

Polarizing Cues in Austria and Germany

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Introduction

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- However, no systematic scientific studies that examine any dimension of political polarization in Austria
- Most of the literature focuses on the US, very little knowledge about the situation in multi-party systems
- Research questions: *What is the impact of party cues on social polarization in Austria? Whose party proponents are more likely to socially polarize for which party cues?*

Theoretical framework

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- heuristics are frequently applied by individuals to make decisions under uncertainty and are used as shortcuts
- Tversky and Kahneman (1974: 141) have famously concluded that "heuristics are highly economical and usually effective, but they lead to systematic and predictable errors"

Research design: experiment 1

"As you might know, Turkey has recently been criticized very frequently for human rights violations. In this context, one proposal from 2016 [supported by the SPÖ/ÖVP/FPÖ/Greens/NEOS; randomize] called the EU negotiations with Turkey into question. What is your view on this suggestion?"

Research design: experiment 2

"A bill circulating in the Austrian National Assembly [supported by the SPÖ/ÖVP/FPÖ/Greens/NEOS; randomize] would forbid the use of palm oil in products, which are certified by the AMA cachet in order to increase environmental protection and decrease dependency from foreign products. What is your view on this bill?"

Model, hypotheses and data

$$E_{PTV_i}(\tau) = E_{PTV_i}[Y(i) - Y(0)], \forall i \in \{SP, VP, FP, Greens, NEOS\} \quad (1)$$

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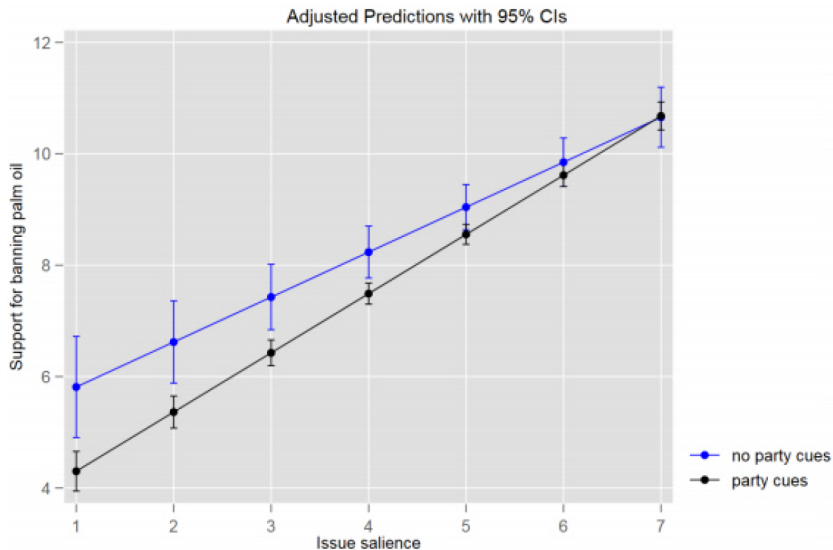
- *H1: Respondents, who consider a political issue as more salient, are less likely to socially polarize.*
- *H2: Respondents, who possess higher political knowledge, are less likely to socially polarize.*
- *H3: Respondents, who possess higher political interest, are less likely to socially polarize.*

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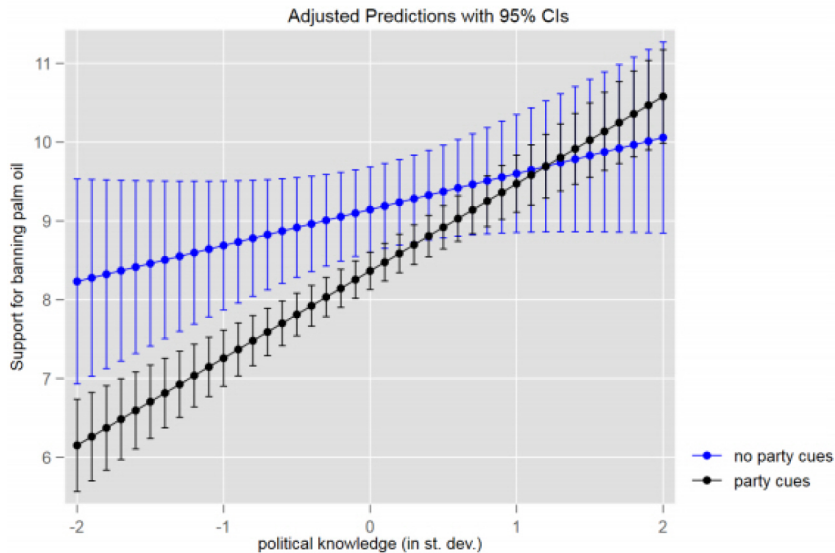
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- Fieldwork: January 2018 as a PUMA module

Cues and issue salience



Cues and political knowledge



Conclusions

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- People with lower degrees of *issue salience* and *political knowledge*, but NOT *political interest* are more prone to (socially) polarize
- Important: Social polarization is NOT mainly driven by supporters of just one party/one side of the political spectrum

Conclusion

Thank you for your attention!

Literature

- Dancey, Logan and Sheagley, Geoffrey (2012). Heuristics Behaving Badly: Party Cues and Voter Knowledge. In: *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(2), 312-325.
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