

A Framework for Spatial Political Analysis

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Abstract :

In order to understand current political events in democracies, it appears that the multidimensionality of political ideology is important. Political candidates and parties differ not only in the traditional left-right dimension, but also concerning environmental issues, migration, gender roles, international relations, law and order, defense, etc. In addition, an arguably important phenomenon in democracies is abstention from voting because of alienation. We here propose a framework for the analysis of political competition, political power, and coalition formation, in a multi-dimensional setting with consideration of abstention. Our approach combines elements from three separate literatures: (A) models of spatial political competition (pioneered by Davis and Hinich, 1966, 1967), (B) a spatial power index suggested by Lloyd Shapley in a RAND memorandum (Shapley, 1977), and (C) concepts and results in geometry concerning medians in multi-dimensional spaces (Durocher and Kirkpatrick, 2009). We illustrate the framework by applying it to data for the recently elected Swedish parliament ("riksdag").