



# Department SEMINARS

## Country Music: Strategic Incentives of Competing Voters

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### A B S T R A C T

We empirically analyze the strategic proofness of a positional voting system. We exploit the setting of the Eurovision Song Contest, where each country participates both as a candidate - with an artist and a song - and with a set of voters - including jury members, and the popular vote. Voters attribute points according to a modified version of the Borda rule. Despite voters being forbidden from voting for their country's song, we find evidence of strategic behavior, particularly among industry experts (jury members), who tend to attribute lower votes to close competitors of their country's candidate. By matching Eurovision voting data to Spotify data for the same songs, measuring both a song's commercial success and its musical features, we show that such effect is indeed related to strategic behavior within the competitions, not explained by a qualities or success of a candidate song. The strategic behavior we document is compatible with any settings where voters have an interest in specific candidates being elected, such as in the election of members of international bodies. Our results show that forbidding votes for own candidates is not enough to neutralize strategic behavior.

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