

# Bloodlines:

## National Border Crossings and Antisemitism in Weimar Germany\*

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## Abstract

This paper argues that national border crossings act as focal points for xenophobia. Two mechanisms converge to produce this pattern. First, when the nation-state is under pressure, border crossings make cross-national differences salient, producing a perceived link between international forces and socio-economic problems of vulnerable social classes. Second, border crossings come to symbolize international threats and attract aggressive nationalist mobilization by radical movements who frame ethnic outsiders as an international evil. In this distinct spatial landscape, ethnic outsiders become scapegoats for broader social problems among those losing social status. I develop my argument through the study of local variation in antisemitism in Weimar Germany before the Holocaust. Statistical analysis of Jewish bogeyman and an in-depth exploration of local reports on antisemitism reveal how pluralism in the Weimar Republic started eroding among members of the lower middle class living at the margins of the state. In doing so, I draw attention to the spatial sources of xenophobia and demonstrate that borders between nations activate borders within nations, shedding new light on the complicated relationship between pluralism and state formation.

**Keywords:** *Ethnic Conflict, Nationalism, Social Movements, Xenophobia, Borders.*

**Wordcount:** 14,497 words (Including Endnotes, Abstract and References).

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Studies of anti-immigrant mobilization in Western Europe (Koopmans and Olzak 2004), race relations in the US (Spilerman 1970; Olzak 1994; Tolnay and Beck 1995), Hindu-Muslim riots in South-East Asia (Varshney 2003; Biggs and Dhattiwala 2012; Wilkinson 2006; Brass 2011) and antisemitism in Central Europe (Charnysh 2015; Brustein 2003) all draw attention to how xenophobia manifests itself differently across space. Given this empirical regularity across the globe, it is hardly surprising that many have tried to formulate an explanation for spatial heterogeneity in resentment towards outsiders. Most of this scholarship highlights the importance of either political or economic threats in explaining xenophobic variation. On the political side of the spectrum, scholarship demonstrates how perceived political threats and instigation by movement leaders (Brass 2011; Wilkinson 2006) shape local variation in xenophobic conflict. Economic arguments emphasize instead the importance of scapegoating (Blalock 1982), a process through which outsiders are blamed for social disorganization or economic crisis in general (Blumer 1958; Olzak 1994; Bendix 1952) and among vulnerable social classes in particular (Lipset 1960).

Much of this work uses place as the unit of observation, treating locations as little containers that carry variables to be deployed for statistical analysis. In contrast, this paper highlights how place in and of itself (Logan 2012; Gieryn 2000; Garrido 2019) shapes xenophobia by coordinating collective sentiments (Simmel 1997) and altering the perception of social problems (Simmel 1994). To be more precise, I argue that when the nation-state is under pressure economically and politically, national border crossings - the physical spaces where people cross borders - become focal points for xenophobia, in particular for those who are losing social status.

Two converging mechanisms link national border crossings to fear of outsiders. First, a *perception mechanism* activates the internationalization of social problems. Border crossings make the nation visible and prime people to perceive international influences

on their lives (Pfaff 2006; Gellner 1964; Barth 2012). As such, border crossings produce an international lens through which local vulnerable groups conceive their social problems. This leads these groups to link their problems to *international* origins. Second, an *attraction mechanism* produces external radical nationalist mobilization. Border crossings often symbolize international threats and therefore attract radical nationalist movements who frame ethnic outsiders as responsible for international evil (Häkli 1998; Radcliffe 1998; Brubaker 1996). Whereas the latter mechanism intensifies the framing of ethnic outsiders as scapegoats for all international problems (Snow et al. 1986), the former mechanism links social problems towards to international origins in a way that makes these frames stick among those who are losing social status (McDonnell, Bail and Tavory 2017; Koopmans and Olzak 2004). Hence, it is the confluence of political and economic interactions in *a distinct spatial setting* that produces xenophobic hotbeds, revealing that the influence of political threats, movement instigation, economic discontent and social class on xenophobic discourse is conditional on its broader place within the nation (Schaeffer and Legewie 2016; Garrido 2019).

I develop this argument through a study of antisemitism in Weimar Germany. Out of dissatisfaction with existing measures of subnational antisemitism that rely heavily on extreme episodes of collective violence, I construct two new datasets that capture overtime and geographical variation in antisemitism. The first dataset builds on data collected by folklorists and captures antisemitism in 19,828 localities by looking at the prevalence of Jewish Bogeymen in *Kinderschreck* (*children's fright*), an oral tradition that deploys fear to induce obedience in children. The second dataset contains a coding of 2,283 antisemitic incidents culled from local reports compiled by the *Centralverein*, the largest secular Jewish organization in the Weimar Republic dedicated to monitoring and combatting the rise of anti-Jewish thought and behavior. While using two datasets assures the robustness of my findings, each of these datasets has different strengths; the former offers an overtime dimension and provides us with an opportunity to compare fine-grained variation in antisemitism before and after the introduction of national border

crossings, and the latter allows us to unpack the key processes and actors involved in the production of resentment towards Jews.

The empirical analysis is recast along the lines of Lipset's lower middle class thesis<sup>1</sup> which argues that small business owners and farmers were more likely to look for scapegoats as they were particularly affected by Weimar's political and economic problems (Lipset 1960). Caught between organized labor and capital, the lower middle classes saw their relative position deteriorating because they were both sellers and buyers on markets (Jensen-Butler 1976) who, in times of massive inflation, were incapable of setting prices of their own sales (Geiger 1930).

The Kinderschreck data shows that border crossings in Weimar Germany formed hotbeds of antisemitism after the nation-state was established and that this was particularly true for localities which were home to more small business owners and farmers. Reports from the Centralverein suggest that this is the case because border crossings operated as magnets for radical nationalists and activated resentment towards international influences among members of the lower middle class who were disproportionately suffering from the economic upheaval of the 1930s. Overtime, this local resentment and external nationalist mobilization converged, producing a fertile ground for the spread of Jewish scapegoating. This finding has important implications for the study of xenophobia because it shows that whether political mobilization, social economic problems or social class influence xenophobia is conditional on spatial position within the nation (Schaeffer and Legewie 2016; Garrido 2019), thereby specifying a spatial link between xenophobia and the rise of the nation-state (Wimmer 2002, 2012). It also reveals how ancient xenophobic tropes interact with contemporary spatial configurations to produce outbursts of hatred (Voigtländer and Voth 2012; Charnysh 2015).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In the next section, I explain why border crossings operate as focal points for xenophobic sentiments. I then give a very brief overview of social problems, antisemitism and border crossings in Weimar Germany before introducing the Kinderschreck data collected from Folklorist archives,

the incident data from the Centralverein and the operationalization of border crossings. The Kinderschreck data is analyzed in section five. I deploy spatial econometrics, a difference-in-differences design and exogenous variation in road construction to show that resentment towards Jews clustered around border crossings after the establishment of the nation-state. Section six contains the analysis of the Centralverein reports. A case study of the northwestern border, a region characterized by relative geopolitical stability, together with a more systematic statistical analysis of all antisemitic incidents reveal that resentful social classes and external nationalist movements turned border crossings into antisemitic hotbeds. The seventh section investigates the perception and attraction mechanisms more directly. It first shows that border crossing effects are stronger in regions with more vulnerable social groups. Through the construction of new collective action measures, the section also demonstrates that radical political organizations concentrated near border crossings while farmers and small business owners living nearby crossings were more likely to mobilize against international problems than their counterparts living in the interior of Germany. I conclude by discussing the generalizability and scope conditions as well as implications for the study of German history, antisemitism and ethnic relationships.

## 2 BORDERS CROSSINGS & XENOPHOBIA

Previous research on ethnic conflict (Olzak 1994; Blalock 1982), immigration (Koopmans and Olzak 2004) and antisemitism (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018) has identified several explanations for xenophobia that move beyond a straightforward link between minority group size and hostility. Intellectual diversity notwithstanding, two predominant themes that emerge from these literatures are the role of economic and political threats. These two strands of research provide the building blocks for the border crossing thesis articulated here.

Research on the economic logic of ethnic prejudice suggests that members of dominant

ethnic or racial groups tend to blame minorities in times of economic crisis or social disruption (Blumer 1958). Perception is key in this process (Belanger and Pinard 1991) as scapegoating is particularly prevalent among majority members who perceive themselves to be in competition with minorities over scarce resources such as jobs (Olzak 1994), or who view minorities as brokers between themselves and elites (Blalock 1982). In his lower middle class thesis, Lipset (1960) links these dynamics to class, arguing that scapegoating is a common strategy among vulnerable members of the lower middle class who are trapped between organized labor and large capital owners.

This approach dovetails well with historical scholarship on economic antisemitism in interwar Germany, which links antisemitism to economic modernization and crisis. The rise of capitalism, industry and liberalism emancipated the Jews economically, politically and socially. While Jewish social mobility elicited fear among Gentiles, their prominent position in finance produced resentment (Niewyk 2018). In line with Lipset's thesis it has been argued that the losers of industrial advancement, most prominently middle sized farmers and small business owners, harbored the strongest antisemitic resentment because they suffered the most from the economic upheaval of the 1930s (Loomis and Beegle 1946; Heberle 1962).

Work on political dynamics and xenophobia highlights the importance of electoral threats and subsequent instigation of ethnic rivalry by movement leaders. Again, perception is crucial to understanding this logic. In this view, minority groups will only become scapegoats for socio-economic problems if they are conceived of as posing an electoral threat to the political establishment or nation-state as a whole (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018). In these cases, majority members might produce outbursts of xenophobia either independently or under influence of the ideological frames, collective identities and mobilizing networks provided by movement entrepreneurs (Biggs and Dhattiwala 2012; Wilkinson 2006; Brass 2011). Empirical support for this political threat model has been found in a wide range of cases, including twentieth century antisemitism in Europe (Brustein 2003).

Overall the evidence regarding xenophobia and different types of ethnic threats is far from conclusive. In part, this is because most work in this vein is vague about how and when different threats are perceived as such (Belanger and Pinard 1991). A growing body of work tries to specify more refined conditions under which economic and political threats translate into resentment towards minorities (Schaeffer and Legewie 2016; Garrido 2019). I join this literature by conceptualizing how space and place condition the impact of economic and political threats on xenophobia by shaping the perception of social problems. In this way, I advance a spatial social analysis by considering the relative locations of places as variables (Logan 2012). Here, place and social processes are deeply intertwined, because place - defined as a fixed, unique and physically built location in the universe - is imbued with meaning and value. As I show, it is through social processes that locations like border crossings come to represent distinct forms of power, memory and identity (Gieryn 2000).

The work of Georg Simmel provides a useful starting point to understand how place can shape behavior (Garrido 2019). According to Simmel, fixed physical locations such as bridges, churches or doors shape social behavior a) through attraction and b) by shaping the perception of differences. First, place can organize collective sentiments by providing fixed points of orientation that act as magnets for collective action. Simmel gives the example of church chapels which become pivotal points for the formation of religious relationships, unleashing communal rather than isolating forces that transform believers into a collective of churchgoers (Simmel 1997). Second, fixed places also partition and connect separate spaces. This shapes perception by rendering the experience of difference more concrete and intense (Simmel 1994).

