Spatial Voting Models under Imperfect Measurement of Ideological Preferences: Evidence from Scandinavia

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Research Idea

- To write a paper for the courses I attended in Michigan

- To do something in mainstream political science / rational choice framework

- To apply newly learned method (mixed logistic regression) and software (BIOGEME)

- To follow own interests, namely studying behavior and radicalism / immigration

Research Question

- Spatial voting in multiparty systems seems an obvious choice

- There's substantial gap in studies of dimensionality in European politics

- Chosen dimensions: traditional left-right and immigration

- "Imperfect measurement" popped up in process

Theoretical Basis

- Anthony Downs, "An Economic Theory of Democracy"

- All voters and candidates have their policy preferences

- Policy preferences can me ordered on a fixed number of dimensions

- Individual votes for the party which is closest to one's policy preferences

Analytical Model

$$u_{ij}$$
$$= \beta_{0j} + \beta_1 \times lrdist_{ij}^q + \beta_2 \times imdist_{ij}^q + \beta_3$$
$$\times lrdist_{ij} \times imdist_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

u_{ij} - respondent's *i* utility from voting for party *j*

$lrdist_{ij}$ - distance between respondent *i* and party *j* on the left-right scale

$imdist_{ij}$ - distance between respondent *i* and party *j* on the immigration scale

q – power of the loss function

Research Design

- **Method:** mixed logistic regression

- **Software:** BIOGEME

- **Countries:** Denmark, Norway, Sweden

- **Data:** European Social Survey, 2002-2010
  - Voting choice
  - Individual positions

- **Data:** Expert judgments, 2000-2010
 - Party positions

Spatial Model Assumed

Progress

Labour

Conservative

Centre

Christ Dem

Voter

Socialist Left

Liberal

Immigration
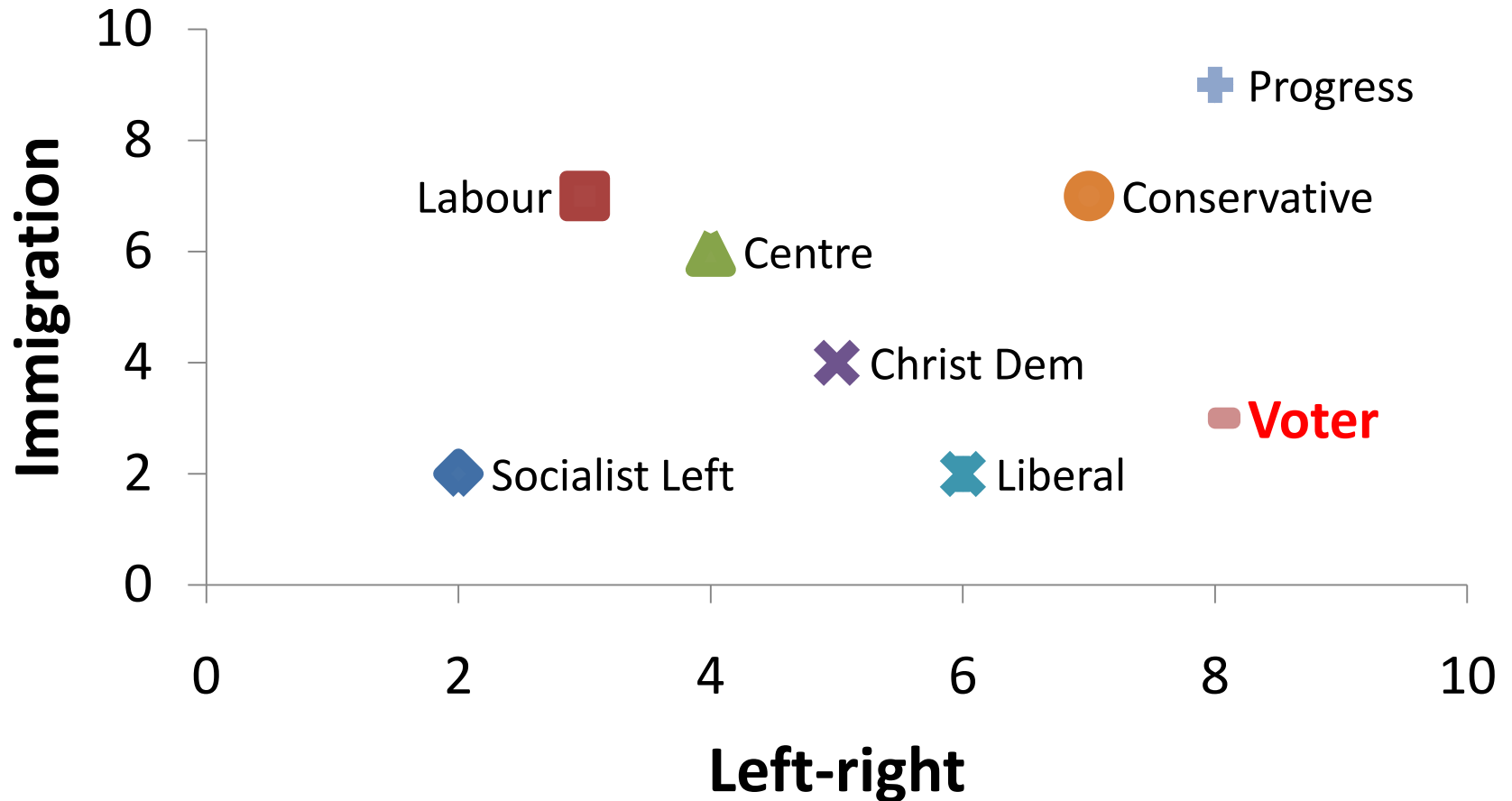
Left-right

Results (Norway)

