stable structures  
550 (around 80ms or longer) are present in all studied bands. It is established  
551 that such spatiotemporal structures do not appear for randomly shuffled  
552 EEG [34]. For most EEG narrow-bands, mean MS durations were usually  
553 in the same range as the typically reported 70–120 ms, but often longer  
554 (for example, alpha in EC was about 150 ms). It is therefore interesting to  
555 consider the mechanistic links between the course-grained broadband  
556 dynamics of the brain's microstates and the dynamics of different  
557 frequency-specific modes.

### 558 **4.4 Between condition comparison: toward a** 559 **systematic frequency decomposition of microstate** 560 **dynamics?**

561 A total of about one third (22 of 75) of pairwise comparisons between  
562 eyes open and eyes closed conditions revealed significant effects. Within  
563 each frequency, between 14 (for alpha) and 8 (for theta) of the studied  
564 parameters were found significant. Compared to the narrow-band results,  
565 the classical broadband MS parameters had a higher effect size for only  
566 one parameter (broadband microstate B mean duration). For all other 14

567 parameters, at least one narrow-band component showed a relatively  
568 stronger effect size.

569 The addition of the frequency dimension therefore has the primary  
570 benefit of increasing the number of potential markers that could aid  
571 clinical prognosis or for the understanding of brain mechanisms. Hence,  
572 the extra frequency dimension could in itself lead to more fine-grained  
573 explorations of the multiplex EEG signal than the more general broadband  
574 analysis. It remains for future work to investigate the statistical power and  
575 effect sizes of these markers compared to those studied traditionally.

576 Moreover, narrow-band effects were sometimes found to be opposite  
577 to the broadband analysis, hence limiting the analysis to the latter could  
578 lead to incorrect or incomplete interpretations of underlying brain  
579 dynamics. We expect that future studies will explore the  
580 neurophysiological significance of narrowband MS analysis more deeply.

#### 581 **4.5 Potential Limitations and Future Work**

582 We consider to current findings exploratory, considering the large number  
583 of tests that were carried out and in the absence of well-defined  
584 hypotheses. Nevertheless, we carried out Bonferroni correction, which  
585 may be considered the most conservative method for controlling multiple  
586 comparisons. Several studies have thus far proposed explanations for the  
587 origins of broadband MS topographies [7]. We feel it is still too early to  
588 make analogies or speculations between these results and those of the  
589 narrow-band dynamics. However, we believe that the application of the  
590 methodology proposed here may lead to valuable insights in order to  
591 more fully understand the underlying spectral tapestry of EEG  
592 microstates.

## 593 **5 Conclusion**

594       Ultimately, we report a number of important new findings between the  
595 classical broadband MS analysis, usually performed in the EEG field, and  
596 its application to more narrow frequency bands relevant to cortical  
597 oscillatory activities. In a nutshell, it appears that each canonical EEG  
598 frequency band possesses its own spatiotemporal dynamics, and that  
599 broadband dynamics cannot be appropriately explained by individual  
600 narrow-band frequency components.

601 Analysis of narrow-band MS parameters revealed spatial and temporal  
602 characteristics that both converged and diverged from broadband MS  
603 findings. At the very least, our results indicate that narrow-band analysis  
604 is justified as complementary to the usual broadband MS analysis. A  
605 narrow-band decomposition into frequencies more specific for cortical  
606 oscillatory activity could not only advance and/or consolidate findings in  
607 clinical disorders e.g. [4] [6], but also enable a better understanding of the  
608 organization and functioning of large-scale brain dynamics.

## 609 **Credit authorship contribution statement**

610 **Victor Férat:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology,  
611 Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

612 **Martin Seeber:** Writing - review & editing

613 **Christoph Michel:** Writing - review & editing

614 **Tomas Ros:** Writing - Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology  
615 review & editing.

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622 CMM.

623

## 624 **Conflict of Interest Statement**

625 The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any  
626 commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a  
627 potential conflict of interest.

