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Social representations of the euro in Austria

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Abstract

In summer 1997, a survey on attitudes and social representations of the single European currency was conducted in Austria on a sample of 534 respondents. Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire on economic expectations and psychological aspects relating to the change of the national currencies to the single European currency. In addition to the standard questionnaire distributed in all 15 EU member states (Müller-Peters et al., 1998). Explaining attitudes towards the cure. Design of a cross-national study. Journal of Economic Psychology 19, 663-680), subjects in Austria were asked to indicate what they freely associated with the term "European single currency" and to evaluate their own associations. On the basis of individuals' attitudes towards the *euro*, the total sample was divided into five sub-samples of (a) strong opponents of the euro, (b) moderate opponents, (c) neutral or indifferent respondents, (d) moderate supporters, and (e) strong supporters. Social representations of these sub-samples were then analysed. Firstly, frequencies of associations within the five groups were investigated by correspondence analysis. It was found that opponents associated mainly negative feelings with the euro, thinking of currency instability and financial losses in conjunction with it. Moreover, strong euro opponents feared a loss of national autonomy and the unjust distribution of EU-related benefits and costs. Supporters, on the other hand, most frequently mentioned the facilitation of tourism and trading opportunities. Comparability of prices and incomes across Europe and the stimulation of the national economies were other frequently mentioned positive consequences. Secondly, sequences of associations were analysed. Four groups showed a tendency to more extreme emotions, that is, positive or negative,

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at the beginning of the association process with a shift towards neutral associations after their initial associations. The belief in a stronger European identity and a threat to Austrian identity, respectively, proved to be a relevant cause for subjective support of or opposition to the euro. Moderate opposition seems to be related to anticipated financial restrictions, both at the individual and the national level. © 1998 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Euro; Social representations; Attitudes; Money

1. Introduction

Surveys conducted in Austria in 1997 and early 1998 indicate that euro-supporters and opponents are roughly balanced: In winter 1997/98 the Eurobarometer (48, 1998) showed that about 44% of all Austrians were in favour of the single European currency, while 43% were against it. Despite a great awareness of the distributions of supporters and opponents all over Europe, little knowledge exists on the determinants of attitudes towards the euro.

Besides expectations based on well-founded arguments, strong emotions determine peoples' attitudes towards the euro. The information about the possible consequences of changing from national European currencies presented by politicians, economists, and journalists is contradictory. While some experts emphasise positive consequences from the introduction of the euro predicting that economic performance in Europe and individual affluence will increase, other experts foresee deterioration of unemployment rates, cuts in welfare and social security, and growing economic gaps within the member states of the EU. Contradictory information frequently leads to uncertainty which in turn stimulates public debates and heated discussions on the euro. The less concrete the information and certainty about the consequences of these changes, the greater the space for emotional response. Collective myths, fear and hope grow and begin to take precedence over individuals' knowledge and evaluations of the euro.

The development of individual ideas and attitudes towards the euro as well as collective knowledge and evaluation of the single European currency may successfully be studied by examining the social representations related to them. Social representations are defined as ideas, thoughts, images, and knowledge about a "social object", i.e. a subject matter of social interest such as the euro (Moscovici, 1981, 1984). They constitute the commonly held

communication and behaviour. Social representations integrate individual experiences while at the same time presenting social norms, values, and knowledge of the collective involved. If individuals lack information and experience about a new social object, it is social knowledge communicated mainly by mass media and through discussions with others which influences the generation of individuals' concepts and determines their attitudes.

Attitudes towards the euro – conceived as individual expressions of support or opposition – are interrelated to social representations of the new currency (Jaspars and Fraser, 1984). Attitudes and social representations are interrelated because of overlapping contents and evaluations (Moliner and Tafani, 1997). While social representations encompass social and culture-based knowledge concerning a social object – such as the euro – and are mutually generated by social discourse and shared by the members of a social category, attitudes are individual evaluations (Allport, 1935) of a social object based on social representations. For a better understanding of the roots of attitudes towards the euro, it is therefore useful to investigate social representations.

Social representations are a means of constructing and understanding social reality. The generation of social representations follows the principles of (a) anchoring and (b) objectification. First, new social objects are linked by individuals and groups to already existing social representations. Anchoring results in a comparison of information on new phenomena, such as the euro, with the contents of existing representations. By linking a new object to pre-existing social representations, the new and unfamiliar phenomenon becomes familiar (Moscovici, 1984; see also Wagner, 1994). Linking or classification follows the principles of subjective similarity, whereby the content and evaluation of the already existing representation have impacts on the assessment of the new and unfamiliar object. The euro, for instance, might be assessed negatively if it is linked to experiences with currency conversions or reforms which occurred as a consequence of high inflation rates during World War II. Linking the euro to tourism and international travel experiences might result in positive evaluations of the new currency. After these classification processes, the new phenomenon can be named which facilitates social discourse about the new social object (Moscovici, 1984).