## 2.1 Attraction Mechanism: Radical Nationalist Mobilization

The attraction and perception mechanisms provided by Simmel seem to be particularly apt for the social influence of national border crossings, i.e. fixed, physical points such as custom houses, border guards or checkpoints that simultaneously connect and separate

different nation-states by transcending otherwise impermeable border lines.<sup>2</sup> Because borders symbolize international rivalry and cross-border influence, nationalists who already have xenophobic attitudes see border crossings as places where territory can be won or lost for the nation (Häkli 1998; Wilson and Donnan 1998). Subsequently, border crossings attract xenophobes, in particular mobilization by radical nationalist groups that aim to defend the nation-state against outsiders (Brubaker 1996; Elcioglu 2020), which transforms them into centers of nationalist agitation (Wilson and Donnan 1998; Elcioglu 2020). These radical nationalist groups carry with them xenophobic frames featuring international scapegoats through which they hope to shape local sentiments. I refer to this process as the attraction mechanism. Needless to say, the intensified usage of xenophobic frames does not automatically make them resonate (McDonnell, Bail and Tavory 2017; Snow et al. 1986). For that, I turn to the second mechanism which sheds light on why xenophobic frames are more readily accepted among vulnerable social classes living in border regions.

## **2.2 Perception Mechanism: the Internationalization of Social Problems**

Border crossings not only intensify external agitation and xenophobic frame deployment, they also influence how the local populations perceive social problems. Border crossings are anchored in an inherent tension because they make the nation-state both powerful and vulnerable at the same time, activating a liminal process that shines a spotlight on international differences and challenges (Gellner 1964; Pfaff 2006). On the one hand, border crossings physically inscribe the powers of the nation-state and enhance its visibility by delineating the extent of its power (Barth 2012). On the other hand, they function as membranes through which peoples, goods, resources and information from other nation-states travel (Wilson and Donnan 1998).

As a result, people living near border crossings are not only disproportionately exposed

to the authorities, markets and citizens of their own state, but also to those across the border. Depending on the local context, border crossings therefore can come to signify:

- Rival conceptions of national and ethnic identity (Brubaker 1996).
- The negative effects of cross-border valuta differences, smuggling, invasion, migration, tourism and other forms of foreign competition (Wilson and Donnan 1998; Radcliffe 1998)
- The defiance of national categories by groups such as the ethnically mixed, stateless people or regionalists (Sahlins 1989; Elcioglu 2020).

Independently, each of these interstitial processes render border crossings a prism into international divergences created by major geopolitical, social and economic events such as a warfare or economic crisis (Wilson and Donnan 1998). In such times of crisis, border crossings amplify the perception of international inequality, threat and negative cross-border influences (Brubaker 1996). In this social setting, economically vulnerable locals will become more likely to attribute their increased social problems to forces located outside the nation and become susceptible to xenophobic sentiments. I refer to this process as *the perception mechanism*.

### 2.3 Convergence

Together, these two mechanisms converge to produce xenophobic spaces involving international scapegoats. While the radical nationalist mobilization activated by the attraction mechanism intensifies the top-down supply of xenophobic frames involving international scapegoats, it does not explain why these frames would resonate among local populations losing social status. Frames are more likely to resonate if they connect with the ways in which people conceive their practical challenges of everyday life (McDonnell, Bail and Tavory 2017). This is where the perception mechanism comes into play. By highlighting the international origins of local social problems it makes vulnerable groups

more receptive to xenophobic frames involving *international scapegoats*. This process of convergence is summarized in Figure 1 below. A social group loses status. Proximity to a border crossing makes these groups link their loss to negative international influence. In addition, the border crossing attracts radical nationalist groups which intensifies the framing of ethnic outsiders as an *international* evil. These frames resonate (Snow et al. 1986; Koopmans and Olzak 2004) among groups losing social status living nearby border regions because they already link their social loss to negative international influences.

[Figure 1 about here.]

Several dynamics highlighted by the economic and political threat approaches discussed above converge at border crossings. A common strand in both literatures is that xenophobia is most likely to emerge in times of social and economic upheaval (Bendix 1952) when vulnerable social classes (Lipset 1960) perceive outsiders as a political (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018) or economic threat (Olzak 1994). National border crossings make this more likely as they shape perception by linking social problems to cross-national differences and forces that transcend the nation. Dovetailing with the notion of movement instigation developed in the political threat approach (Wilkinson 2006; Brass 2011; Biggs and Dhattiwala 2012), the production of xenophobia is further reinforced by the attraction of radical nationalist entrepreneurs near border regions who deploy the frames, identities and networks to mobilize resentment towards xenophobic scapegoats in order to protect the nation.

It is important to highlight that this argument builds on, but is distinct from Mann's hypothesis that regions near threatened borders are more likely to nurture aggressive forms of nationalism (Mann 2005) and Brubaker's notion that the nearby presence of ethnic compatriots outside of the state hardens ethnic boundaries (Brubaker 1996). The border crossing thesis put forward in this paper is both more general and more specific. It is more specific in that it focuses on small clusters located near border crossings and not entire provinces or regions. It is more general in that it identifies all national border

crossings as focal points for xenophobia and not just those that are contested. Hence, while historians have criticized Mann and Brubaker for being too general (Applegate 1990), I would argue that their arguments about border effects are not general enough.

### 3 WEIMAR'S BORDERS & BOUNDARIES

With the end of the First World War in 1919 and the establishment of the Weimar Republic, one era gave way to another. While the latter ended the rule of the German Emperor through a socialist revolution and finalized the formation of a democratic nation-state, the former unleashed destabilizing dynamics in the geopolitical, social and economic domain that would define the newly established republic for years to come.

Consider first the geopolitical transformations. The Treaty of Versailles that ended the war seriously challenged Germany's sovereignty, forcing the country to cede control of Eupen-Malmedy, Alsace-Lorraine, a portion of Schleswig-Holstein, parts of Upper Silesia, Danzig, the Polish Corridor and all recent military gains, either directly or after plebiscites. In addition, Germany had to demilitarize the Rhineland and pay the Allied powers reparations to compensate for losses caused by the war. When the Germans defaulted on their payments, Belgium and France occupied the Rhineland in response (Weitz 2018).

These geopolitical challenges were further exacerbated by social unrest. The socialist revolution that produced the Weimar Republic had a long lasting and polarizing effect, pitting the political left against the political right. The latter blamed the former for undermining German unity and losing the war, a tension that was made more salient by a series of socialist strikes (Heberle 1962).

This brings us to challenges in the economic realm. In order to meet wage demands of striking workers, the Weimar government printed banknotes that were not backed by gold, resulting in hyper inflation affecting all segments of society. Apart from economic mismanagement, a series of global economic and agrarian crises, culminating in the Great

Depression, further added to the economic misery of all Germans (Loomis and Beegle 1946).

Farmers and small independent business owners suffered even more than others however (Lipset 1960). These lower middle classes were both sellers and buyers on markets (Jensen-Butler 1976). However, due to strict government regulation of food prices and competition from giant warehouses, they were not able adjust their sale prices independently when faced with inflation. As a result, their expenses increased while their income deteriorated, forcing them to go into debt (Geiger 1930).

Differences between the geopolitical, social and economic domains notwithstanding, radical nationalists framed Jews as scapegoats for all three sets of problems, producing a major uptick in antisemitism (Niewyk 2018; Wildt 2014). As a result of a historical overrepresentation in finance, the far-right characterized Jews as miserly manipulators of money who engaged in unethical business practices that undermined the national economy (Niewyk 2018). Prominent Jewish figures in the Russian and German revolution, in turn, led right-wing movements to accuse Jews of forming the backbone of an international subversive left wing conspiracy that aimed to undermine the status quo (Hecht 2003). The infamous stab-in-the-back myth took these logics one step further and claimed that Jews were responsible for German defeat in the First World War. All three of these branches of antisemitism shared a common denominator: by appealing to myths of the wandering and unrooted nature of Judaism, they depicted Jews as outsiders without national loyalty who instead aligned themselves with international forces that transcended the nation (Niewyk 2018).

Apart from hardening fault lines inside Germany, World War One also solidified borders between Germany and its neighbors. Until the early twentieth century, international borders played little role in peoples lives and before 1914 one could cross the German border without even noticing them (Murdock 2010). The Great War ended this abruptly. Spies entering to report back to an enemy state, smugglers funneling out valuable assets, productive workers leaving for greener pastures and citizens escaping military service re-

vealed to officials and bureaucrats alike that unchecked migration could pose a serious threat to the livelihood of the nation-state. This led to the introduction of guarded borders. After the war, European states did not return to lax border controls; refugee flows and revolutionary threats magnified the risks of uncontrolled migration. Instead, they resorted to carefully designed system of checkpoints located at the nation's crossroads and required passports to enter the country (Torpey 2018).

To fully comprehend the effect of border crossings on the life of individuals, it is instructive to look at pre-war, wartime and post-war pictures of the Dutch-German border crossing at Glanerbrug depicted, in Figure 2. As we can see, the crossing looks like a normal twentieth century Dutch street before becoming completely militarized during the war. It is not until after World War One that it turns into a visible checkpoint that partitions and connects, denoting closure, entrance and difference.

[Figure 2 about here.]

## 4 DATA

Was there a spatial relationship between the resonance of xenophobic sentiments and the emergence of national border crossings? Existing subnational analyses of antisemitism in Europe before the Holocaust often rely on pogrom data (Voigtländer and Voth 2012; Johnson and Koyama 2019). Yet, pogrom data suffers from three shortcomings. First, pogroms are an extreme form of antisemitism and anti-Jewish sentiments are likely to exist even in the absence of pogroms. Second, pogroms cannot take place in the absence of Jewish targets. Deploying pogroms as a proxy therefore assumes a local Jewish presence as a precondition for the emergence of antisemitism, something that remains an open empirical question (Charnysh 2015). Third, pogroms are not a pure measure of local sentiments towards Jews as they also tap the capacity to mobilize and, in some cases, the presence of instigation by movement entrepreneurs.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, pogroms tell us about organized forms of antisemitic violence but do not fully capture latent and non-violent

sentiments.

Given these shortcomings, I exploit data on antisemitic themes in children stories collected by folklorists and local Centralverein reports to investigate the border thesis. These sources tap both latent and less extreme forms of antisemitism and do not require the presence of Jews for antisemitism to appear. The two data sets have different strengths. Whereas the folklore data is fine-grained and has an overtime dimension that enables us to explore antisemitism through time and space, the reports allow us to unpack the processes and actors that produce antisemitism. I will describe each data source in more detail below, before discussing the measurement of border crossings.

