

Séminaire general du 06 novembre 2018

Cognitive perspectives on the effect of threats on voting preferences

For decades, observational works have demonstrated that political preferences vary systematically with environmental harshness. For instance, in times of high economic threat, individuals prefer stronger leaders and dangerous worldviews correlate with right-wing authoritarianism. In the past few years, cognitive scientists have further confirmed this association by showing that threatening scenarios are associated with a preference for more masculine, more dominant and less trustworthy leaders. These results suggest that leader preferences are notably guided by a cognitive mechanism responding to threat signals. In this talk, I will present data collected in children and in a representative sample of the French population confirming this idea. Based on these new results and on an extensive review of the literature, I then will propose a theoretical model to explain the effect of threats on voting preferences.