Immigration and the Polarization of American Politics

In this talk, I will present two ongoing projects on immigration and the polarization of American politics. The first part (co-authored with Axel Dreher, Sarah Langlotz and Christopher Parsons), which will constitute the majority of the talk, provides causal evidence showing that migration increased the polarization of politicians campaigning for the House of Representatives between 1992 and 2016. Our polarization measures derive from ideology data based on 3 million campaign contributions. Our shift-share estimates hold over the medium-run, although they wane over time. Our results remain similar when focusing specifically upon refugees, where we exploit the spatial and temporal variation stemming from the opening of refugee resettlement centers for the sake of causal identification.

The second part (co-authored with Tobias Grossbölting) explores the contribution of politicians' migration narratives to ideological shifts in response to migration. It exploits discontinuities in local political TV ads to disentangle changes to the narratives the population is exposed to from changes in reality.