628

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630

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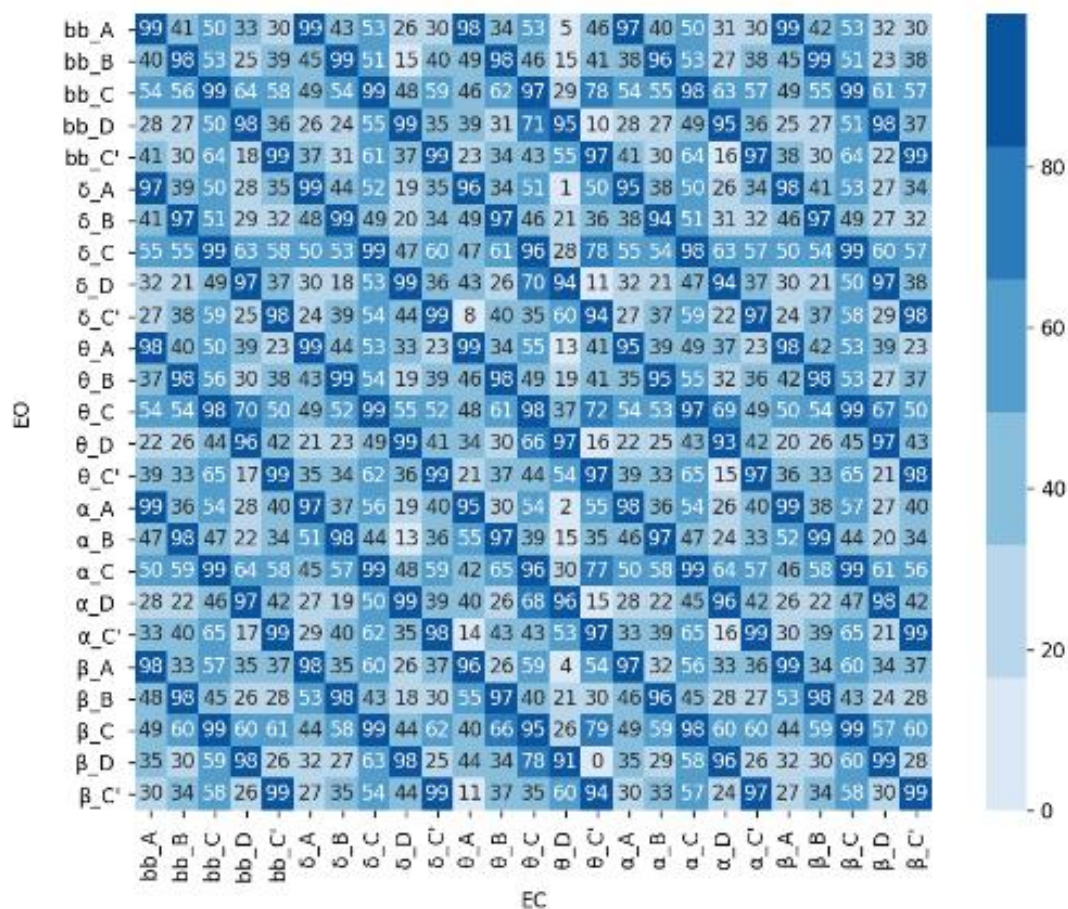


Figure : MS segmentation parameters of MS topographies.

Spatial correlation of cluster centers between eyes opened (EO) and eyes closed (EC) condition across all frequency bands.



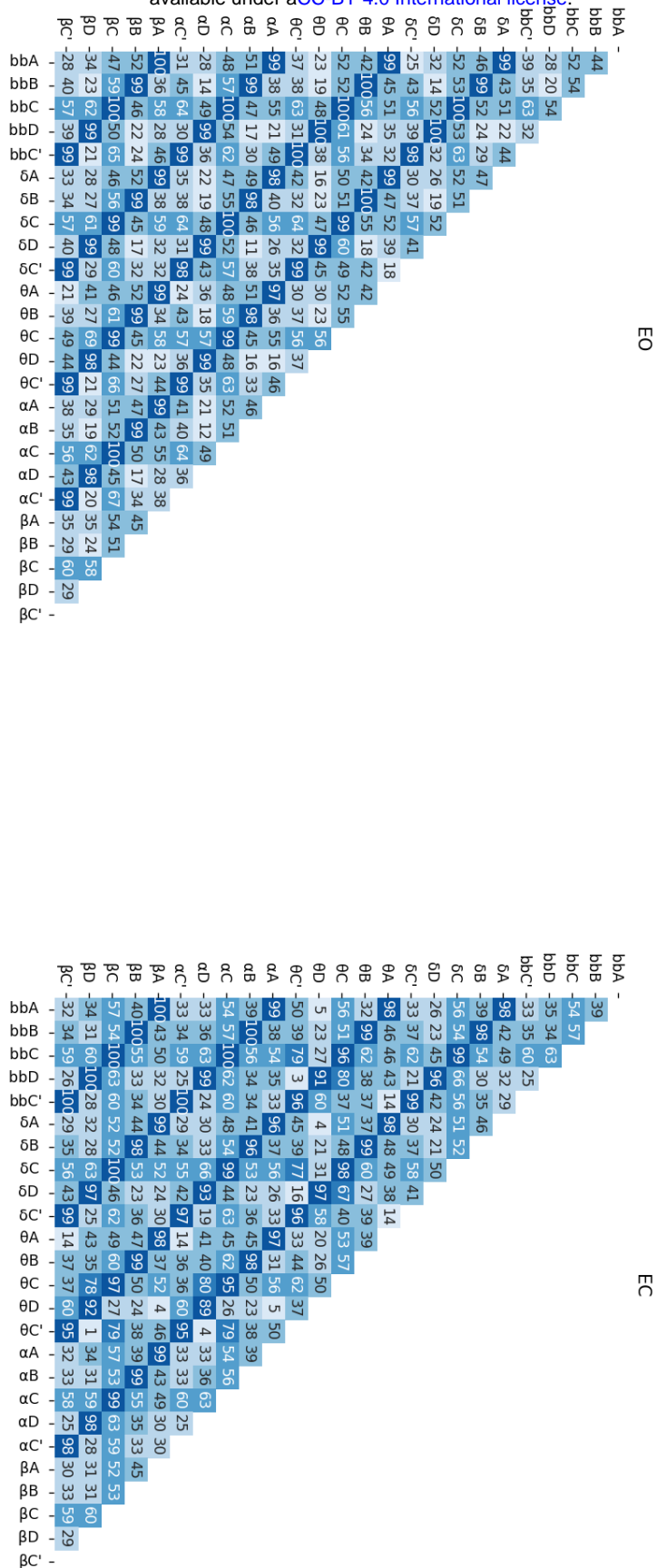


Figure: MS segmentation parameters of MS topographies.