## 4.1 Kinderschreck

The collapse of the German empire, hatred towards the Versailles Treaty, destabilizing economic transformations and social unrest - all outlined in the previous section - shattered German trust in modern progress, producing an “explosive spiritual vacuum” (Kurlander 2017, p. 18). In part, this void was filled by a renaissance in occult beliefs, folklore and mythology as folk tales centered around national myths, stereotypes and symbols allowed Germans to deal with the burdens of post-war life by providing a lens through which to perceive daily struggles (Snyder 1951). These stories, filled with supernatural and natural monsters such as cannibals, witches, vampires, magicians and demons, instilled a romantic sense of German identity while at the same time constructing a range of imagined enemies that threatened national values (Grober-Glück 1974).

This paper zeros in on the genre of folk tales known as *Kinderschreck* (or *Children’s Fright*) to capture local variation in popular antisemitism. *Kinderschreck* was an oral tradition of storytelling widespread in Central Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth century. It was deployed by parents to discipline children through the inducement of fear. The set up of *Kinderschreck* stories was both brief and basic, involving only two components: a spatial location and a bogeyman. Parents would tell their children to stay away from a certain place (water line, corn fields, etc) because otherwise a bogey-

men would come and get them. Kinderschreck tales frequently featured rather innocent depictions of fantasy figures or animals that acted as bogeymen. In some villages, however, the bogeymen was the “Forest Jew”, “Blood Jew” or “Wandering Jew” (Beitl 1933; Mannhardt 1884). In the 1930s, the use of Kinderschreck was widespread and touched all segments of society. Survey evidence from the 1930s suggests that over 66 percent of all respondents had been exposed to Kinderschreck (Beitl 1933).

I build on data collection efforts by folklorists to map where and when Jewish bogeymen started appearing in Germany history. Folklore studies was established as a professional discipline by the Grimm brothers, who, in addition to collecting and publishing children stories, had a deep interest in documenting different oral and material traditions that existed in German lands. Overtime, the collection of materials became more and more professional. The work of Grimm student Wilhelm Mannhardt is particularly noteworthy as he was probably the first to collect folklore through systematic expert surveys in a large number of European villages (Mannhardt 1884). Mannhardt’s approach inspired many and culminated in the *Atlas Der Deutsche Volkskunde (ADV)* (Zender 1958; Schmoll 2009). This research project funded by *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (the German equivalent of the National Science Foundation), was grandiose for its time. The study was based on expert surveys in almost 20,000 German localities between 1930 and 1935. For each of these localities, the ADV send questionnaires to pre-screened and pre-selected local experts who were able to write independently and lived in the surveyed community for a prolonged period of time. The 1930, 1931 and 1932 surveys included questions about local Kinderschreck stories and explicitly asked about the Bogeyman featuring in these tales (Zender 1958; Schmoll 2009).<sup>4</sup> The Nazi takeover and World War Two abruptly ended the analysis of the questionnaires from the early 1930s.<sup>5</sup>

However, the original surveys survived the war and are currently located in the basement of the *Abteilung Kulturanthropologie* of the *Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms University* in Bonn, Germany. During the summer of 2017 and 2018, I received permission to ac-

cess the survey material which had not been touched for over twenty years. During this period, I hand-coded the answers to the Kinderschreck questions. The resulting dataset included information on Bogeyman reported by 50,356 experts living all over Germany. This database was transformed into a locality level dataset with 19,828 observations.<sup>6</sup> For 5.620 percent of these localities at least one expert reported the presence of a Jewish bogeymen.

As individual judgement is prone to systematic biases, reliability is a major concern when using expert-based measures.(Maestas 2016). A discussion of the reliability of this measure can be found in Appendix A. To assure the reliability of our measure we also cross-check our findings with a separate measure of antisemitism compiled out of reports created by the *Centralverein* (See Appendix F).

## 4.2 Centralverein Reports

While the ADV data allow us to capture the geographical spread of antisemitism, it does not help us identify the processes that produce its spatial clustering. Therefore I complement it with qualitatively richer data culled from the archives of the largest secular Jewish organization in twentieth century Germany: *the Centralverein*. The Centralvereins Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens was founded in 1893 to formulate an enlightened response to the upsurge in antisemitism across Europe and fight for equal Jewish rights in Germany (Barkai 2002). As part of this response, founders wanted to inform their home society about the breath and nature of German antisemitism. In order to do this, they set up a decentralized research center consisting of over 650 local chapters and 70,000 members tasked with documenting antisemitic incidents across the country (Wildt 2014).<sup>7</sup> Information on antisemitism was gathered through careful reading of local newspapers and magazines as well as the collection of complaints by fellow Jews. Despite being confiscated by the Gestapo, local Centralverein reports for the Weimar period survived World War Two and were rediscovered in the Russian *Sonderarchiv* in February 1990 (Barkai 2002). A nearly complete series of photo copies of these archives are

available at the *Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People*<sup>8</sup> and *Yad Vashem*.<sup>9</sup>

During the summer of 2019, I retrieved all antisemitic incident reported in the local Centralverein reports between 1919 and 1932, the last year before the Nazi takeover. I define an antisemitic incident as all acts that are hostile towards Jews because of their ethno-religious identity. This includes conventional forms of public claim making, such as editorials, parliamentary statements, interviews, opinion articles, columns, protests, as well as more disruptive forms such as antisemitic attacks, boycotts and protests. For each of these events I code the location, date, the actors involved, the form of antisemitism and a brief synopsis of the incident. As the geographical information for many cases was less precise than that for the ADV data, I will often rely on county level comparisons of antisemitic incidents. In total, I was able to identify 2,283 incidents of antisemitism in 448 different counties. All the sources are listed in Appendix D.

Scholars have recently started using Centralverein reports to map the evolution of antisemitism overtime (Hecht 2003; Wildt 2014). To my knowledge this is the first project that uses the archives to explicitly explore spatial variation in antisemitism. Although the decentralized nature of the organization offers many opportunities for subnational analysis, two shortcomings of the Centralverein data need to be acknowledged up front. First, because of its roots in the enlightenment, the association strongly believed that racism could be fought through legal means and, most importantly, by the advancement of Jewish citizenship in Germany. As a result, the organization stood in stark conflict with Zionist ideology. Antisemitic incidents against Zionists are therefore likely to be underrepresented in the data (Barkai 2002). Second, although xenophobia against recently arrived Jewish refugees from the East feature prominently in the archives, we should probably assume that the data undercounts antisemitism toward non-German citizens (Hecht 2003). Although we cannot say this with absolute certainty, it seems plausible that this bias might actually produce an underestimation of border effects as both refugees and Zionists put a spotlight on the boundary transcending nature of Jews.

### 4.3 National Border Crossings

To test the border crossing thesis, the data on antisemitism outlined above is paired with geocoded information on national border crossings. This data is obtained by geo-referencing all paved roads in 1885.<sup>10</sup> The process is visualized in Figure 3, which shows the geo-referencing of the maps. Based on the newly created road network, I was able to mark locations where a paved thoroughfare crossed Weimar's national borders and calculate the road distance of these crossings to localities that experience different levels of antisemitism. Figure 3d shows all border crossings. In the analysis presented below the Rhineland border (marked in bold) is also considered a national border.<sup>11</sup> The analysis only looks at land borders and excludes international ports. This is done for three reasons. First, on a methodologically level, ports are unique places with distinct histories of tolerance and hatred (Jha 2013), introducing high levels of omitted variable bias. Second and more substantially I want to draw explicit attention to the spatial dynamics of land crossings that have received little to no attention compared to port cities (Jha 2013). Third, on a theoretical level, international ports are often large cities, making focal point effects more diffuse. Nonetheless, I also rerun the analysis with international ports as borders crossings. The analysis is presented in Figure 2 and Table 10 of Appendix E. The border effects become somewhat weaker but remains robust in this specification. In the present analysis, I instead control for the presence of international ports to investigate border port effects separately. Results of port effects are discussed in the conclusion.

[Figure 3 about here.]

## 5 ANALYSIS OF BOGEYMEN

### 5.1 Main Results

The central thesis developed in this paper would lead us to expect that antisemitic bogeymen cluster around border crossings. As a first cut at the data, I map all the localities

in the dataset and mark those with Jewish bogeymen. Figure 4a reveals that Jewish bogeymen tend to cluster near the border with Denmark, France, Belgium, Switzerland, parts of Austria, the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia. Figure 4b displays the geographical distribution of Jewish citizens living in Weimar Germany in 1925. In total, 71 percent of all 1,114 towns reporting Jewish bogeymen are located within 50 kilometer of border crossings. There does not seem to be a particularly strong overlap between the presence of antisemitic themes in children stories and the density of Jews, suggesting that antisemitism without Jews was quite prominent (Charnysh 2015).

Border regions often have distinct histories of tolerance as well as conflict and undergo unique demographic, economic, political and military transformations that can be plausibly linked to the outbreak of antisemitism (Segal 2016). I therefore statistically analyze the relationship between bogeyman and proximity to border crossings while including a range of controls that tap (1) demographic composition, (2) legacies of hate and tolerance, (3) economic problems, (4) political threats and (5) exposure to World War I to partly address this.<sup>12</sup> The control variables and their sources are described in detail in Appendix B and include Jewish density. Unless indicated otherwise, all control variables are measured at the county level. Hence, the analysis is based on 19,828 localities nested in 946 counties and therefore deploys county clustered standard errors. To further isolate the effect of border crossing proximity as opposed to just being in a border region more broadly, I also run models in which I keep constant the distance to the *borderline*. These models provide a refined test of the border crossing thesis as they compare localities that are equidistant from the borderline but differ in their proximity to border crossings.

[Figure 4 about here.]

Conventional statistical analysis assumes independence of observations. The bogeymen data deployed in this paper are likely to violate this assumption as oral traditions tend to diffuse through space (Grober-Glück 1974). Spatial dependence creates autocorrelation and typically introduces bias in standard errors and coefficients. To account

for spatial autocorrelation, I deploy spatial filtering (Murakami and Griffith 2019). This approach absorbs autocorrelation in the residuals through the inclusion of Moran Eigen Vectors as synthetic controls among the right-hand side of the statistical model. Since the presence of bogeymen is a binary outcome, I deploy a logistic link function. Finally, I utilize generalized additive models (GAM) which allows for any functional relationship between the prevalence of antisemitism and road distance to the nearest border crossing (Wood 2017).<sup>13</sup> The results are presented in Figure 5. Full model results are reported in Tables 6 and 7 which can be found in Appendix C.

Initially, there is a strongly negative relationship between distance to border crossings and antisemitism. While almost one in ten of all towns adjacent to border crossings report antisemitic bogeymen, this rapidly declines to less than two percent if one moves 60 kilometers inward. After that, the strong negative relationship between distance to border crossings and antisemitism levels off and flattens out once reaching the 100 kilometer point. This suggests that border effects become much weaker once we move inwards and is exactly what one would expect if xenophobia does indeed cluster around border crossings. Figures 5b to 5f show that this pattern is not fundamentally altered when we control for demographic differences, legacies of hate and tolerance, economic downfall, political threats, exposure to World War I and distance to the borderline. Although the initial negative effect weakens slightly, the clustering around border crossings remains pronounced.