The second principle is objectification which connotes the process in which "(...) abstract notions, ideas and images are transformed into concrete and objective common-sense realities" (Augoustinos and Walker, 1995, p. 139). Contradictory information is reshaped and the new representation becomes more consistent and simplified. One form of objectification is personification, namely, linking the social object to a person or group. The euro, for example

might be associated with the European Commission or with Europeans. Figuration constitutes another form of objectification: The social object is depicted and symbolised by a concrete, predominantly metaphorical image. In the case of the euro, pictures of the new notes and coins may function as symbols, just as lakes of milk and mountains of butter symbolise the European Union for many (Moscovici and Hewstone, 1983). Augoustinos and Walker (1995) have coined the term ontologizing as a third form of objectification, describing it as a process in which abstract concepts are assigned physical properties.

Social representations are generated and shaped by social discourse and are therefore in constant flux. According to Moscovici (1984, p. 13) "...they lead a life of their own, circulate, merge, attract and repel each other, and give birth to new representations, while old ones die out...". According to Abric (1993) the structure of social representations consists of central and peripheral elements. Central elements can be conceived of as a central core which expresses the general meaning of social representations. The central core or nucleus (e.g., de Rosa, 1995) is rather stable and is shared by most of the members of a collective. Central elements are surrounded by peripheral elements specific to only parts of the collective or only to individuals. Peripheral elements are more context-dependent, have impacts on position or actions towards the object and are less stable than central elements, and are therefore more subject to change when new information is processed.

The concept of social representations is broad and often criticised as vague and boundary-less (Farr, 1993). The advantage of the concept, however, is that it allows one to detect thoughts and myths, images and ideas which underlie attitudes towards the euro, expressed by individuals at a specific moment, and eventually changed when new information is integrated in social representations about the new currency.

The present study aims to describe the social representations of people opposing the euro and those supporting it, respectively. First, attitudes of a representative sample of Austrians are measured. In a second step, the sample is subdivided into five subgroups of strong opponents, moderate opponents, neutral or indifferent respondents, moderate supporters, and strong supporters of the euro. Thirdly, free associations with the term "European single currency" are analysed by subgroups, in order to detect underlying representations of different attitudes of the subgroups. Free associations are frequently used to assess social representations (Wagner et al., 1996; Vergès et al., 1996). Moreover, by analysing association sequences, aspects of the structure of social representations should become apparent

This last aspect, however, must be treated with caution. Methods for analysing content and structure of social representations, specifically peripheral and central elements, range from experimental designs to nonreactive methods, such as content analyses or word associations (Doise et al., 1993). Following the work of Vergès (Vergès et al., 1994), the structure of social representations was investigated by analysing sequences of associations and relative frequencies of associations.

2. Method

2.1. Respondents

A representative sample of 534 Austrian completed a questionnaire on attitudes towards the euro and related economic expectations and psychological aspects. While this questionnaire was distributed in all 15 countries of the EU, the Austrian version also included a section on free associations towards the euro. Only 419 persons answered the association section, whereas 115 refused to do so. Table 1 shows the distribution of demographic characteristics, for the total sample, those who responded to the association section, and those who did not do so. It was no surprise that the individuals responding to the association task were of higher socio-economic status than those refusing to do so: Educational level ($\chi^2(df=4) = 35.70, p < 0.01$), current occupation ($\chi^2(df=5) = 18.48, p < 0.01$), and personal income ($\chi^2(df=4) = 16.25, p < 0.01$) were significantly different in both groups. The results presented below may therefore not be representative of the Austrian population as a whole but display social representations of higher status individuals. There were no differences in attitudes towards the euro between the groups ($t(531) = -1.36, p > 0.05$) or towards the European Union ($t(524) = 1.43, p > 0.05$).

2.2. Material

Besides the questionnaire used in all 15 EU-countries, in the beginning of the questionnaire free associations towards the euro were collected by using a modified version of the associative network technique (de Rosa, 1995). The stimulus word "European single currency" was presented on a single page followed by ten lines on which respondents could write their free associations. Respondents listed their thoughts about the euro and indicated

