The powerful unidimensional agenda setter model

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Abstract

The paper introduces the concept of structure-induced preferences and policy (cf. **?**) to show that one-dimensional models of political decision making are not as restrictive as often claimed. While institutions in general reduce the dimensionality of the policy space, agenda-setting monopoly collapses it into a single dimension of conflict.

Ideology constrains choice and so gives structure to politics. The universal notions of left and right provide a most intuitive approach to politics and policy, next perhaps only to notions of good *vs* evil and us *vs* them. They provide voters with reasonable connections between a big and seemingly disconnected number of issues and their self-interest (**??**). The constrain also operates at the elite level, left and right informing on the positions that politicians and their parties are likely to take in day-to-day business (**?**).

Collapsing policy into a single left–right continuum, however, does not accurately capture politicians everywhere all the time. Cox's activation. In ethnically split societies, for example... Politics is often multi-dimensional.

Yet the one-dimensional representation remains popular. Downs, Poole+Rosenthal. List work with one-dimensional assumption.

This paper provides a defense of unidimensionality. Parties reduce a myriad of possible policy combinations to a much lower-dimensionality space. Institutions do the same. "Structure-induced preferences and policy space".

1   The dimensions of policy

Reduction: 2 sources.

Ideology (Converse 1964), Aldrich and Fernández. Parties nurture ideology.

Institutions. Cox 1997 on slimming effect of electoral systems. Shepsle 1979, Talbert+Potoski.

But contradictions remain. Use CSES macro (elite) surveys

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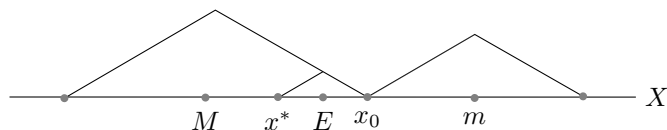to establish how often policy has >1 dimensions.

Figure 1: One-dimension setter

2 Veto politics in one and two dimensions

Discuss standard one-dimensional setter model here.

Then see that easily extends to two-dims. Discuss Advantages of two-dims from Tsebelis (more accuracy and two-dim can be generalized to n-dim whereas 1-dim cannot).

But: not a simple majority legislature, as in social choice. There are institutions. In particular, a president (or a second chamber) can block legislation. In this context, institutions depress dimensionality to one.

M = majority party/coalition in the assembly. M makes a take-it-or-leave-it proposal to the executive (E). E can accept the proposal, ending the game with policy xM, or veto. In this case the pivotal legislator m (the one-third minority) chooses to join the executive (sustaining the veto with x0) or the majority (overriding the veto with xM).

Payoffs are Euclidian and policy two-dimensional. The result is well-known: M will calibrate xM in roder to leave E or m indifferent with the status quo, making concessions to the most compromising one.
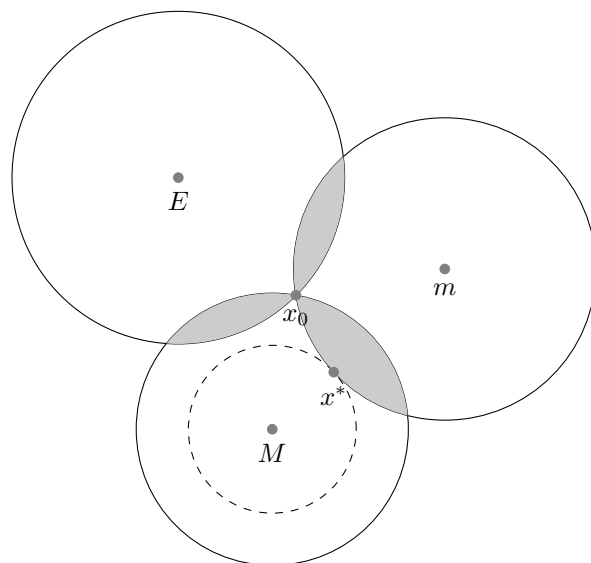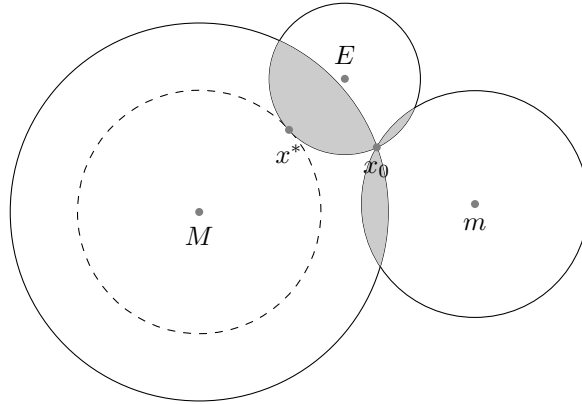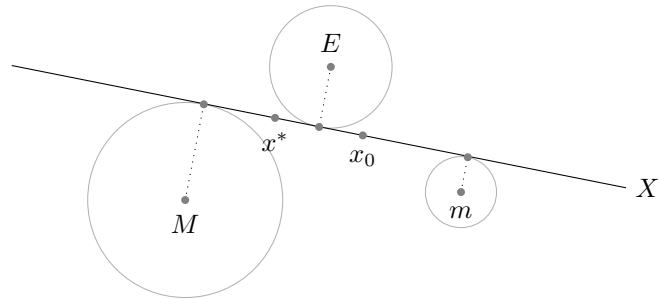
References

Figure 2: Two-dimension setter

Part A Two-dimensional setter

Part B Orthogonal projections
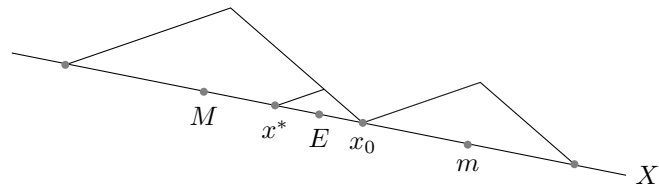

Part C Structure-induced unidmensionality

Figure 3: How institutions reduce dimensionality