[Figure 5 about here.]

## 5.2 Instrumental Variable & Difference-In-Differences

Another major methodological concern stems from endogeneity or reverse causation bias. Historically, Jewish migration has played an important role in the construction of trade routes which frequently included roads that cross-cut Weimar's borders (Welford and Bossak 2010). We also know that in the centuries following the plague Jewish migration

was at times driven by outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence (Johnson and Koyama 2019). As both road construction and antisemitism persist in space (Voigtländer and Voth 2012), it is plausible that both historic borders and the roads forming Weimar crossings were produced by local level antisemitism instead of the other way around. In order to solve this problem I employ two strategies: an instrumental variable approach and a difference-in-differences design.

Before introducing these approaches, I would like to make one technical comment. Both instrumental variables and difference-in-differences designs are hard to integrate into the flexible generalized additive framework deployed in the previous section. Because the analyses above indicated the existence of a curvilinear relationship between antisemitism and distance and border-crossings, I use inverted logged distance to border crossings to capture this functional form in the analysis below. In addition, I allow errors to be correlated across observations within the same county by deploying clustered standard errors.

To rule out worries that antisemitism produced border crossings through legacies of forced long-distance migration that took place after the plague, I draw on pre-Black Death road data collected by epidemiologists (Welford and Bossak 2010) to construct an instrumental variable. Based on a wide range of sources, scholars interested in the social transmission of the Bubonic plague have constructed fine-grained data on medieval road networks from before the Black Death's initial outbreak and predating the first major waves of antisemitism. I use this data to capture the location where pre-plague roads cross Weimar's national borders. These pre-plague crossings are then used as an instrument for Weimar's border crossings. The data is mapped in Figure 6. As one can see, data on roads in Poland is sparse compared to the rest of Europe. Inspection of the original source material indicates that epidemiologists were not able to identify any original Polish sources on medieval roads. Therefore I exclude localities nearest to Polish border crossings from the data set. This results in a reduction of over 3,000 observations.<sup>14</sup>

[Figure 6 about here.]

In order for pre-plague border crossings to be a valid instrument, I need to make two assumptions. First, the location of Weimar border crossings need to be strongly influenced by the location of medieval road networks. This is commonly referred to as the *the relevance assumption*. I test this assumption in the first stage regression which deploys an OLS-model to predict the proximity to Weimar border crossings with a variable that measures the proximity to pre-plague crossings. As we can see from the large F-statistic, Weimar's border crossings are highly correlated with pre-plague crossings, regardless of whether we control for distance to the border line (model 2) or not (model 1).

[Table 1 about here.]

Second, *the exclusion restriction* requires that medieval road networks themselves not directly influence local level antisemitism other than via later established national border crossings. I corroborate this assumption by regressing pre-plague crossings against the occurrence of pogroms during the first wave of post-plague antisemitic violence as compiled by Voigtlander and Voth (2012) and the resonance of Jewish bogeymen in 1865, six years before the creation of the German nation-state in 1871. The latter data was obtained for 1,609 localities from the earlier mentioned expert surveys conducted by Wilhelm Mannhardt (1884). This survey was digitized based on original source material held by the *Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz*.<sup>15</sup> In total, 284 of the 1,608 localities surveyed by Mannhardt were not used in this analysis because they were closest to Polish border crossings. As one can see in models 3 and 4, distance to pre-plague crossings is not significantly correlated with the prevalence of pogroms after the plague or antisemitic bogeyman before the emergence of the German nation-state, providing suggestive evidence for the notion that proximity to pre-plague border crossings was not related antisemitism before the rise of the nation-state and making it more plausible that the exclusion restriction is met.

[Table 2 about here.]

The reduced form analysis, presented in models 5 and 6, shows a positive relationship between the presence of Jewish bogeyman and proximity to pre-plague crossings. Models 7 and 8 present the second stages of two-stage probit models. This second stage uses border proximity that is due to proximity to pre-plague road networks to predict whether localities were reported to have Jewish bogeyman or not. The effect of national border proximity is robust in the IV-specification. The size of the effects is summarized in the top half of Figure 7. Increasing the instrument with one standard deviation increases the likelihood of Jewish bogeyman by more than eight percent, even if we keep constant the distance from the borderline.

[Figure 7 about here.]

Pairing the Weimar data from the ADV with Mannhardt's 1865 survey also allows us to explore the clustering of Jewish bogeyman before and after the introduction of national border crossings. Figure 8 shows the percentages of localities with Jewish bogeyman in 1865 and 1930-1932 by region. Two things immediately stand out. First, one can note an overall increase in Jewish bogeyman between 1865 and 1930-1932. This pattern can be plausibly linked to two factors: the overall increase in antisemitism mentioned in section 3 and the uptick in nationalist myth making described in section 4.1. A second thing to note is that regardless of the distance threshold, the upward trend in antisemitism is much stronger in localities near Weimar's border crossings. Jewish Bogeymen are almost twice as likely in border regions when we use a ten kilometer buffer to mark border crossing proximity. Again, the effect levels off when wider radii are deployed to calculate border regions. Taken together, this supports the idea that proximity to newly created national borders had an independent and positive influence on the production of antisemitism.

[Figure 8 about here.]

We can evaluate this relationship more systematically with a basic difference-in-differences setup where we model the interaction of time and logged distance to border

crossings with time and locality fixed effects and locality clustered standard errors to account for time constant omitted variable bias. The model also interacts all control variables with time to account for time varying omitted variable bias. The lower half of Figure 7 above displays the effect of border crossing proximity for the difference-in-differences set-up. Increasing proximity to border crossings with one standard deviation leads to a more than five percent higher probability of Jewish bogeyman. This effect is robust to the inclusion of distance of border line as a control and in the IV-specification using pre-plague crossings as an instrument. Full models can be found in Table 8 of Appendix C.

The analyses in this section show that regions that surround national border crossings were not more antisemitic before crossings were established, reducing concerns about early selection effects and endogeneity. Of course, the attraction mechanism requires that selection effects after the establishment of border crossings could still play an important role. Indeed, the next section reveals that the attraction of radical nationalist antisemites to the border was crucial in producing antisemitic climates.

## 6 ANALYSIS OF CV REPORTS

The quantitative analysis in the previous section demonstrated that antisemitism clusters around border regions, but it does not tell us what processes are driving this spatial pattern. To shed light on the actors and sentiments underlying the production of antisemitism in border regions, I analyze 2,283 incidents culled from the archives of the Centralverein. The sources are described in Appendix D. In addition to exploring the incident data more systematically in Appendix F, I present an in-depth exploration of the northwestern border with the Netherlands, which the maps in section 5.1 showed to be an antisemitic hotbed. This region is particularly important because the Netherlands remained neutral during World War I and the Dutch-German border had been stable for decades, meaning that prominent theories linking radical nationalism to lost territory

(Mann 2005) or the presence of compatriots outside the nation (Brubaker 1996) cannot fully account for the emergence of antisemitism. That the Dutch-German border was barely touched by World War One further suggests that war violence was not necessary for the production of antisemitic bogeymen. Accordingly, a better understanding of antisemitism in the northwest will likely hold the key to a better understanding of antisemitism in general.

During the early nineteen-twenties, Bruno de Levie, a Jewish cattle trader from North Germany, regularly travelled to the livestock market in Leer, about twenty kilometer from the Dutch-German border, and this is what he did on August 4th, 1928, more than five years before Hitler's seizure of power. Upon arrival at the market that day, however, he noticed something different. To De Levie's shock, two students wearing antisemitic NSDAP symbols were parading alongside the stands. Chaos erupted quickly after several Jewish traders, including De Levie himself, tried to remove the students from the market and rip off the Nazi emblems. Somewhat surprisingly, several gentile farmers and business men stepped up and protected the students from the assault, resulting in repeated skirmishes between groups of Jews and gentiles.<sup>16</sup> The violent episode was not simply an isolated accident; as similar eruptions began taking place in other market towns along the Dutch-German border in the months that followed.<sup>17</sup> In the aftermath of this wave of unrest, several restauranteurs and hotel owners stopped serving Jewish customers,<sup>18</sup> pamphlets encouraging locals to boycott Jewish financiers began circulating,<sup>19</sup> synagogues and Jewish cemeteries were vandalized,<sup>20</sup> and antisemitic slurs uttered by children could be heard in the streets across the Northwest.<sup>21</sup>

It is tempting to link this shift towards antisemitism to class relationships or the economic challenges small independents and farmers were facing because of taxation and price regulation. However, what makes the events along the German border stand out is that market towns in Germany's interior often formed islands of tolerance where small business owners, farmers and Jewish traders cherished their mutual interdependencies

and rejected racist resentment (Fischer 2010). Why did class and decline play out so differently in border regions?

## 6.1 Attraction Mechanism

An in-depth exploration of the Northwestern region reveals two characteristic processes, both of which can be traced back to the proximity of border crossings. Firstly, the visit of the two right wing students that instigated the outpour of antisemitism in Leer was unlikely to be a coincidence as border regions acted as magnets for radical nationalist movements of many stripes. When going through Centralverein reports for counties with a national border crossing, sixty-eight percent of them involved *Freikorps* paramilitaries,<sup>22</sup> right-wing veteran's associations such as *Stahlhelm*,<sup>23</sup> members of the *Pan-German league* or their antisemitic wing the *German Nationalist Protection and Defiance Federation*<sup>24</sup> and several national socialist factions, including Hitler's NSDAP.<sup>25</sup>

Looking at the ideologies anchoring these movements, the prevalence of their involvement near borders is not hard to understand. Apart from their open embrace of antisemitism, these organizations had one additional feature in common: each ascribed symbolic value to border regions, conceptualizing them as spaces that had to be defended from foreign influence. This motivated them to actively seek out the borders of the nation. While Freikorps units came together at Germany's Eastern and Western borders to cut off external support for left wing insurgencies<sup>26</sup> and Stahlhelm's veterans associations moved westwards to celebrate the identity of the border as something that had to be insulated from Dutch and French influence, the Pan-German League went one step further to argue that parts of the Dutch borderlands should be incorporated into the German nation-state altogether (Müller 2015). Taken together, this suggests the importance of the *attraction mechanism* as radical nationalist groups were drawn to border crossings to mobilize.<sup>27</sup>

## 6.2 Perception Mechanism

In addition to attracting outside mobilization, border crossings also shaped how local populations living in border regions perceived their socio-economic problems. From the early 1920s onwards, the effects of Weimar's weak currency and price control policies for food items became incredibly visible for lower middle classes living near border towns. Dutch traders and consumers crossed the border and bought up livestock and other resources, posing enormous challenges for local farmers and small business owners. The “hole in the west”<sup>28</sup> through which valuable raw materials left the country started to symbolize the negative consequences of inflation for farmers and businessmen who due to government regulation and competition from warehouses were in response to a further devaluating currency unable to increase their the prices they sold at (Feldman 1997).

