Firing up the base: The effect of party system polarisation on positive and negative partisanship in Europe between 1999-2019

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Theoretical framework
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Research design
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Descriptive analysis
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Results and Discussion
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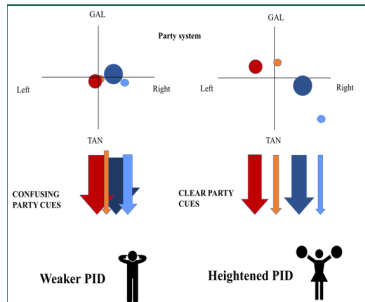# Top-down explanations of partisanship change

- Previous work:

  The more differentiated parties'
  ideological stances on the
  Left-Right dimension, the stronger
  Positive Partisanship (Lupu 2015,
  Vegetti 2015)

- ! **Neglect of negativity**
  (But see Anderson *et al.* 2022)

- ! **Multidimensional policy space**
  (But see Dassonneville *et al.* 2022)

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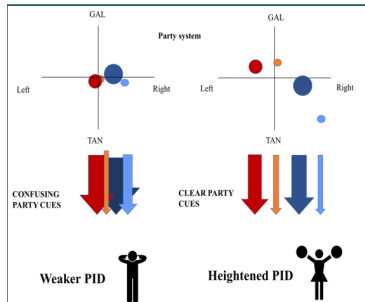# Top-down explanations of partisanship change

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The "darkside" of partisanship

■ Negative Partisanship (NP):

   Perennial debate in partisanship literature ==> Stability

   • Commonly defined in affective and emotional terms: Repulsion
     from a party, "animadversion", "systematic rejection" = *Never
     vote for*
   • Instrumental/Rational? Some evidence pointing to the role of
     ideology (E.g. McGregor *et al.* 2015)
   • "A power of its own" on electoral behaviour (Medeiros *et al.*
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NOTE: Conceptually and empirically independent from PP

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Effect of polarisation

- ■ H1: An increase in LR (economic) polarisation will lead to an increase in Positive Partisanship
- ■ H2: An increase in LR (economic) polarisation will lead to an increase in Negative Partisanship
- ■ H3: An increase in GALTAN (cultural) polarisation will lead to an increase in Positive Partisanship
- ■ H4: An increase in GALTAN (cultural) polarisation will lead to an increase in Negative Partisanship

Data and methods

■ Data and methods

- Voter-level data from European Election Studies (EES) 1999-2019 (5 waves)
- 27 European countries (CEE and WE), 108 election-year, 83,889 respondents
- Party-level data from Chapel Hill Expert Surveys and Parlgov
- EES-CHES pairing strategy: Closest ($\Delta - 2years$)

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Data and methods (cntd)

■ Negative Partisanship (DV)

- Aversion to a party one would *never* vote for
- Respondent coded 1 if at least one NP
- Propensity To Vote (PTV): "How probable is it that you will **ever** vote for the following parties? (0-10)"

- Classification strategy
  PTV = 0
  Party won at least 1 seat in last GE
  Party competes nationally (e.g. excludes SNP)

■ Positive Partisanship (DV)

- Dichotomous variable (complete answers to strength and direction questions)

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Data and methods (ctnd 2)

■ Party system Polarisation (IV)

- **Party system polarisation**
  Ideological distance between parties on GALTAN (cultural) and
  LR (Econ.) dimensions
  Dalton's index of polarisation based on CHES data:

$$Pola_{dim} = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{n} \omega j \frac{(p_j - \bar{p})^2}{5}}$$

Data and Methods (ctnd 3)

■ Control variables
- **Individual-level (level-1)**
  Socio-economic (age, age stop study, gender)
  Interest in politics
  Ideological extremism

- Country-year level (Level-2)
  Party system polarisation (Economic and cultural)
  Effective N parties (N parties evaluated)
  Time since last GE (in months)
  Western European country

