

**Title:** False narratives and political mobilization (joint with Kfir Eliaz and Simone Galperti)

**Abstract:**

We present an equilibrium model of politics as a battle between narratives over public opinion. We conceptualize narratives as models that attribute a commonly valued outcome to (potentially spurious) postulated causes. When these models are quantified against empirical observations, they generate a belief over the outcome as a function of its postulated causes. In our model, a political platform consists of a policy, a coalition of social groups having diverse intrinsic attitudes to policies, and a narrative. Coalition members share a belief that is induced by their common narrative. The strength of the coalition's mobilization depends on the intensity of its members' belief and their intrinsic attitudes to the policy. In equilibrium, only platforms that generate the maximal total mobilization prevail. Our equilibrium characterization demonstrates how false narratives can be detrimental for the common good, and how political fragmentation leads to their proliferation. The false narratives that emerge in equilibrium attribute good outcomes to the exclusion of collections of social groups from ruling coalitions.