It also explicitly linked economic problems to international forces. Overtime, frustration grew with Dutch visitors who at times descended like hyenas to buy out their hapless neighbors. Retailers in Duisburg, for instance, started describing the Dutch as foreign plunderers and “dark uncontrollable elements” that behaved like sharks in blood-spilled waters. Some restaurant owners and hoteliers stopped serving Dutch customers altogether so that they could focus on their German clientele instead (Feldman 1997, p. 237).

[Figure 9 about here.]

Figure 9 provides a powerful illustration of how border crossings shaped local sentiments. It depicts emergency money produced in the border town of Goch during the financial crisis between 1921-1923. During the early years of the Weimar Republic, many local farm and trade communities would issue their own billets to satisfy the need for small change. Considerable effort was put in the design of the money. While these designs often featured celebrations of local historical events or attractions, it at times also included political messaging. Here we see how the prints explicitly turns the border crossing in Goch (Figure 9a) into a focal point for social problems driven by international forces

by lamenting the loss of goods to Dutch neighbors who in swarms enter Germany to buy up resources (Figure 9b). This indicates that borders activated a perception mechanism through which social problems were linked to international origins.

The internationalization of social problems also produced distinct forms of political mobilization. Between 1924 and 1928, farmers staged a wave of protests demanding protection against international competition and price differentials from the Weimar government (Bergmann and Megerle 1989). Frequently, local small business owners would join these protests to express their shared discontent with international economic influences. Apart from this form of extra-parliamentary mobilization, small business owners also organized themselves in a special interest party called the *Business Party (BP)* which ran on a protectionist platform in the national elections of 1924 and 1928 (Schumacher 1972; Winkler 1976).<sup>29</sup>

### 6.3 Convergence

In the late twenties, the influx of far-right groups and the resentment of small business owners and farmers towards international forces started to converge. Initially, radical nationalists tried to draw workers into their organizations but only with limited success. The propaganda activities of the far-right did not seem to resonate with the daily experiences of laborers (Noakes 1971). This suggests that propaganda alone cannot account for the clustering of antisemitism near borders. It was not until National Socialists, veterans and the Pan-German league started to actively reach out to small business owners and farmers that they saw their base grow.

These radical groups initiated boycotts against international Jewish bankers and warehouses to lure in shopkeepers,<sup>30</sup> and depicted Jewish traders as border transcending parasites that made money off the backs of hardworking farmers.<sup>31</sup> Their propaganda linking social problems to international enemies, dovetailed with how the lower middle classes in border regions had recently come to perceive the sources of their daily struggles.

After radical nationalists started targeting lower middle classes, many of the restau-

rants and hotels near the border who boycotted the Dutch now became clubhouses for far-right associations that refused to serve Jewish customers.<sup>32</sup> It was also during this period that local farm associations started issuing emergency money again, this time in response to the Great Depression. On this occasion, however, the billets featured a Jewish financier hugging a bag of coins instead of Dutch women wearing bonnets.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, we observe these dynamics both in Protestant Lower Saxony and Catholic Westphalia. As the latter region was characterized by the well organized Catholic *Zentrum party* that insulated its constituents from nationalist propaganda, this suggests that the border thesis cuts through strong partisan walls. It also provides support for the notion that Catholics rejected National Socialism but not antisemitism as such (Kauders 1996).<sup>34</sup>

At the turn of the decade, a coalition of German militias, Stahlhelm veterans, members of the Pan-German league, wings of the National Socialist movement and disgruntled farmers came together in the *Landvolk Bewegung*.<sup>35</sup> This movement started organizing a series of violent protests against international capitalism, Weimar's trade policies and low food prices, featuring a range of antisemitic tropes linking Jews to international finance and socialist governance. Two of the largest riots took place in Emden and Norden,<sup>36</sup> counties bordering the Leer market with which we began this section.<sup>37</sup>

Radical nationalist frames deploying antisemitism resonated near border crossings in northeast Germany because the lower middle classes living in these areas already linked their social problems to international processes. In Germany's other border regions, this internationalization of social problems took different forms. Alongside all of Weimar's borders, border crossings activated ethnic fault lines and antisemitism among vulnerable social classes by increasing exposure to nationalist Frenchmen, African soldiers (North Rhine), regionalist conflict (Schleswig), Poles (Eastern Prussia), refugee flows (Silesia) and price differentials (Saxony) (Braun 2021). Although the exact source of international resentment varied across border regions, the same spatial configuration played a powerful role by linking social problems to international forces and attracting radical nationalists, which together produced a fear of Jews. Space limitations prevent me from

zeroing in on each of the cases. Instead, I turn to more comprehensive statistical analyses of all antisemitic events in Appendix F. Taken together these analyses show that a disproportionately large number of all antisemitic events involved radical nationalist groups or vulnerable social classes and took place nearby border crossings. Equally important, farmers, small business owners and external radical nationalist groups were much more likely to be involved in events nearby border crossings, providing evidence that the border theory picks up on a pattern across the whole of Germany.

## 7 MECHANISMS

The in-depth case study of the northeastern border revealed two mechanisms that turns border crossings into hotbeds of xenophobia. First, national border crossings prime national differences, forging a perceived link between social problems and international factors among groups that are losing social status (the perception mechanism). In line with existing work (Loomis and Beegle 1946; Heberle 1962; Lipset 1960), the Centralverein data showed that this was particularly true for farmers and small business owners who were most likely to face the consequences of prize regulation and hyper inflation. Second, border crossings attract radical political mobilization (the attraction mechanism). In this section, I will try to assess the plausibility of the different components of the argument with quantitative data.

Let's start with the important role the lower middle classes play in the production of antisemitism. If the perceived internationalization of social problems among farmers and small business owners is responsible for the production for antisemitism, the border crossing effect should be stronger in localities with sizable farm communities and large numbers of small business owners. To investigate these empirical implications I deploy kernel density interactions (Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu 2019)<sup>38</sup> to examine the heterogeneity of border crossing effects across localities with and without vulnerable economic classes experiencing economic downfall.<sup>39</sup> The plot in Figure 10 presents

the marginal effects of changing the logged proximity to national border crossings by one standard deviation on antisemitism, conditional on the percentage of the population employed as farmers or small business owners. The latter captures the presence of the middle classes that were losing status in the Weimar Republic (Lipset 1960; Loomis and Beegle 1946; Heberle 1962).

In line with the postulated perception mechanism that states that border crossings increase attribution of social problems to international forces by lower middle classes, the overall effects are indeed stronger in regions with large proportions of economically vulnerable social classes. Whereas proximity to border crossings has little to no impact in localities with few farmers and small business owners that experienced little economic decline, increasing logged proximity to border crossings by one standard deviation increases the prevalence of antisemitic bogeymen by almost ten percent in localities with sizable vulnerable groups facing deteriorating economic conditions. This confirms the importance of lower middle classes in the production of anti-Jewish resentment.

[Figure 10 about here.]

An analysis of different forms of political mobilization provides quantitative evidence consistent with the attraction and perception mechanisms. Unfortunately, it is not possible to find fine-grained data on different form of political mobilization for each of the 19,829 German localities. However, secondary literature and membership books allow me to retrieve county-level information on several of the radical nationalists groups and different forms of lower middle class mobilization introduced in section 6.<sup>40</sup>

If border regions act as focal points for radical nationalist movements as the attraction mechanism postulates, we would expect to find more far-right mobilization in the vicinity of border crossings. I compiled county-level information on the presence local chapters of the *Pan-German League* and *Freikorps units*, significant membership rates in *Stahlhelm*, as well campaign events held by Hitler's *NSDAP* and protests staged by the *Landvolk Bewegung*.<sup>41</sup> Out of this information, I created a binary outcome variable that marked whether counties were touched by at least one form of mobilization or not.

To capture the perception mechanism, I create three variables that tap lower middle class mobilization around the perceived internationalization of social problems. If borders indeed activate the perceived internationalization of social problems, we would expect this form of political mobilization to be more intense near border crossings. Section 6 discussed how between 1924 and 1928 farmers staged a series of protests to demand government protection against international competition and price differentials (Bergmann and Megerle 1989). While small business owners frequently joined these extra-parliamentary demonstrations, they also rallied for protection against international competition electorally by supporting the *Business Party (BP)*, a short lived special interest movement representing small business owners during the 1924 and 1928 elections (Schumacher 1972; Winkler 1976). I therefore mark counties in which pro-protectionist protests of farmers took place between 1924 and 1928. In addition, I mark counties in which small business owners participated in pro-protectionists protest and take the average percentage of votes for the BP between 1924 and 1928 to measure the extent to which small business owners mobilized against the international origins of social problems. The latter variable is logged to deal with its skew.

Figure 11 shows the results of generalized additive models that include all control variables described in Appendix B.<sup>42</sup> In line with the attraction mechanism, we see in Figure 10a that radical mobilization is most prevalent adjacent to border crossings and initially declines rapidly when moving inwards. This decline, however, is curvilinear and levels off with distance. Figures 11b to 11c demonstrate that all three forms of pro-protectionist mobilization against international threats by lower middle classes follow a very similar pattern. Taken together, this provides tentative support for the attraction mechanism, which postulates that border crossings operated as magnets for radical nationalist mobilization, the perception mechanism, which postulates that lower middle classes living in the vicinity of border crossings were more likely to perceive the international origins of social problems, and the notion that both of these mechanisms converge at border crossings.

[Figure 11 about here.]

In Appendix G, I explore whether alternative mechanisms can account for the clustering of antisemitism near border crossings. In particular, I considered five alternative causal processes induced by borders: regionalism, early post-war nationalism, pre-war antisemitism, increased exposure to Jewish populations and distinct socio-economic characteristics of Jewish communities. Generalized additive models suggest that none of these processes provide a plausible link between border crossings and antisemitism.

## 8 CONCLUSION

A considerable body of work on xenophobia has identified political and economic sources of resentment. While the former emphasizes the importance of electoral threats and instigation by movement leaders, the latter zeros in on how vulnerable social classes that are losing status scapegoat outsiders in times of socio-economic upheaval. This paper brings together both branches to develop a spatially contextualized explanation for xenophobia by showing that whether economic decline, the presence of vulnerable social groups or political instigation by social movements converge to produce fear for outsiders, is conditional on relative location within the nation.

The paper reveals that national border crossings, spatial locations that link two nation-states, activate both top-down and bottom-up processes that together provide a fertile breeding ground for the production of ethnic fear. First, groups losing social status are more likely to attribute their decline to international factors when national differences are made salient by a nearby border crossing. Second, border regions disproportionately attract radical xenophobic movements who want to protect the nation from alien threats. While the first process creates bottom-up demand for international scapegoats among vulnerable social groups, the latter fulfills these demands top-down by framing international actors as the root of all evil.