Spatial correlation of cluster centers between all frequency bands in both EO and EC conditions.

EO

EC

| map | band1 | metric   | d     | p    |
|-----|-------|----------|-------|------|
| A   | alpha | Gev      | 0.57  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 3.38  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.76  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | 0.61  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.47  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.23  | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 0.11  | 1.00 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.80 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.66 | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.22  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.62  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.05  | 1.00 |
| B   | alpha | Gev      | 0.94  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 3.25  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 1.13  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | 0.56  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.37  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.18  | 0.17 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 0.20  | 0.05 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.69 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.56 | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.32  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.58  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.17  | 0.05 |
| C   | alpha | Gev      | -0.06 | 1.00 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 2.31  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.00  | 1.00 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -0.13 | 1.00 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.10  | 1.00 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.30 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 0.50  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.28 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.71 | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.31  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 1.33  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.06  | 1.00 |
| C'  | alpha | Gev      | 0.25  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 2.41  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.25  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -0.87 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.30 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -1.10 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 1.32  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.91 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.45  | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.06  | 1.00 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.52  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.12 | 1.00 |
| D   | alpha | Gev      | -0.40 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 3.23  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.11 | 1.00 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -0.91 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.17 | 0.60 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -1.14 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 1.44  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.91 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.81  | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 1.06  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 1.06  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 1.02  | 0.02 |

| map | band1 | metric   | d     | p    |
|-----|-------|----------|-------|------|
| A   | alpha | Gev      | 0.12  | 0.10 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 3.25  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.28  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | 1.12  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.44  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.83  | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 0.88  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -2.00 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.24 | 0.14 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.66  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.55  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.38  | 0.02 |
| B   | alpha | Gev      | 0.22  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 2.91  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.38  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | 0.82  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.19  | 0.14 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.48  | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 0.60  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -2.08 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.49 | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.46  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.43  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.16  | 0.48 |
| C   | alpha | Gev      | 0.34  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 1.50  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.16  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -1.00 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.76 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -1.00 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | -0.48 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.64 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -1.53 | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | -0.50 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.08 | 1.00 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.83 | 0.02 |
| C'  | alpha | Gev      | 0.00  | 1.00 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 2.50  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.05  | 1.00 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -0.24 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.20 | 0.24 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.54 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 1.52  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.17 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.63  | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.31  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.31  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.07  | 1.00 |
| D   | alpha | Gev      | 0.02  | 1.00 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 2.44  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.14  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -0.40 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.30 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.73 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 1.26  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.47 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.17  | 1.00 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 1.15  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.81  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.87  | 0.02 |

Table 1: For both EO and EC condition, P values (p) and cohen's d (d) are reported for each test between broadband and band segmentation on each studied metric (Global explained variance, Mean duration, time coverage).

| map | band  | metric   | d     | p    |
|-----|-------|----------|-------|------|
| A   | alpha | Gev      | 0.12  | 0.10 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 3.25  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.28  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | 1.12  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.44  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.83  | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 0.88  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -2.00 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.24 | 0.14 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.66  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.55  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.38  | 0.02 |
| B   | alpha | Gev      | 0.22  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 2.91  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.38  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | 0.82  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.19  | 0.14 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.48  | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 0.60  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -2.08 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.49 | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.46  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.43  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.16  | 0.48 |
| C   | alpha | Gev      | 0.34  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 1.50  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.16  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -1.00 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.76 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -1.00 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | -0.48 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.64 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -1.53 | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | -0.50 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.08 | 1.00 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.83 | 0.02 |
| C'  | alpha | Gev      | 0.00  | 1.00 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 2.50  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.05  | 1.00 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -0.24 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.20 | 0.24 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.54 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 1.52  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.17 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.63  | 0.02 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 0.31  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.31  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.07  | 1.00 |
| D   | alpha | Gev      | 0.02  | 1.00 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 2.44  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.14  | 0.02 |
|     | beta  | Gev      | -0.40 | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -0.30 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | -0.73 | 0.02 |
|     | delta | Gev      | 1.26  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | -1.47 | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.17  | 1.00 |
|     | theta | Gev      | 1.15  | 0.02 |
|     |       | MeanDurs | 0.81  | 0.02 |
|     |       | TimeCov  | 0.87  | 0.02 |

Table 2: For each between conditions (EO/EC) test P values (p) and cohen's d (d) are reported for all combinations of band, map and metric.