

UTKU B. DEMİR

FROM STAGES TO SQUARE
REPRESENTATION BY
NICHE PARTIES AND PO-
LITICAL PRESENCE (THE
ROLE OF PERFORMA-
TIVITY)

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Introduction

The opposite of representation is not
participation

Plotke 1997

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Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Analysis and Current Debates

Blumenau, Wolkenstein, and Wratil (2024)

I argue that Nonnemacher (2023)'s claim that niche party voters take to the streets once they realize their party's influence is negligible remains only partially valid. Niche party voters may also recognize that even after their party gains governmental positions, fundamental attributes of electoral democracy continue limiting the effectiveness of square-based political action.

Niche party voters cannot be reduced to policy-driven extremists or disaffected protestors. **New Claim:** I contest Nonnemacher's core assumption by arguing niche party support stems more fundamentally from supporters' engagement with alternative modes of representation rather than protest orientation. This engagement emerges through perceived closer connections with niche party representatives, reflecting Saward's concept of the *Square* rather than mere involvement in protest activities.

2.2 Methodology and Research Question

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Main Analysis

The definition of niche parties remains contested. While scholars demonstrate variability in party selection criteria (compare Adams et al. 2006; Nonnemacher 2023; Adams et al. 2006; Nonnemacher 2023), most agree niche parties emphasize specific non-economic issues neglected by mainstream competitors (Nonnemacher 2023; Stiers 2024; Nonnemacher 2023; Stiers 2024). Like their supporters, these issues occupy marginalized positions within political agendas.

Recent decades witnessed significant voter migration from mainstream to niche parties on one's own terms (Kim, Karavasilis, and Nonhoff 2024).

Nonnemacher (2023) attributes niche party supporters' protest participation to *representational deprivation*, positing governmental participation reveals parties' limited influence, triggering disillusionment (*ibid.*). While aligning with grievance mobilization theories, this framework underplays supporters' active pursuit of alternative representation modes.

My analysis counters that niche support reflects not merely reactive protest but active engagement with reconstituted representative practices. Supporters seek not policy influence alone but the right to political presence through what Saward (2024) terms the Square's mutual vulnerability. Niche parties' hybrid institution to participatory performance.

Traditional representation's physical separation between representatives and constituents (*ibid.*) inhibits the feedback loops essential for responsive democracy. Niche parties' strength lies in creating Squares where constituencies materialize as political bodies rather than abstract vote masses. This performative reconstitution of representation challenges institutional norms while expanding democratic possibilities.