

# Exploring the vote share decline of the Austrian Social Democratic Party

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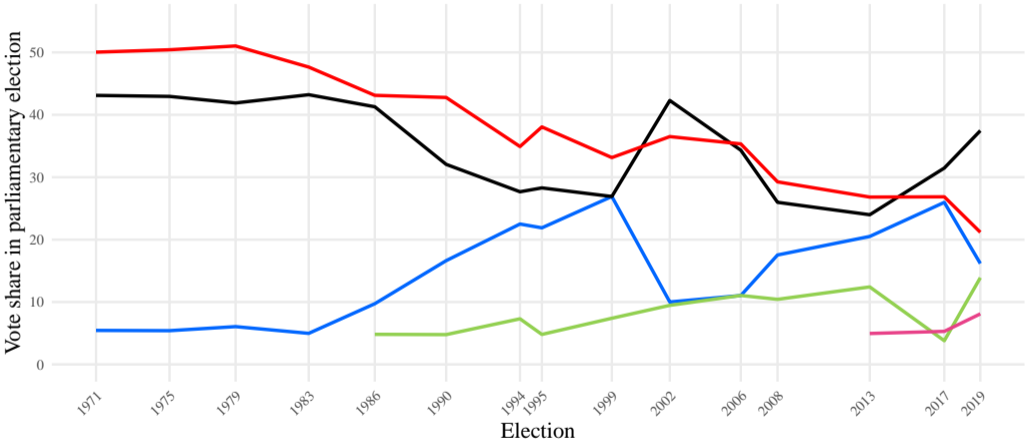
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- Height of its electoral success in the 1970s
- More than 50% of the vote
- Election results over the last 50 years
- District level

## Research question:

*"Which socio-demographic factors were decisive for the decline in the vote share of the Austrian Social Democratic Party?"*

# Vote shares of different parties in parliamentary elections



Vote share: — FPÖ — Grüne — Neos — ÖVP — SPÖ

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# The importance of manufacturing

- Class-based voting
- Industrial workers → core electorate of social democracy
- High level of unionisation in the manufacturing sector
- The decline in employment in industry causally led to an increase in the FPÖ vote share (Bekhtiar 2023)
- Rise of far-right and decline of established parties are linked
- Conflict over target group of blue-collar workers

## Hypothesis $H_1$ :

$H_1$ : A **decline** in employment in the manufacturing sector in a district leads to a **decline** in the SPÖ's vote share.

# The changing role of education

Core electorate in 1950s & 1960s:

- Lower income
- Lower education levels

Core electorate today:

- Lower income
- Higher education levels

(Gethin et al. 2021; Abou-Chadi and Hix 2021)



## Hypothesis $H_2$ :

$H_2$ : An **increase** in the level of education in a district leads to an **increase** in the SPÖ's share of the vote.

# Migration and voting rights

- Immigration has always been a key issue for the far-right
- Key to their electoral success (Halla et al. 2017)
- Migrants are often the target voter group for social democracy
- No voting rights

## Hypothesis $H_3$ :

*H3: An **increase** in the proportion of the population without citizenship in a district leads to a **decline** in the electoral success of the SPÖ.*

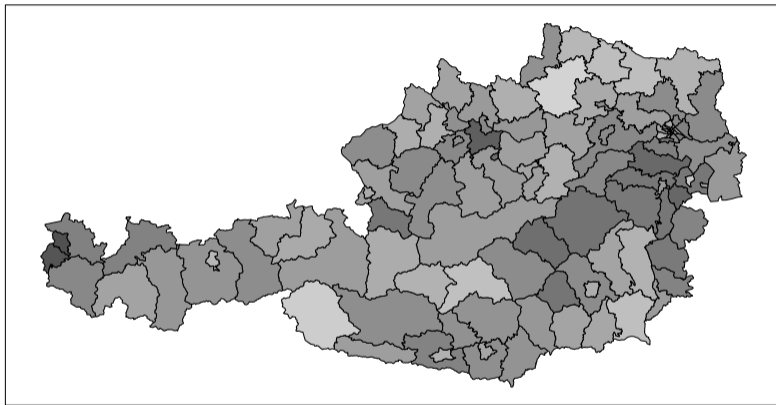
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## Variable description

Variable	Min	Mean	Max	$\sigma$
Vote share SPÖ	0.09	0.34	0.73	0.13
Age structure index	30.36	40.02	47.87	3.88
Unemployment rate	0.01	0.05	0.17	0.03
Share of population without citizenship	0.00	0.09	0.42	0.08
Share of highest education: apprenticeship	0.08	0.25	0.36	0.07
Share of highest education: university	0.00	0.07	0.39	0.07
Share of persons employed in primary sector	0.00	0.05	0.36	0.06
Share of persons employed in secondary sector	0.02	0.22	0.57	0.11
Share of persons employed in tertiary sector	0.16	0.38	0.64	0.09