Before discussing potential strengths and contributions of this research project, I

would like to briefly highlight one of its key weaknesses. Although the paper compellingly shows that antisemitic bogeymen and events cluster near border crossings and begins to unpack the socio-economic dynamics underlying these clusters, it does not really explain how the latter dynamics were able to shape the content of children's tales in the first place. Research tracing this process is currently in progress.

This weakness notwithstanding, this study unearths a specific interaction between space, class and political mobilization that holds important implications for the study of ethnic conflict, antisemitism and German history. At a general level, this paper joins a growing body of work that situates intergroup dynamics in the context of broader cleavage structures (Braun 2019, 2020) through the demonstration that borders between nations activate borders within nations. While existing research often looks at how relationships between insiders and outsiders influence mutual resentment, this paper suggests that intersections within one insider groups (i.e. national borders between Christian gentiles) alone can activate hatred towards a third group (i.e. the Jews) by shaping the perception of social problems and producing ethnic mobilization.

The findings also provide a micro-foundation for macro-sociological theories on the rise of nationalism and ethnic conflict. The shift from empire to nation state has produced intensified political exclusion along ethnic lines (Wimmer 2002, 2012). I suggest that this shift was particularly strong in border regions between different nations. Mechanisms that specify how this shift materialized at a local level show how cognitive and mobilization processes at the margins of challenged nations are important in shaping the forms that ethnic exclusion might take at the political center.

The exclusion of Jews is a case in point. While most historians and some social scientists recognize the early roots of antisemitic thought (Niewyk 2018; Voigtländer and Voth 2012), a majority of social scientists argue that the importance of deep seated hatreds is perhaps overstated (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018). The overtime analysis of Jewish bogeymen reveals that although the antisemitic theme of the Jew as a border transcending actor is ancient, its influence varies through time and space. Fear of Jews

as measured in children's stories became stronger after the establishment of the German nation and mainly concentrates along its borders. The border thesis put forward in this paper thus shows how ancient xenophobic themes about border transcendence and disloyalty interact with contemporary spatial configurations to produce hatred towards outsiders near places that symbolize cross-national connections and influence (Charnysh 2015).

Finally, this paper also returns to the now debunked geographical interpretation of German history. This controversial approach claims that Germany's precarious geographical location in Central-Europe played an important role in the emergence of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Bordering enemies on all sites, Germany could not afford democracy and was forced to embrace radical nationalist authoritarianism (Evans 2006). Though my findings should not revitalize this somewhat teleological geographic thesis, they do shed light on how pressure at Germany's distinct borders produced a xenophobic climate that could be exploited by radical movements, some of which played an important role in the establishment of Hitler's rule.

This brings us to the generalizability of the border thesis. Although further research is required, there is suggestive evidence that the mechanisms outlined in this paper travel beyond the confines of the truly unique German case and operate elsewhere when the nation-state is under pressure. Eastern Europe also saw the rise of aggressive antisemitism that was closely aligned with distinct patterns of nationalist mobilization in the border regions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Ukraine and Bulgaria (Segal 2016).

Outside of the realm of antisemitism, research on the Armenian Genocide indicates that conflict between nationalist Turks and the Armenians was most salient along border-lines because of fear for Russian influences (Bloxham 2005) and similarly hatred towards Tutsis was more severe in Rwanda's border regions, partly due to radical mobilization by recent nationalist immigrants (McNamee 2018). Closer to home, recent ethnographic work on the US-Mexico border shows that status anxiety drove anti-immigrant groups from across the country to southern parts of Arizona in the early 2000s to work with

local vigilantes and prop up what they perceive as fundamental weaknesses in the armor of the nation state. As the border also attracted progressive groups, immigration politics has become highly polarized around border crossings (Elcioglu 2020) which intensified anti-Mexican attitudes (Branton and Dunaway 2009). Backing up this perhaps more anecdotal evidence, a recent statistical analysis with worldwide coverage also provides support for the notion that in times of instability domestic ethnic conflict is more prevalent near national borders (Wucherpfennig et al. 2011).

Closer inspection of the mechanisms provide us with an opportunity to elucidate potential scope conditions of the border theory (Ermakoff 2019). The attraction mechanism is activated when border crossings come to symbolize threats to national security and acts as magnets for radical nationalist groups. This (perhaps too) obviously implies that an organized nationalist movement rooted in xenophobia needs to exist in order for border crossings to turn into xenophobic focal points. Unfortunately, this scope condition is not very restrictive given the recent resurgence of nativist movements around the globe. More interestingly, it also suggests that border crossings are more likely to turn into hotbeds of xenophobia when they becomes symbols of international threat. This could perhaps explain why the earlier mentioned Arizona-Mexico border became more contentious in the early 2000s (Elcioglu 2020). Because some of the 9/11 bombers had entered the country via land, the government dedicated more resources to border protection, at the same time that politicians and pundits started framing US borders as being part of a sustained intensive antiterrorism operation, turning border crossings into symbols for nationalist defense (Andreas 2012). This process is very similar to what we saw happening at Weimar's border near the end of World War One (as summarized in Figure 1).

The perception mechanism postulates that border crossings activate the internationalization of social problems by priming international differences and influences. We can deduce from this that border crossings are less likely to become focal points for xenophobia when they fail to make international differences visible. As Allport (1954) pointed out long ago, differences between social groups become less salient when they are rooted

in crosscutting interactions that are both equal and cooperative in nature. Consequently, this suggests that the xenophobic effects of border crossings will become less powerful the more they are embedded in harmonious and cooperative border-spanning communities. This might explain why the US-Canadian border is a rather harmonious region characterized by little ethnic resentment or mobilization. The fact that local elites on both the Canadian and US side of the border work together to promote regional prosperity (Gilbert 2005) might account for the fact that ethnic tensions have remained limited. In contrast, Weimar Germany was surrounded by states that were deemed inferior or that were in fact economically superior, making it plausible that the border thesis only operates in the absence of extensive equal and cooperative ties between national communities that could potentially reduce the perception of international difference.

On the flip side, it is also important to highlight that border mechanisms might operate beyond the land crossings that are investigated in this paper. Changes in international transportation has created new sites where goods and people from different nations meet, such as air- and seaports. Recent waves of airport protests against and in support of travel bans suggest that these hubs could also become focal points for xenophobia as they come to symbolize external threats and prime national differences.<sup>43</sup>

Some suggest that the era of the nation-state is coming to a close. Could this imply that the coordination of xenophobia around border crossings in times of crisis will disappear altogether? The answer is probably no. If anything, the number of border crossings has actually increased in number over the last few decades. Apart from this quantitative shift, they have also become more important in a qualitative sense. Borders are under renewed scrutiny from local populations, external vigilante groups, political movements (from the left and right), right-wing media outlets and political elites (Simmons 2019). It only requires a little bit of speculation to make the argument that this salience will continue to have psychological effects, spark political contention and consequently organize inter-group relations for decades to come.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank one of the reviewers for this powerful formulation.

<sup>2</sup>This, of course, is not surprising as Simmel relied quite heavily on the metaphor of the door when describing spatial processes.

<sup>3</sup>It is important to highlight that some researchers do this consciously to analytically separate anti-semitism from violent mobilization (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018).

<sup>4</sup>In particular, I relied on questions 49, 52, 124 and 125.

<sup>5</sup>I will only draw on data collected before the seizure of power by the Nazis in 1933. After the Nazi takeover the ADV was Nazified and started collecting data in a different fashion using different questionnaires. There is considerable reason to believe that post-1933 data collection was unreliable (Schmoll 2009).

<sup>6</sup>Aggregating data up to the locality level raises the issue of whether we are indeed measuring things at the correct level of analysis. It is possible that much more variation exists within rather than between the chosen units, obscuring important causal processes. For instance, it is possible that xenophobia

varies more at the neighborhood level than at the village level. I was able to investigate this for the city of Berlin, located 182 kilometers from the nearest border crossing. For this city I was able to collect information from 23 experts living in 13 different boroughs. In line with the border thesis, none of these experts reported the existence of Jewish bogeymen in local folklore, suggesting that there was little important variation within one unit. Although this only provides information on one city, it is important to highlight that, at the time, Berlin was one of the most diverse places in Western-Europe (Weitz 2018). In addition, the high reliability coefficients presented in Appendix A also indicate that within unit variation is extremely low. Taken together this provides evidence for the notion that between unit variation is stronger than within unit variation.

<sup>7</sup>Brustein draws on national newspapers and English language annual reports to produce proxies for antisemitism in a wide range of countries (Brustein 2003). His sources are suitable for measuring antisemitism on a national level. If one would want to transport his approach to a subnational level one would need an extensive body of local newspapers. The Central Verein reports provide this and more.

<sup>8</sup>CAHJP: HM2.

<sup>9</sup>Fonds 721: INV 7768.

<sup>10</sup>This is done based on the 1885 military *Stadtedurchfahrtsplan* (Handtke 1920), accessed via Stanford's Earthworks Website. Later road data is not available. However, since road networks in Germany did not undergo fundamental changes until the Nazi-takeover (Evans 2006), we can be confident that the data captures road networks for the Weimar period.

<sup>11</sup>However, analysis without the Rhineland border are almost identical to ones presented below.

<sup>12</sup>I also ran robustness checks investigating urban and rural variation and controlling for associational networks (Varshney 2003). Result are presented in Appendix E.

<sup>13</sup>GAM allow one to model relationships between a dependent and independent variable without assuming a linear relationship between the two. Instead, it explicitly models the functional relationship between measures. This is useful for the present analysis because our theory predicts clusters of xenophobia around border crossings. However, we do not want to impose an artificial distance threshold on these clusters. We want the model to tell us whether there is a cluster or not and where this cluster lies. GAM allow us to do that by deploying basic techniques akin to machine learning (Wood 2017).

<sup>14</sup>An analysis presented in Table 12 of Appendix E interacts border crossing proximity with a dummy marking these cases and shows that excluding them does not alter estimates significantly in the full sample, providing assurance that the exclusion of the Polish border does not bias our results.

<sup>15</sup>Nachl. Wilhelm Mannhardt, Staatsbibliothek Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz DE-611-BF-2979.

<sup>16</sup>HM2/8714.893.

<sup>17</sup>HM2/8702.303.

<sup>18</sup>Verzeichnis 1926.

<sup>19</sup>HM2/8716.973.

<sup>20</sup>Friedhofschandungen in Deutschland.

<sup>21</sup>HM2/8702.303.

<sup>22</sup>HM2/8712.768.

<sup>23</sup>HM2/8761.2351.

<sup>24</sup>HM2/8789.153.

<sup>25</sup>HM2/8702.303.

<sup>26</sup>HM2/8712.768.

<sup>27</sup>Section 7 provides a quantitative analysis of the radical movement attraction mechanism.

<sup>28</sup>Much like its infamous namesake used to describe the situation in the Rhineland.

<sup>29</sup>Section 7 provides a quantitative analysis of the perception mechanism by looking at the spatial distribution of protests and voting for the BP.

<sup>30</sup>HM2/8757.2251, HM2/8766.2475.