Table 1
Sample description

Sample description	Total sample (n = 534)			Participants responding to the association task (n = 419)			Participants refusing to respond to the association task (n = 115)		
	M	SD	f (%)	M	SD	f (%)	M	SD	f (%)
Age	44.00	17.90		42.91	17.72		47.90	17.84	
Sex									
Female	277		51.8	215		51.3	62		53.9
Male	257		48.1	204		48.7	53		46.1
Education									
Primary school	54	10.2	10.2	31	7.5	7.5	23	20.0	20.0
Vocational school	231	43.7	43.7	167	40.3	40.3	64	55.7	55.7
Secondary school	74	14.0	14.0	68	16.4	16.4	6	5.2	5.2
College	136	25.7	25.7	116	28.0	28.0	20	17.4	17.4
University	34	6.4	6.4	32	7.7	7.7	2	1.7	1.7
Occupation									
Self-employed	21	3.9	3.9	13	3.1	3.1	8	7.0	7.0
Employed	251	47.2	47.2	203	48.7	48.7	48	41.7	41.7
Unemployed	13	2.4	2.4	12	2.9	2.9	1	0.9	0.9
Housewife	74	13.9	13.9	53	12.7	12.7	21	18.3	18.3
Student	52	9.8	9.8	49	11.8	11.8	3	2.6	2.6
Retired	121	22.7	22.7	87	20.9	20.9	34	29.6	29.6
Living environment									
Country	257	48.3	48.3	191	45.8	45.8	66	57.4	57.4
Town	142	26.7	26.7	116	27.8	27.8	26	22.6	22.6
City	133	25.0	25.0	110	26.4	26.4	23	20.0	20.0

Table 1 (Continued)

Personal monthly net-income (ecu)	Total sample (n = 534)			Participants responding to the association task (n = 419)			Participants refusing to respond to the association task (n = 115)		
	M	SD	f (%)	M	SD	f (%)	M	SD	f (%)
Less than 600	104	21.3	19.5	88	22.6	21.1	16	16.2	16.2
600 to 999	113	23.2	21.2	77	19.8	18.4	36	36.4	36.4
1000 to 1499	169	34.6	31.3	134	34.4	31.9	35	35.4	35.4
1500 to 2099	73	15.0	13.5	66	17.0	15.7	7	7.1	7.1
More than 2100	29	5.9	5.4	24	6.2	5.7	5	5.1	5.1
Missing	46	-	-	30	-	-	16	-	-
Household monthly net-income (ecu)									
Less than 1000	76	15.2	14.1	54	13.5	12.9	22	22.0	22.0
1000 to 1599	164	32.8	30.7	127	31.8	30.3	37	37.0	37.0
1600 to 2299	140	28.0	26.4	116	29.0	27.4	24	24.0	24.0
2300 to 3099	78	15.6	14.6	66	16.5	15.6	12	12.0	12.0
More than 3100	42	8.4	7.7	37	9.3	8.9	5	5.0	5.0
Missing	34	-	-	19	-	-	15	-	-
Attitudes towards the euro	3.15	1.20		3.19	1.17		3.02	1.29	
Towards the EU	3.36	1.05		3.40	1.05		3.24	1.02	

Note: Attitudes towards the euro were measured by seven items included in the questionnaire used in all EU-member states. Individual responses - ranging from 1 = strong opposition to 5 = strong support for the euro - were averaged. Attitudes towards the EU were measured by a single item (5-point answering scale with 1 = against EU to 5 = in favour of the EU).