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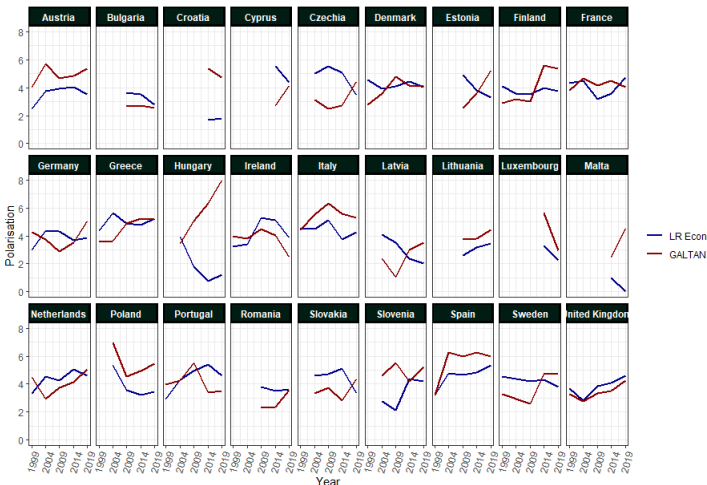 Party system polarisation (Economic and cultural)
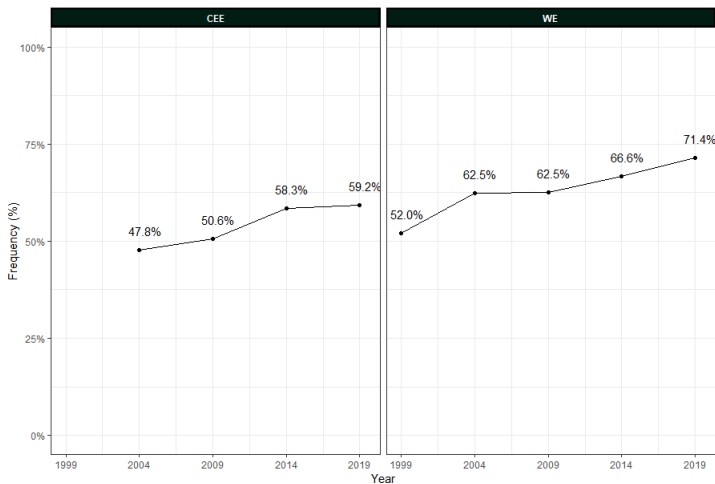 Effective N parties (N parties evaluated)
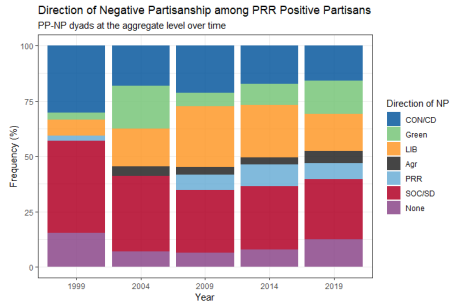 Time since last GE (in months)
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Party system polarisation in Europe between 1999-2019

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Positive Partisanship Europe between 1999-2019

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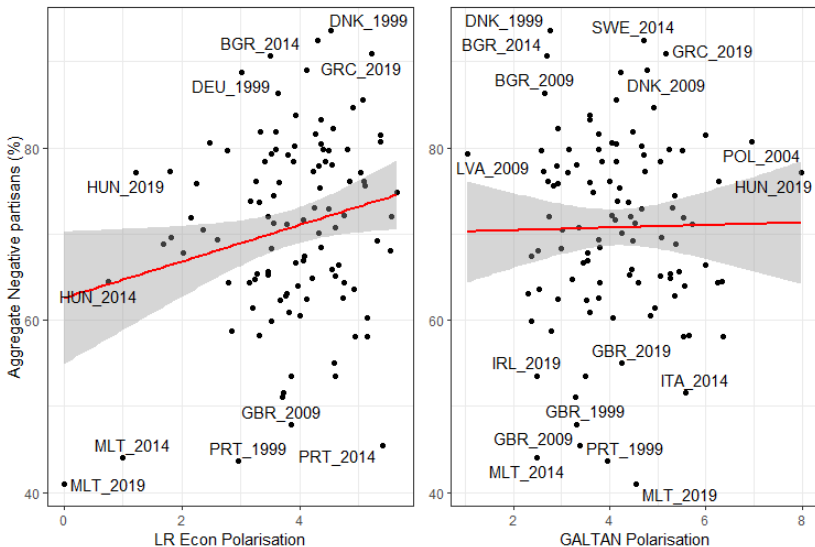# Where is the hate? Measuring NP from PTV
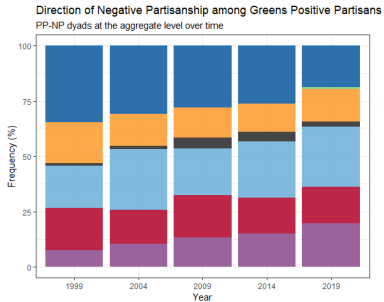
The direction of Negative Partisanship among Greens (left) and Far-right (right) Positive Partisans

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Scatter plot of the share of NPs in each election-year diad by polarisation

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	Dependent variable:	
	Positive Partisanship	Negative Partisanship
GALTAN Polarisation	0.184** (0.059)	−0.030 (0.050)
LR Econ Polarisation	0.163* (0.076)	0.115* (0.057)
Age	0.094*** (0.005)	0.136*** (0.005)
Gender (Female)	−0.055*** (0.016)	0.060*** (0.017)
Political interest	1.269*** (0.023)	0.275*** (0.026)
Age left education	−0.075*** (0.020)	0.082*** (0.022)
Ideological extremism (LR)	0.272*** (0.005)	0.217*** (0.006)
Effective N parties	0.134** (0.048)	
Positive Partisanship		0.091*** (0.019)
Time since GE (months)	0.021 (0.046)	0.011 (0.039)
WE country	0.130 (0.198)	0.014 (0.164)
N Eval. parties		0.107** (0.034)
VAR election	0.274	0.206
VAR Country	0.151	0.105
N elections	108	108
N Countries	27	27
Observations	83,889	81,903