Party	Left-right	Immigration
All	-0.325***	-0.110***
Socialist Left Party	-0.424***	-0.199***
Labour Party	-0.319***	0.009
Centre Party	-0.389***	-0.071*
Christian Democratic Party	-0.288***	-0.015
Liberal Party	-0.311***	-0.260***
Conservative Party	-0.283***	**0.108***
Progress Party	-0.126***	-0.137***

The Problem

- **Red number means:** farther a respondent is from the Conservatives on immigration, more likely one is to vote for them

- Clear contradiction to the spatial voting axiom

- **Technically,** people who vote Progress are below the party on anti-immigration score…

- Whereas people who vote Conservative are WAY below the party on anti-immigration score

Spatial Model Observed
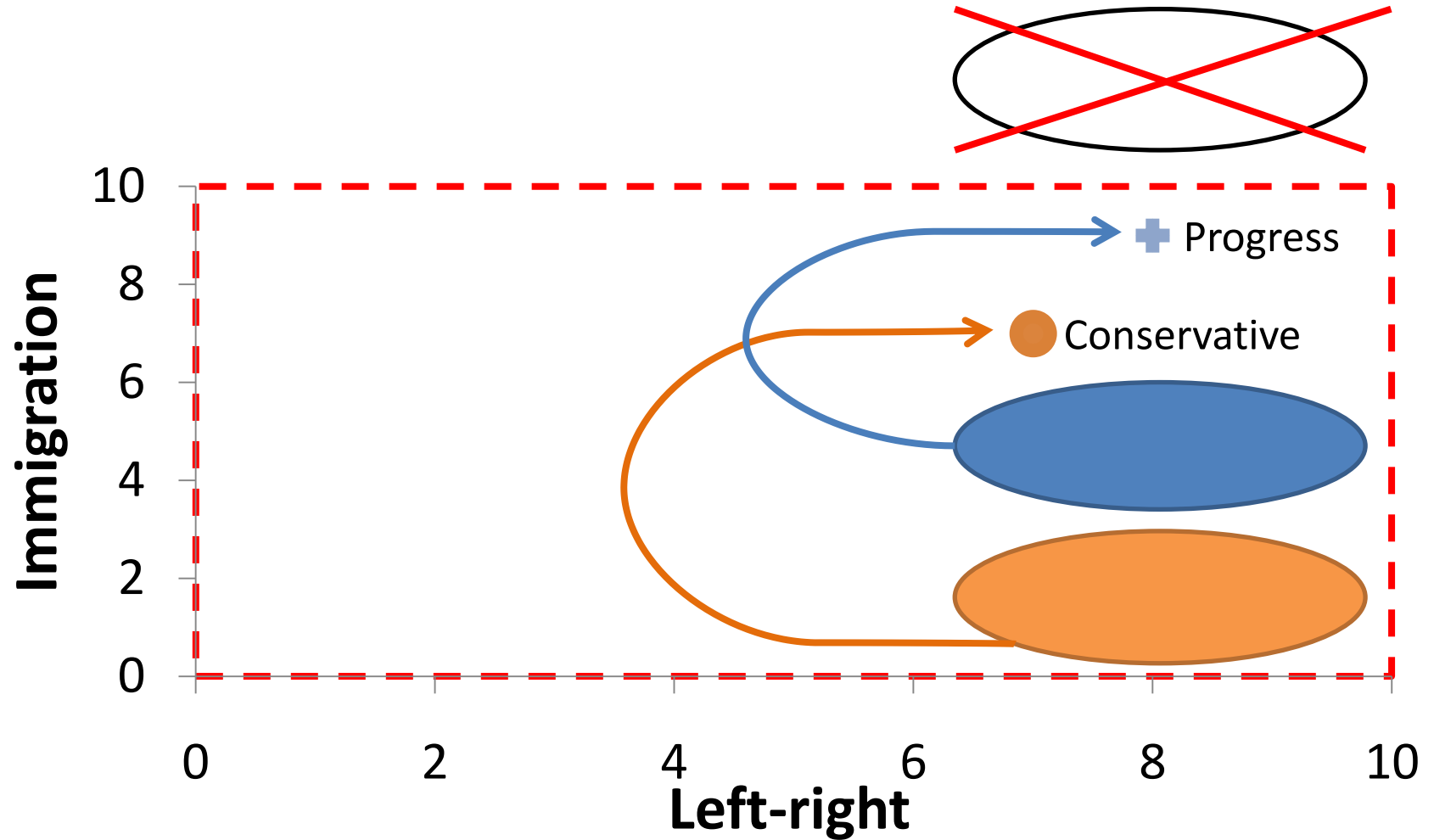
Possible Explanations

- **Empirical reality:** spatial voting model does not work for this particular case

- **Imperfect measurement**
  - Different questions
  - Differences between voters and experts
  - Dimensions are truncated (0 to 10)

- More empirical work needed to understand real cause of my finding

Future Steps

- Take one country with good national electoral study

- Obtain different estimates of party positions
  - Voter's placement
  - Average voters' placement
  - Expert surveys
  - Manifesto project

- Problems persist → empirical reality

- Problems disappear → imperfect measurement