Table 2 Categories of associations and frequencies by sub-groups

Associative categories	f	Strong euro opponents (n=69)				Moderate euro opponents (n=59)				Neutral or indifferent euro supporters (n=82)				Moderate euro supporters (n=123)				Strong euro supporters (n=86)			
		f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f		
<i>Positively evaluated associations on an individual level:</i>																					
11. Facilitation of tourism	175	10	17	37	61	50	38.13**	10	1	1	1	3	4	2.76	15	9	37.85*	34	18	14.42**	
12. Transparency of prices, income	93	1	9	14	35	34	37.85*	62	3	6	9	26	18	14.42**	13	6	37.85*	34	18	14.42**	
13. Positive feelings	28	0	3	5	12	8	8.04	28	0	3	5	12	8	8.04	14	5	16.66**	16	14	12.88*	
14. Stronger European identity	38	2	1	1	13	14	12.88*	38	2	1	1	13	14	12.88*	21	6	16.66**	16	14	12.88*	
21. Facilitation of trade	124	6	8	25	47	38	34.95**	124	6	8	25	47	38	34.95**	21	6	16.66**	16	14	12.88*	
22. Stimulation of national economy	72	3	8	6	32	23	26.41**	72	3	8	6	32	23	26.41**	22	7	16.65**	8	8	6.21	
23. Political unification of Europe	43	1	4	10	14	14	10.48*	43	1	4	10	14	14	10.48*	32	7	16.65**	8	8	6.21	
24. Stability of currency	38	2	1	7	12	16	16.66**	38	2	1	7	12	16	16.66**	32	7	16.65**	8	8	6.21	
25. Europe as competitor of USA, Asia	38	2	1	8	13	14	12.88*	38	2	1	8	13	14	12.88*	32	7	16.65**	8	8	6.21	
26. Stimulation of labour markets	13	0	0	5	5	3	7.00	13	0	0	5	5	3	7.00	31	6	16.20**	2	2	16.20**	
<i>Negatively evaluated associations on an individual level:</i>																					
31. Negative feelings	103	27	22	25	18	11	27.57**	103	27	22	25	18	11	27.57**	31	6	16.20**	2	2	16.20**	
32. Fear of financial loss	84	23	15	17	15	7	16.65**	84	23	15	17	15	7	16.65**	32	7	16.65**	8	8	6.21	
33. Adaptation problems	59	10	8	18	15	8	16.65**	59	10	8	18	15	8	16.65**	33	8	16.65**	8	8	6.21	
34. Public economy measures	37	12	4	7	12	2	11.25*	37	12	4	7	12	2	11.25*	34	6	3.03	5	5	3.03	
35. Threat of national identity	31	7	6	7	6	5	3.03	31	7	6	7	6	5	3.03	35	6	3.03	5	5	3.03	
36. Lack of information	31	6	3	14	6	2	16.20**	31	6	3	14	6	2	16.20**	36	6	16.20**	2	2	16.20**	
<i>Negatively evaluated associations on a national level:</i>																					
41. Instability of currency	118	28	23	25	27	15	16.12**	118	28	23	25	27	15	16.12**	41	8	5.98	9	11	8.31	
42. Conversion problems	63	8	7	18	21	9	5.98	63	8	7	18	21	9	5.98	42	8	5.98	9	11	8.31	
43. Increase of unemployment	51	14	9	5	12	11	8.31	51	14	9	5	12	11	8.31	43	14	8.31	11	11	8.31	
44. Procedural and distributive injustice	43	16	7	11	7	2	22.24**	43	16	7	11	7	2	22.24**	44	16	22.24**	2	2	22.24**	
45. Decrease of national autonomy	40	16	12	7	4	1	35.57**	40	16	12	7	4	1	35.57**	45	16	35.57**	1	3	8.37	
46. Economic disadvantages	22	8	4	4	3	3	8.37	22	8	4	4	3	3	8.37	46	8	8.37	3	3	8.37	
47. Wrong timing	14	4	2	4	4	0	4.86	14	4	2	4	4	0	4.86	47	4	4.86	0	0	4.86	
51. Neutral descriptions	59	3	3	12	28	13	17.11**	59	3	3	12	28	13	17.11**	51	3	17.11**	13	13	17.11**	

Note: Asterisks indicate levels of significance: * = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01.

whether the named associations were positive, negative, or neutral. They were free to list one to ten associations.

2.3. Procedure

Data were collected by a market research institute in the summer of 1997. In all, over 1000 questionnaires were sent out with a request to complete the questionnaire and return it in the envelope enclosed with the questionnaire. The return rate of 56% was high and may partly be explained by the initiation of public information campaigns at the time of data collection and high public interest in the topic.

