

[Thomas Kurer](#)'s (UZH) Paper presentation at the IPerG: Feb. 27, 2025

Title: Can Government Policies Moderate Political Backlash to Structural Change? (co-authored with Reto Bürgisser, Silja Häusermann and Susana Tavares)

Abstract: This study examines whether government policies can mitigate the political backlash triggered by structural economic change. We focus on the French Professional Security Contract (CSP), a targeted policy intervention introduced in 2011 that combines material support with non-material elements like personalized counseling. Using comprehensive administrative data and original surveys, we analyze the policy's impact on political backlash, measured through radical right support, political distrust, political inefficacy, and dissatisfaction with democracy. Our findings reveal that the CSP significantly reduces radical right support in vulnerable municipalities and among individual beneficiaries. This effect stems from the program's dual mechanisms: material benefits alleviate economic hardship, while personalized engagement fosters social recognition and respect. We corroborate the relevance of this non-material mechanism with a unique study among previous CSP beneficiaries. Our paper has profound policy implications: Mainstream governments can design interventions to counter political backlash and hence possess more leeway than often assumed. By thoughtfully combining material and non-material benefits from a standard policy toolbox, targeted programs can strengthen democratic cohesion in the face of disruptive structural change.