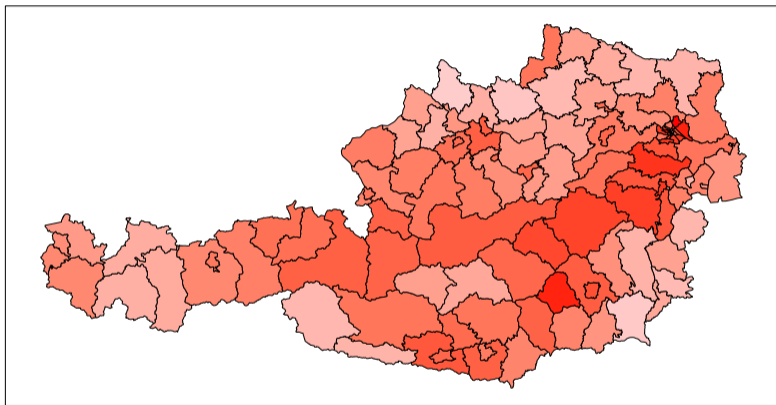
# Decline employment in manufacturing from 1971 to 2019



Decline in percentage points



# Decline in vote share of the SPÖ from 1971 to 2019



Decline in percentage points



-20

-30

# Decline in Vienna from 1971 to 2019



Decline in percentage points

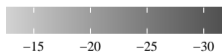
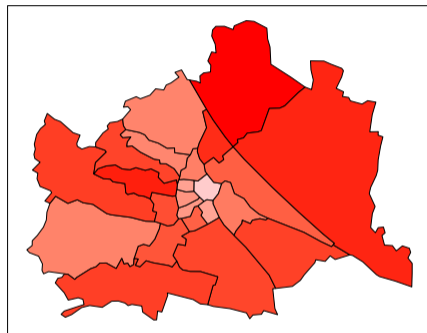


Figure: Decline employment in manufacturing



Decline in percentage points

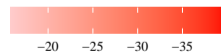
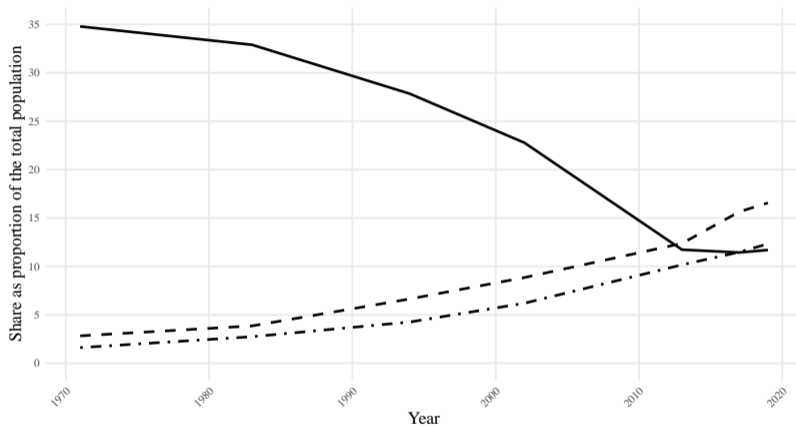


Figure: Decline vote share of the SPÖ



# Trends in key socio-demographic variables



Socio-demographic variable:

- · · Share of highest education: university
- Share of persons employed in secondary sector
- - - Share of population without citizenship

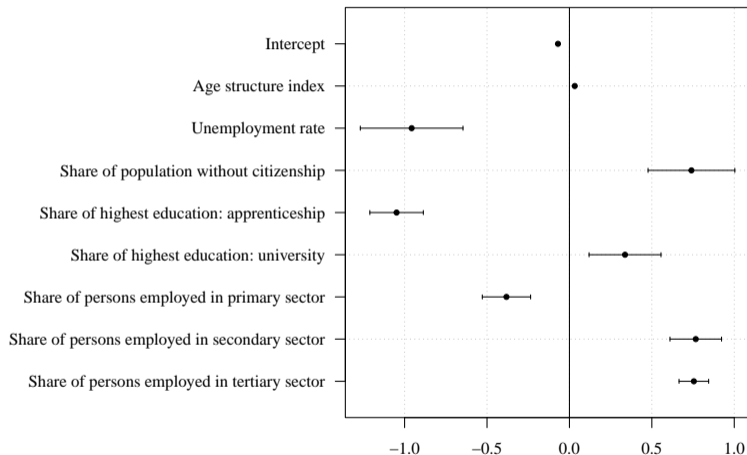
$$\Delta Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta \Delta \mathbf{X}_{it} + \Delta \epsilon_{it}$$

- First differences estimation
- $T = 7$  (1971 - 2019)
- 116 districts
- Fixed effects at district level
- Robust clustered standard errors

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# Regression coefficient estimates in percentage point changes



# Hypotheses

$H_1$ : A **decline** in employment in the manufacturing sector in a district leads to a **decline** in the SPÖ's vote share. ✓

$H_2$ : An **increase** in the level of education in a district leads to an **increase** in the SPÖ's share of the vote. ✓

$H_3$ : An **increase** in the proportion of the population without citizenship in a district leads to a **decline** in the electoral success of the SPÖ. ✗

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# Conclusion

## Negative effects:

- Increase in unemployment
- Decline in employment in the secondary sector

## Positive effects:

- Increase in employment in the tertiary sector
- Increase in education
- Increase in the share of population without citizenship

- Social democratic parties had to broaden their electorate in a post-industrial society
- Increasing importance of the GAL-TAN dimension

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# Bibliography I

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