3. Results and discussion

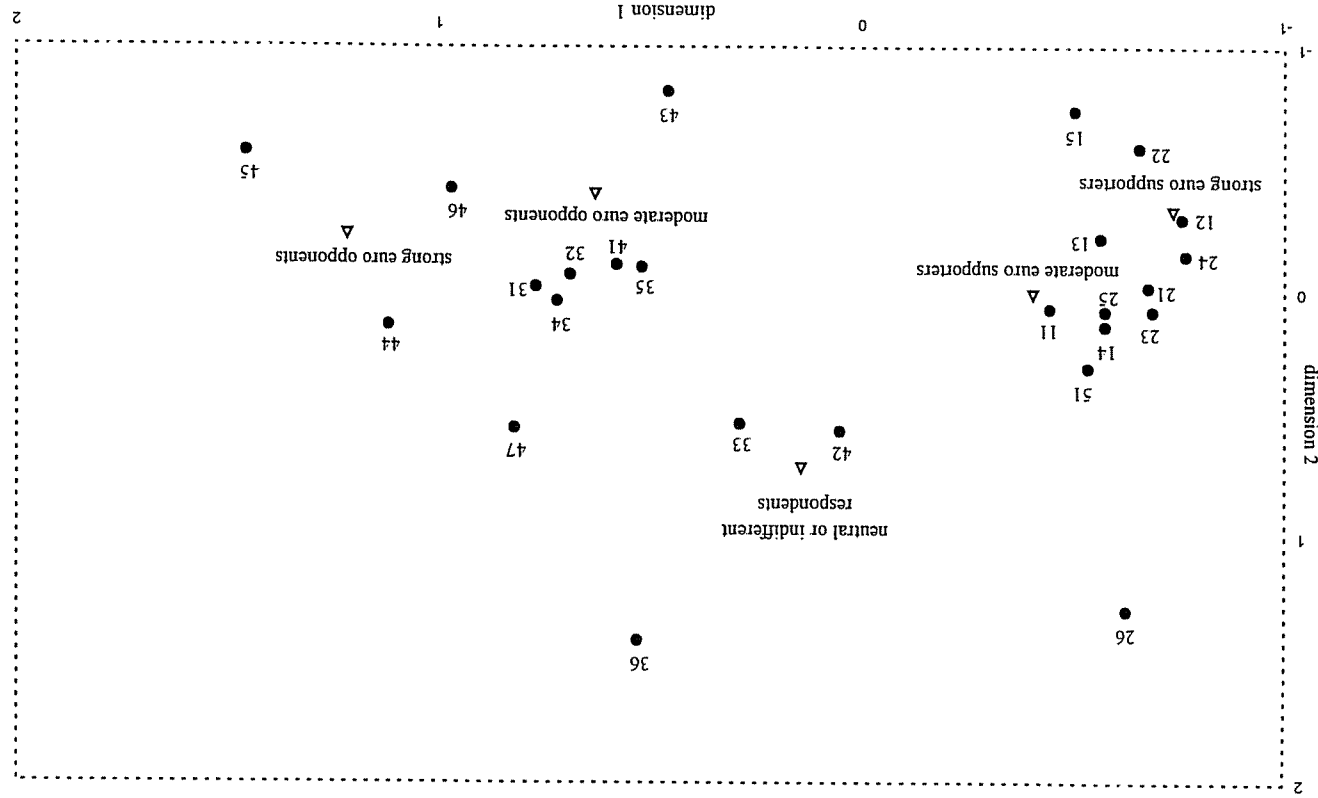
3.1. Content of associations

In total, 1900 associations were established with the stimulus word "euro"; 1229 of these associations were different. On average, about four to five associations were listed by each participant. Four independent raters classified the associations according to a categorisation scheme consisting of 25 categories which was pre-established by the authors. The scheme was developed on the basis of two dimensions, one distinguishing between positively and negatively worded associations, and the other distinguishing between associations related to individual and national aspects. Table 2 presents all the categories. The average interrater reliability of the four raters was satisfactory at $\kappa = 0.66$, ranging from 0.54 to 0.79.

Table 2 shows that the facilitation of tourism and trade was most often mentioned among the positively evaluated associations. Negative associations on the individual level were most often related to emotions, such as uncertainty, fear, or anger. At the national level, instability of the new currency constituted the most frequently mentioned disadvantage of the euro. Threat to Austrian identity and the generation of a new European identity were rather rare.

Individual attitudes towards the euro were computed on the basis of seven questions included in the general questionnaire described in the introductory chapter of this journal issue (Müller-Peters et al., 1998). Respondents holding attitudes lower than 1.8 on the five-point attitude scale were designated as strong opponents of the euro; those with attitudes rated at between 1.81 and

Fig. 1. Results of correspondence analysis of frequencies of associative categories by sub-groups. Note: Numbers refer to associative categories listed in Table 2. Numbers from 11 to 15 indicate positive association on individual level, from 21 to 26 positive categories on national level, from 31 to 36 negative, individual categories and from 41 to 47 negative categories on national level.



2.6 were defined as moderate opponents. Attitude indexes between 2.61 and 3.4 indicated indifference or neutral attitudes. People with attitude indexes higher than 3.4 and lower than 4.21 were moderate supporters, and those with higher indexes were designated as strong supporters. A significant correlation was found between attitudes as measured by seven items in the questionnaire and the average subjective evaluation of associations (negative, neutral, or positive; $r(393) = 0.67$; $p < 0.01$). Frequency distributions of the associative categories across the five sub-samples were analysed by chi-square statistics. Frequencies and significant differences in the frequencies of associations between the five subgroups are presented in Table 2. The frequency table (five subgroups by 25 association categories) was included in a correspondence analysis (ANACOR; Greenacre, 1993) which yielded two factors explaining 82% and 11% of the variance, respectively. The graphical result of the correspondence analysis is presented in Fig. 1.

The first dimension clearly distinguishes between euro supporters and opponents, respectively. The second dimension describes neutral or indifferent respondents. The groups of euro opponents are positioned closely together in the association categories "injustice", "decrease of national autonomy", and "economic disadvantages". These categories, representing the most negative evaluations, refer to negative emotions and thoughts with regard to the relationship between Austria and the EU. In contrast, groups of euro supporters most often mentioned economic and political advantages related to the single European currency: "stability of the new currency", "financial transparency across Europe", "stimulation of the national economies", and "Europe as a political union". People holding neutral or indifferent attitudes claimed not to be informed about the currency conversion and its consequences, and foresaw difficulties with regard to the public process of changing the money and adapting to the euro.