<sup>31</sup>Central Verein Zeitung 26-6-1929.

<sup>32</sup>Verzeichnis 1929, HM2/8761.2351.

<sup>33</sup>HM2/8757.2255.

<sup>34</sup>Table 12 of Appendix E tests this idea quantitatively with the bogeymen data described below. The model interacts proximity to border crossings with the percentage of Catholics, the percentage of votes for the Zentrum party and the proportion of Catholics voting for Zentrum. The analysis reveals that border crossing effects are not conditioned by the local strength of the Catholic movement.

<sup>35</sup>Although most people associate this movement with mobilization at the Northern border with Denmark in Schleswig-Holstein, they were also active in the western parts of Lower Saxony (Heberle 1962).

<sup>36</sup>HM2/8717.1074.

<sup>37</sup>The Landvolk protests were distinct but in part grew out of the earlier pro-protectionist protests, revealing the convergence of radical mobilization and the internationalization of social problems (Heberle 1962).

<sup>38</sup>Most of our theories assume that conditional effect are linear (the effect of X on Y becomes stronger if we increase C) Existing ways of modeling interactions simply assume that the conditional effect is linear. Kernel density estimation allows one to see whether this is indeed the case using non-parametric probability density functions. This provides a more serious test of our theories and underlying assumptions.

<sup>39</sup>These analysis are based on models with the full range of control variables listed in Table 4 of Appendix B and county clustered standard errors.

<sup>40</sup>Sources and descriptives can be found in Table 4 and 5 of Appendix B.

<sup>41</sup>The Landvolk protests were distinct but in part grew out of the earlier pro-protectionist protests used to tap the perception mechanism.

<sup>42</sup>Full models can be found in Table 9 of Appendix C.

<sup>43</sup>In line with this, an additional analysis presented in Appendix E shows that the presence of international ports was also positively correlated with antisemitism.

# Figures

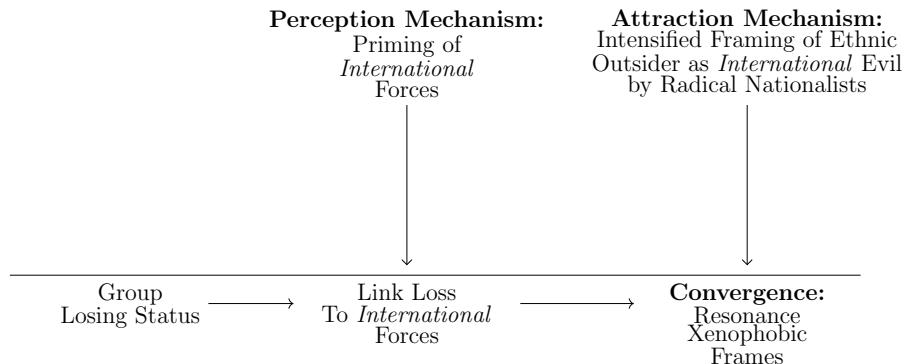
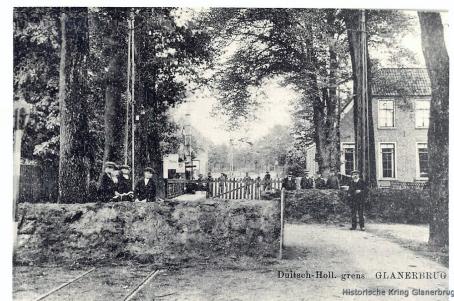


Figure 1: Schematic overview of the argument.



(a) Border Crossing, 1908



(b) Border Crossing, 1915



(c) Border Crossing, 1922

Figure 2: Border Crossing Glanerbrug 1908-1922.

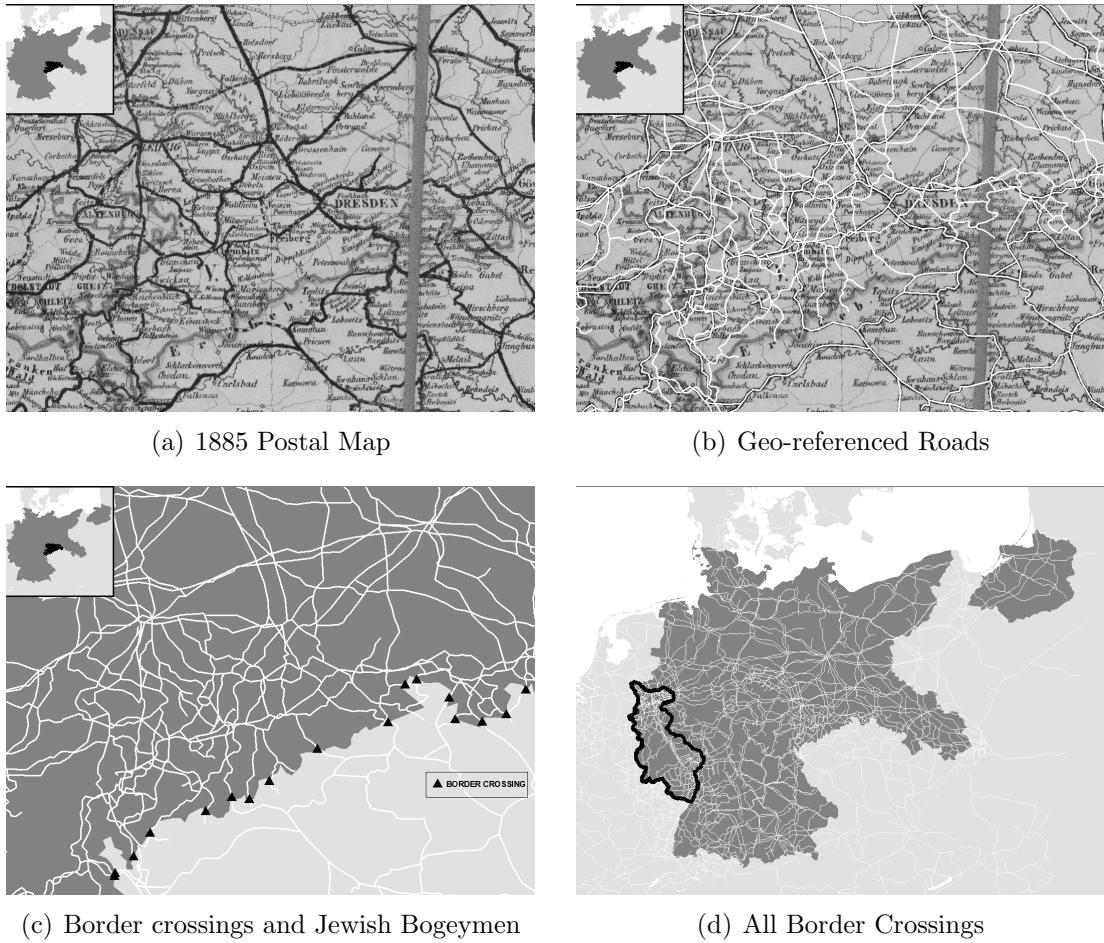
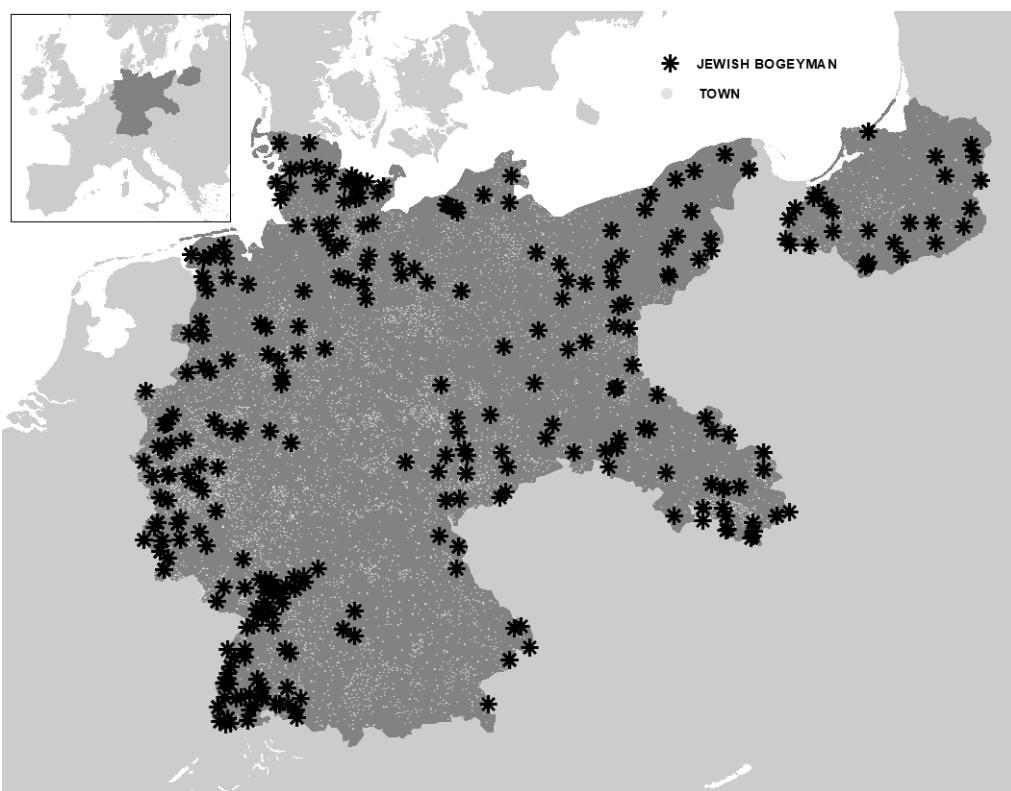
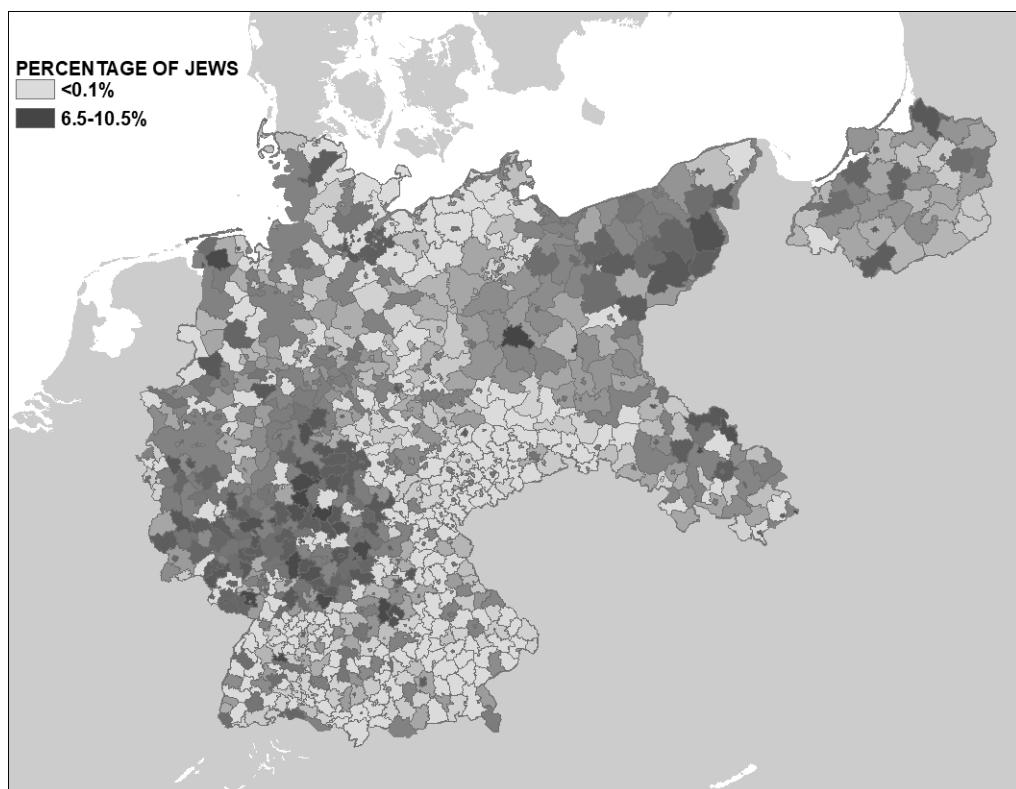


Figure 3: Creation of Border Crossing Variable.