Note: $^{*}p<0.05$; $^{**}p<0.01$; $^{***}p<0.001$

Effect of party system polarisation on Positive Partisanship

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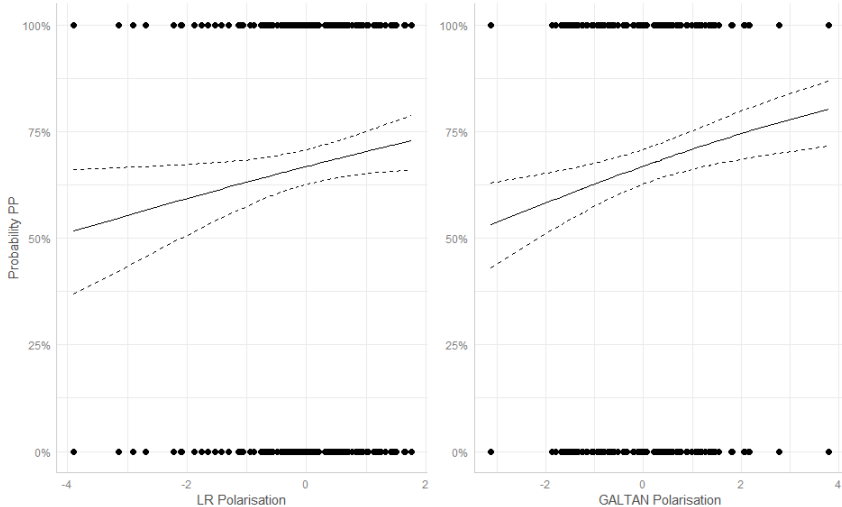
Effect of party system polarisation on Negative Partisanship
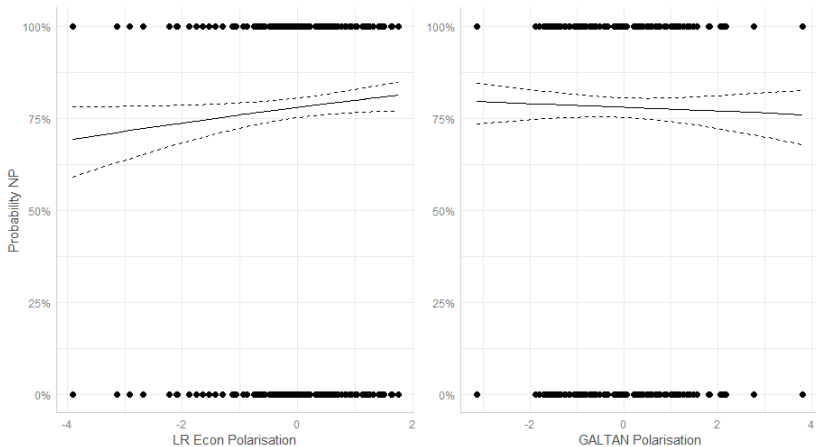
Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Result
H1: LR Econ Polarisation on *Positive* Partisanship	✅
H2: LR Econ Polarisation on *Negative* Partisanship	✅
H3: GALTAN Polarisation on *Positive* Partisanship	✅
H4: GALTAN Polarisation on *Negative* Partisanship	❌

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Conclusions

- Negative Partisanship seems more stable than Positive Partisanship
- Cultural polarisation (GALTAN) generates more partisan electorates
- Surprisingly no evidence of increased NP in culturally polarised elections
- Is NP better understood in terms of directional, rather than proximity electoral behaviour?

Research agenda

- Replicate analysis using panel data

- Interplay between Positive and Negative Partisanship?
  Partisanship typology (Rose and Mischler 1998)
  E.g. closed partisans: GAL partisans vs TAN Partisans

- Is Negative Partisanship identity-based?
  Does polarisation lead to more expressive behaviour (Loyal voting, turnout)?

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Summary statistics

Table: Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Dalton Econ.	109, 534	−0.00	1.00	−3.90	1.75
Dalton GALTAN	109, 534	−0.00	1.17	−3.12	3.80
Age	108, 908	−0.00	1.68	−3.82	5.36
Time since last GE	109, 534	−0.00	1.28	−2.47	2.63
Extremism	93, 419	−0.00	1.57	−2.72	4.25
ENP	109, 534	−0.00	1.54	−2.84	4.05
N eval. parties	109, 534	0.00	1.68	−4.47	6.53

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Typology of Partisanship in Western Europe

Typology of Partisanship in Central and Eastern Europe