3.2. Sequences of associations

Sequences of associations were analysed in order to detect structural aspects of social representations held by euro opponents and supporters, respectively. Subjective evaluations of associations (negative, neutral, or positive) were averaged for the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth to tenth associations. Table 3 shows the average subjective value of associations per associative step and subgroup. Also the number of participants providing one, two, and more associations is presented. The results show that immediately after being confronted with the stimulus word euro, respondents

Table 3
Evaluative aspect of sequences of associations by sub-groups

	Strong euro opponents		Moderate euro opponents		Neutral or indifferent respondents		Moderate euro supporters		Strong euro supporters						
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD					
1st association	-0.81	0.57	62	-0.43	0.87	53	0.08	0.94	77	0.59	0.74	116	0.76	0.60	83
2nd association	-0.76	0.64	54	-0.42	0.91	50	0.15	0.95	73	0.42	0.82	112	0.63	0.75	79
3rd association	-0.55	0.78	51	-0.49	0.83	43	-0.19	0.94	69	0.09	0.91	96	0.47	0.84	68
4th association	-0.56	0.81	36	-0.45	0.81	31	-0.18	0.94	55	0.06	1.03	78	0.38	0.83	55
5th to 10th association	-0.39	0.78	20	-0.50	0.65	21	-0.20	0.64	40	0.06	0.66	51	0.28	0.72	39
r (S)	0.96**			-0.75			-0.83			-0.91*			-0.99**		

Note: Correlations (r) were computed between average evaluations of associations at each step of the associative process and step of association.

spontaneously listed polarised associations. With increasing reflection, more neutral associations followed. The only exception was the group of moderate euro opponents, who reported negative associations throughout the association process. Correlations between the average evaluation of associations and the step in the association process show a tendency towards more neutral associations over time (Table 3). This tendency was significant in three out of five subgroups.

Following Vergès (Vergès et al., 1994, 1996) medians of steps in the sequence and relative frequencies for each associative category were computed, separately for all subgroups (Fig. 2). Central elements of social representations are defined as elements mentioned by more than 20% of a subgroup. Elements constituting the periphery appear later in the sequence (Md > 2.5) and were expressed by less than 20% of a subgroup. Furthermore, a correspondence analysis on frequencies of associations by subgroup and step of association was computed. Medians of ranks and relative frequencies of associations specify intra-subgroups' characteristics, while results of correspondence analysis show differences between the subgroups. In the correspondence analysis, three dimensions were obtained, explaining 32%, 19%, and 11% of variance, respectively. The three-dimensional solution is presented in Fig. 3. Again, the first dimension represents the evaluation of the euro. The second and third dimensions are more difficult to label. Interpretation of the results of correspondence analysis follows the closeness of associative categories to the associative steps listed by the subgroups.

Opposition to the euro seems to be based on expected currency instability, fear of financial loss, negative feelings, and an anticipated decrease of national autonomy as central elements of the social representations. Moreover, strong opponents emphasise higher unemployment rates due to the unification of national currencies and unjust distribution of benefits and costs among EU member states. Moderate opponents name advantages for tourism as central elements. Peripheral elements differ between strong and moderate opponents. Threat to national identity, anticipated adaptation and conversion problems and finally tourism facilitations are mentioned by strong opponents, whereas moderate opponents focus on disadvantages and advantages for the national economy. Considering subgroups' differences as expressed in the correspondence analyses (Fig. 3), negative attitudes seem to be rooted in thoughts concerning mainly loss of national autonomy and injustice, thoughts which are closely related to perceived challenges to national identity. Moderately negative attitudes seem to be based on negative economic expectations both on a national and an individual level.

2. Sequences and relative frequencies of associative categories by sub-groups. Note: Md stands for Median and numbers refer to associative items listed in Table 2.

Subgroup	Step	Item	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Strong euro supporters (n=86, F=315)	1	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
	2	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	3	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	4	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	5	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
6	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
7	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
8	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
9	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
10	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
Moderate euro supporters (n=123, F=455)	1	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
	2	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	3	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	4	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	5	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
6	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
7	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
8	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
9	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
10	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
Neutral or indifferent respondents (n=82, F=306)	1	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
	2	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	3	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	4	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	5	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
6	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
7	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
8	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
9	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
10	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
Moderate euro opponents (n=59, F=187)	1	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
	2	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	3	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	4	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	5	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
6	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
7	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
8	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
9	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
10	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
Strong euro opponents (n=69, F=215)	1	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
	2	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	3	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	4	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
	5	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0
		13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0
6	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
7	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
8	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
9	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	
10	11. Tourism	1.0	1.0	
	13. Positive feelings	1.0	1.0	

("What do you associate with the euro?")

