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## **The Other Space in Spatial Politics**

Scholars have long sought to formalize the “rules of the game” by which political parties compete with one another for votes. Drawing from theories of spatial competition, many of these analyses have conceptualized parties within a given political system as arranging themselves along some kind of single ideological dimension. In many cases, a party’s position along this dimension has been connected to a particular social class or group. However, in more recent years, analysts have pointed to a decline in traditional “class politics” and the rise of new political dimensions centered on social issues, consumption, and lifestyle.

Within this modern political environment, parties can no longer succeed by simply focusing on voters situated within one particular social class, but rather are forced to appeal to several cross-cutting identities and social locations. However, it is similarly obvious that not all of these “identities” or “locations” will be equally relevant in every electoral situation. Unfortunately, the current literature in the political science and political sociology fields have done little to account for the multi-faceted nature of modern party identities or answer the questions of *where* and *when* particular parts of these identities become more or less important than others.

This paper is concerned with two related questions, both of which are answered through a multivariate statistical analysis of results for four political parties in the 2009 French elections for the European Union parliament. First, how does local context—in terms of socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural elements—determine which particular parties will be most directly competing with one another? Second, how do particular aspects of a party’s identity and appeal become more or less important when the party is competing more directly with one opponent and less directly with another?