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Blind spots in the party system: Spatial voting and issue salience if voters face scarce choices

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## Blind spots in the party system: Spatial voting and issue salience if voters face scarce choices

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### Abstract

Drawing on spatial models of political competition, this research investigates whether decision weights vary across groups of voters defined by their policy positioning in a two-dimensional space. Our analyses of electoral survey data from England, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland reveal that the economic and cultural dimensions of electoral competition are salient for the vote choice of most groups of voters. However, those voters who hold economically left and culturally right preferences weigh their preferences on the economic dimension much more and discount parties' position on cultural issues when no party represents their configuration of preferences. Consequently, left parties are less able to attain votes of economically right but culturally libertarian voters for cultural policy reasons, when electoral choices are scarce, while right parties are successful in attaining votes based on both dimensions. As a result, significant representation gaps can occur.

**Keywords :** Issue salience, Spatial Voting, Issue Congruence, Western Europe

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