EURO

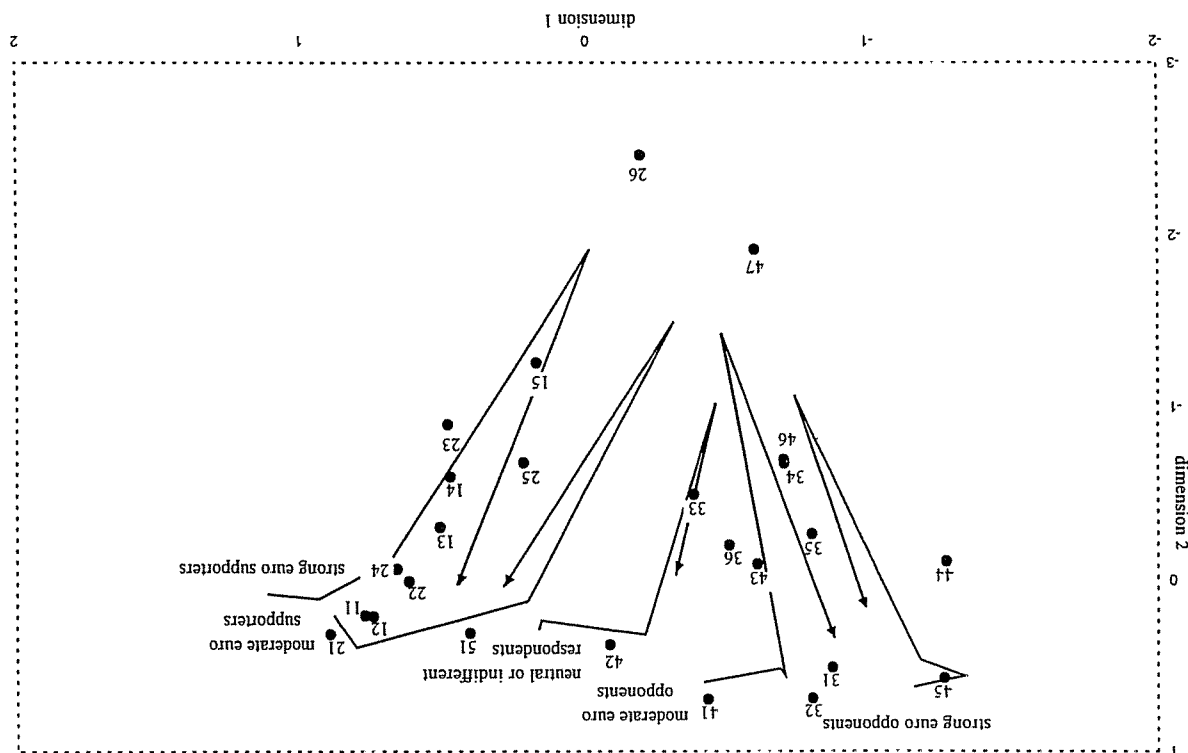


Fig. 3. Results of correspondence analysis of frequencies of sequence of associative categories by sub-groups. Note: Numbers refer to associative categories listed in Table 2. Numbers from 11 to 26 indicate positive association on individual level, from 21 to 26 positive categories on national level, from 31 to 36 negative, individual categories and from 41 to 47 negative categories on national level. Correspondence analysis based on a table cross-classifying associative categories (rows) and combinations of subgroup-association step (columns). Arrows indicate the association process of the five sub-groups from the first to the second, third, fourth, and fifth to tenth association (small arrows).

