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July 7, 2020

Prof. Thomas Douenne
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AEJPol-2020-0092.R1 “Yellow Vests, Pessimistic Beliefs, and Carbon Tax Aversion”

Dear Prof. Douenne,

Thank you for submitting the first revision your paper “Yellow Vests, Carbon Tax Aversion, and Biased Beliefs” now titled “Yellow Vests, Pessimistic Beliefs, and Carbon Tax Aversion,” to the *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*.

I carefully read the revision. I thought the revision was reasonably responsive to the comments of the referees and myself, but that it still needs a decent amount of work to get it up to the standards of *AEJ Policy*. I am willing to consider another revision of the paper. In that revision, please respond to the following comments:

1. Exposition

Quality of exposition has improved but remains an issue. I tried to help you by including lots of expositional comments in the PDF of your paper, but frankly, my editorial role is about scientific content not quality of exposition. Please really work on further improving the quality of exposition. I did not have the time to point out every issue with the exposition, so you need to do more than just the things that I pointed out, but hopefully my comments give you some guidance of the direction in which you need to move.

I still had trouble understanding what variable (measured when in the survey) you were discussing at various points in the paper. You have a somewhat complicated experiment, so you need to be extra clear both in your description of it and when you discuss results based on it. My comments in the PDF of your paper point to some of the instances that I thought were most unclear, but I think there is more you can do beyond the comments I made in order to make the exposition more transparent.

I appreciate that you had your paper edited by a professional English-language editor. However, there were still many things in the paper that this editor did not notice or correct. You might want to have the revision edited by a different editor, and ideally one that is a native English speaker. I understand the challenges of writing in a foreign language all too well; still, if the article is well written, it will be read more widely and have greater impact. So, I think there is a long-run payoff to investing in the quality of exposition.

Please carefully proofread the PDF of the revised paper before you send it in. I found too many things you should have caught yourselves.

2. Focus on the causal effects

The most interesting and credible part of your paper is when you show how your randomized interventions affect beliefs about and support for tax & dividend policies. I would like you to focus more on these causal estimates. In particular:

- a. It is fine to have a short section (#3) that describes the beliefs. This is valuable background information, but not really a reason for publishing the article; we don't publish opinion polls. The same goes for correlates of initial beliefs. Please keep this relatively short and limit the speculation on reasons behind the correlations.
- b. When looking at determinants of beliefs in Section 4, please focus on the causal estimates (the ones that will be the 1st stage in Section 5). You can keep the material on asymmetric updating, but please be very clear that this is not causal evidence, because the feedback on gain/loss that you provide is not randomized.
- c. Please cut Sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4. This all just correlational and the interpretation is mostly speculative. Instead, you can have just a few lines in Section 4.1.2. under the heading "Motivated reasoning" that describe the nature of heterogeneity in updating and that mentions that this updating is consistent with (or "fits well with") the motivated reasoning hypothesis. Still, please make clear it could also be consistent with other hypotheses, for example, supporters of the Yellow Vests could have more distrust. The heterogeneity tables can go to the online appendix.

3. Length

The conclusion currently ends at the top of page 42 (using our numbering). Please shorten the paper so that the conclusion ends on or before page 39 (using our numbering), keeping the same formatting and the same size of figures, etc. In your shortening, please focus on removing material that is speculative or correlational. I don't think you need to shorten your description of your survey or the methodology used. Parts of those might need to be longer to improve clarity. I also thought the introduction and conclusion were appropriate in terms of length.

As noted above, I put many suggestions in the PDF of your manuscript using the comment function. I assume you will implement them all, unless I explicitly said I left it up to you. For those that you do not implement, please let me know in your response letter why you did not do so (there may be a good reason; e.g., I might have missed something). You do not need to respond in your response letter to the comments in the PDF that you implemented.

I am looking forward to reading the revised version of your paper and your detailed response letters to the comments noted above. Please submit the revision within six months at the latest.

Sincerely,

Erzo F.P. Luttmer
Editor, *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*

To revise your manuscript, log into <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/aej-policy> and enter your Author Center, where you will find your manuscript title listed under "Manuscripts with Decisions." Under "Actions," click on "Create a Revision." Your manuscript number has been appended to denote a revision.

You will be unable to make your revisions on the originally submitted version of the manuscript. Instead, revise your manuscript using a word processing program and save it as a PDF on your computer.

Once the revised manuscript is prepared, you can upload the PDF and submit it through your Author Center.

In addition to your manuscript, please prepare a separate anonymous PDF detailing your responses to the referees. Please also prepare a letter to the editor (in PDF format) detailing the changes you made in the revised manuscript. Be as specific as possible in your response to the review(s) and letter to the editor.

All submissions, including revisions, must be accompanied by a Disclosure Statement (www.aeaweb.org/aea_journals/AEA_Disclosure_Policy.pdf). This is applicable even when the authors have no relevant interests to disclose. Authors will need to provide a separate Disclosure Statement for each coauthor at the time of submission. The statements will also need to disclose whether IRB approval was obtained for the project, and if not, state the reason(s). Submissions that do not include the statements will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed. Please upload disclosure statements in Step 5 of the submission process for original submissions and Step 6 for revisions.

Also, please be reminded of the American Economic Journal: Economic Policy policy on data posting:

“It is the policy of the American Economic Journal: Economic Policy to publish papers only if the data used in the analysis are clearly and precisely documented and readily available to any researcher for purposes of replication. Authors of accepted papers that contain empirical work, simulations, or experimental work must provide to the journal, prior to publication, the data, programs, and other details of the computations sufficient to permit replication.”

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Because we are trying to facilitate timely publication of manuscripts submitted to the American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, your revised manuscript should be uploaded as soon as possible. If it is not possible for you to submit your revision in a reasonable amount of time, we may have to consider your paper as a new submission.

Once again, thank you for submitting your manuscript to the American Economic Journal: Economic Policy and I look forward to receiving your revision.