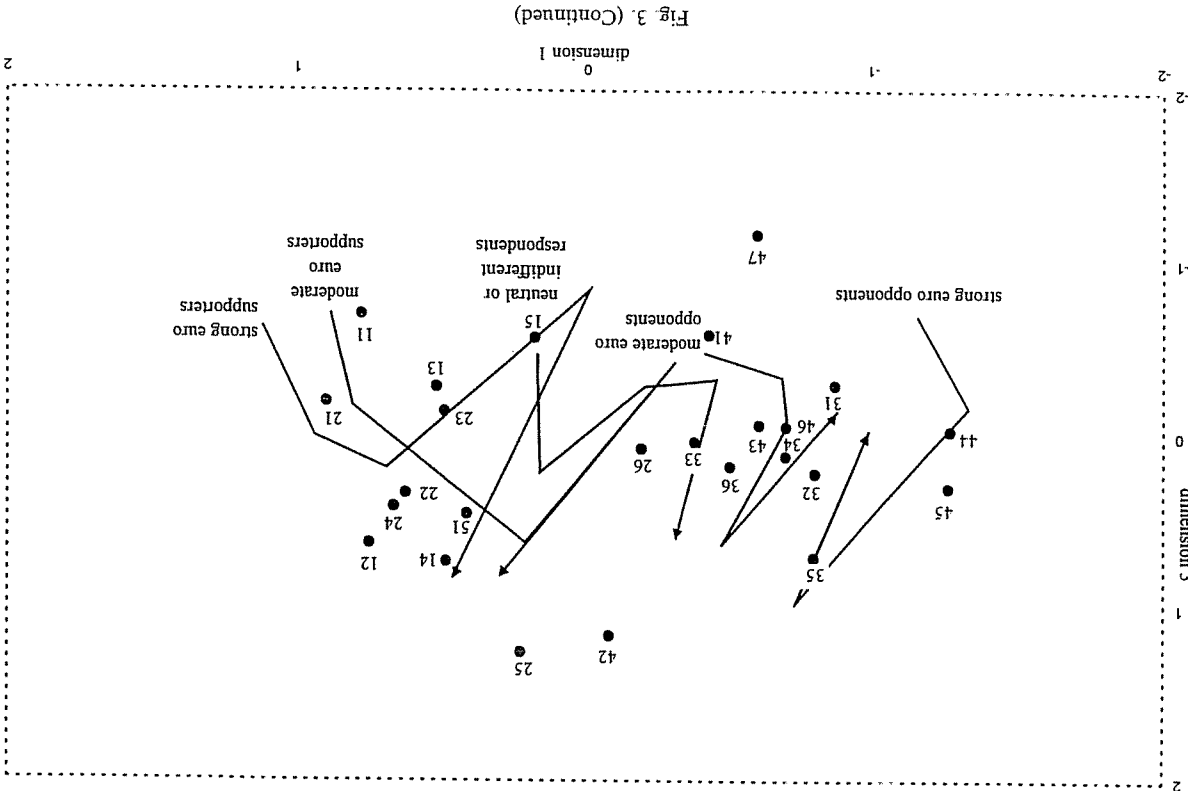


Fig. 3. (Continued)

Both, negative and positive consequences of the euro are central to the social representations held by neutral and indifferent respondents: Trade and tourism facilitations, fears of currency instability and financial loss, and problems concerning the change of currencies on national and individual level. Lack of information, perceived procedural and distributive injustice, hopes for political unification, and positive feelings can be considered as peripheral elements. In comparison to the other subgroups, only neutral or indifferent respondents indicated public costs and individual and national problems pertaining to the conversion of the national currencies to the euro as central elements of the euro.

Both moderate and strong supporters refer to the facilitation of trade and tourism, general mobility, transparency of prices across Europe, advantages for national economy, and positive feelings as central elements. While moderate supporters also integrate currency instability as a negative consequence of the euro in their social representation, strong supporters only mention positive aspects of the euro in the first place. Problems concerning the conversion to the new currency, positive consequences of a stronger Europe in the economic and political world and fear of losing money associated with negative feelings are mentioned by moderate euro supporters as peripheral elements. Strong supporters additionally name stability of currency and stimulation of the labour market as peripheral elements. In correspondence analysis more associative categories are grouped near the strong euro supporters, than Vergès intra-subgroup analysis would suggest. This stems from the fact that correspondence analysis depicts characteristic associative patterns of subgroups by neglecting absolute frequencies of associative categories listed by subgroups. Associative categories, such as stimulation of the Austrian economy, the stability of the euro, and the political advantages of European unification are mentioned in the beginning of the association process by strong euro supporters and seem to be therefore most typical associations of this subgroup. They then indicated the reduction of public debt as a positive consequence of the Maastricht Treaty, and finally ended by referring to the new European currency as a means of strengthening European identity.

4. Conclusion

Social representations are assumed to determine individuals' attitudes to-

opponents, neutral or indifferent respondents, and supporters of the single European currency are based on social representations which differ in content, evaluation, and structure. Moreover, it seems that central elements of social representations of the five subgroups are different, whereas peripheral elements are similar. While supporters of the euro are most likely to emphasise economic advantages for nations and individuals, opponents' attitudes seem to have a more emotional tone: Negative feelings, fear of losing money, unjust distribution of costs and benefits among the EU member states, and a perceived decrease in national autonomy and identity were the most frequent associations listed by opponents.

By comparing strong euro opponents and supporters, respectively, it became evident that extreme attitudes can be traced to individuals' preoccupations about national identity: Opponents claimed the euro would threaten Austrian identity while supporters held to the vision of a stronger Europe. Associations concerning national and European identity emerged only at the end of association processes. Identity issues therefore represent peripheral elements of social representations, which have impacts on the evaluation and future behaviour towards the euro. Associations about national and European identity did not come to mind immediately, but did arise just after the possible economic consequences of the euro frequently referred to in the mass media were expressed. Aside from economic expectations, positive or negative, and perceptions of fairness, other factors shaping people's attitudes towards the euro were psychological concerns about national identity and autonomy.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the associative technique used in the present study allowed not only the contents of social representations of five groups of people holding different attitudes towards the euro to be detected, but was also useful in discovering patterns in various aspects of the structure of social representations.

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