(a) Jewish Bogeymen in Localities



(b) % Jews, 1925

Figure 4: Jews and Jewish Bogeymen in Weimar Germany.

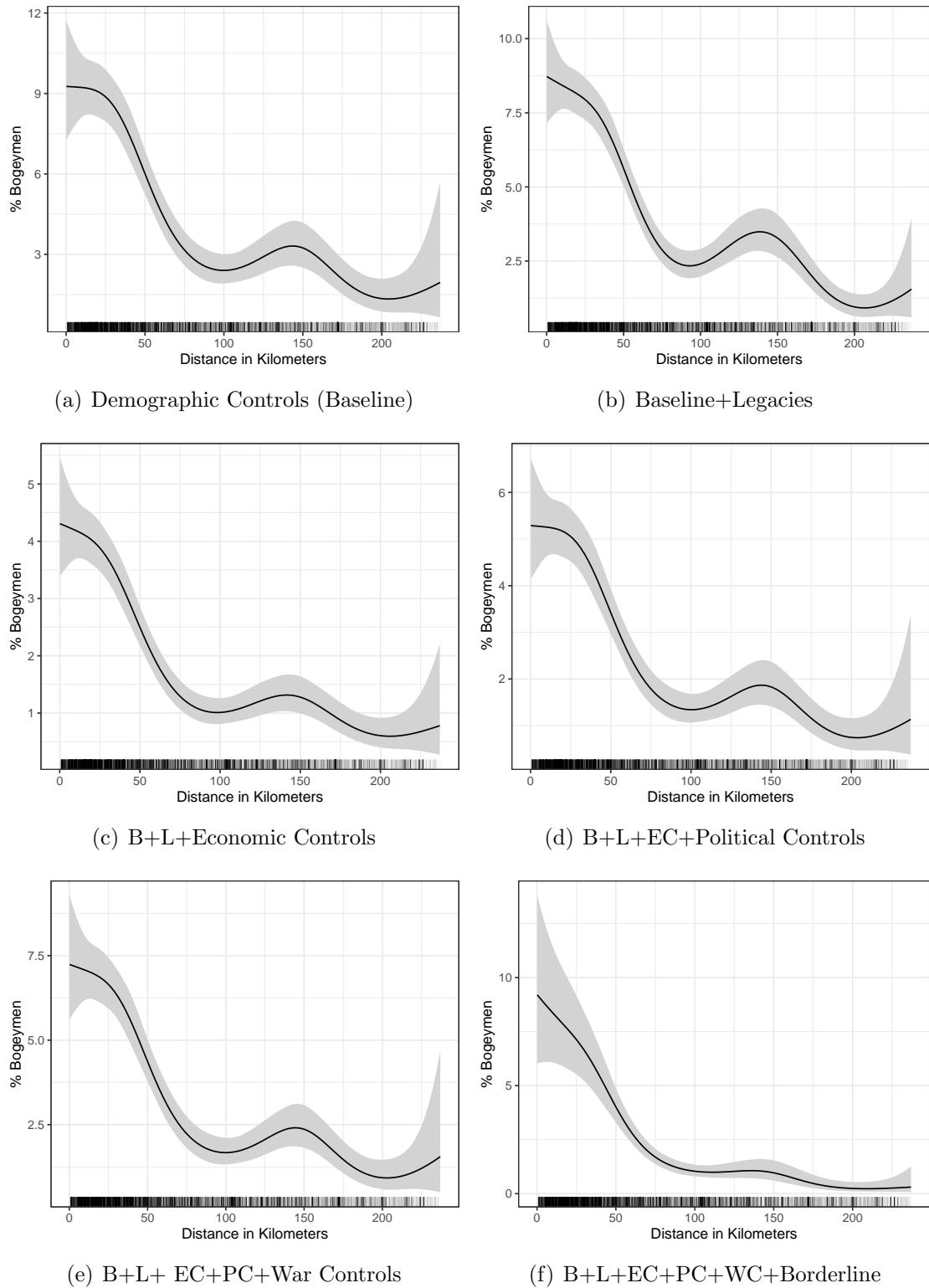


Figure 5: GAM-Models: Antisemitic Bogeymen and Distance from Border Crossing with 95 % Confidence Intervals.

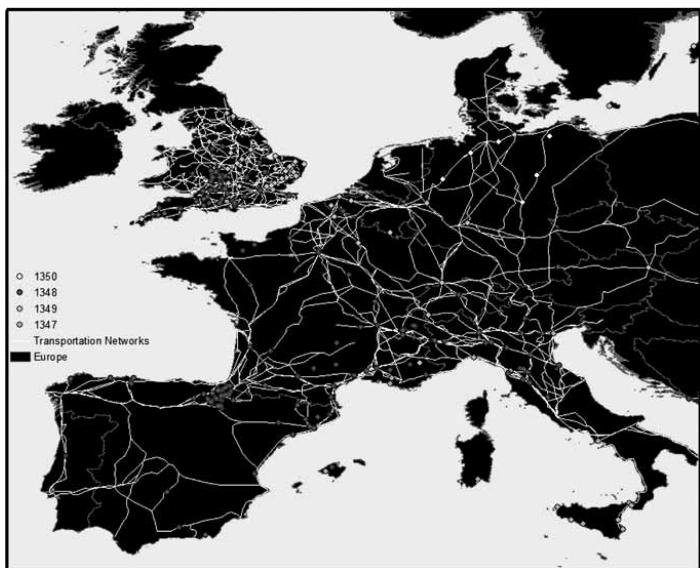


Figure 6: Pre-Plague Road Network (Welford and Bossak 2010).

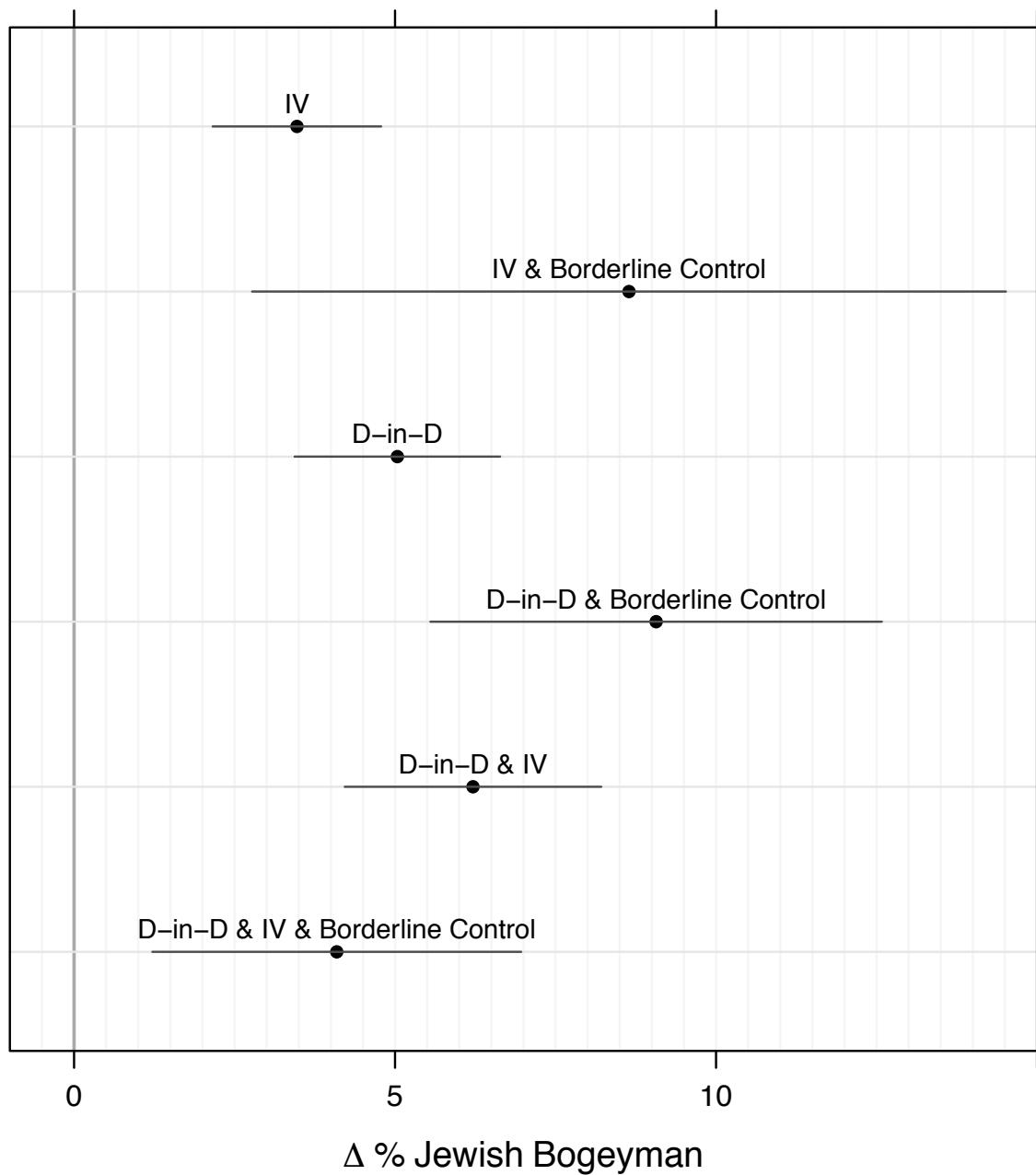


Figure 7: The effect of Increasing Proximity one SD on the % of Local Communities with Jewish Bogeymen using estimates of difference-in-difference (D-in-D) design and instrumental variable (IV) approach with and without borderline control.

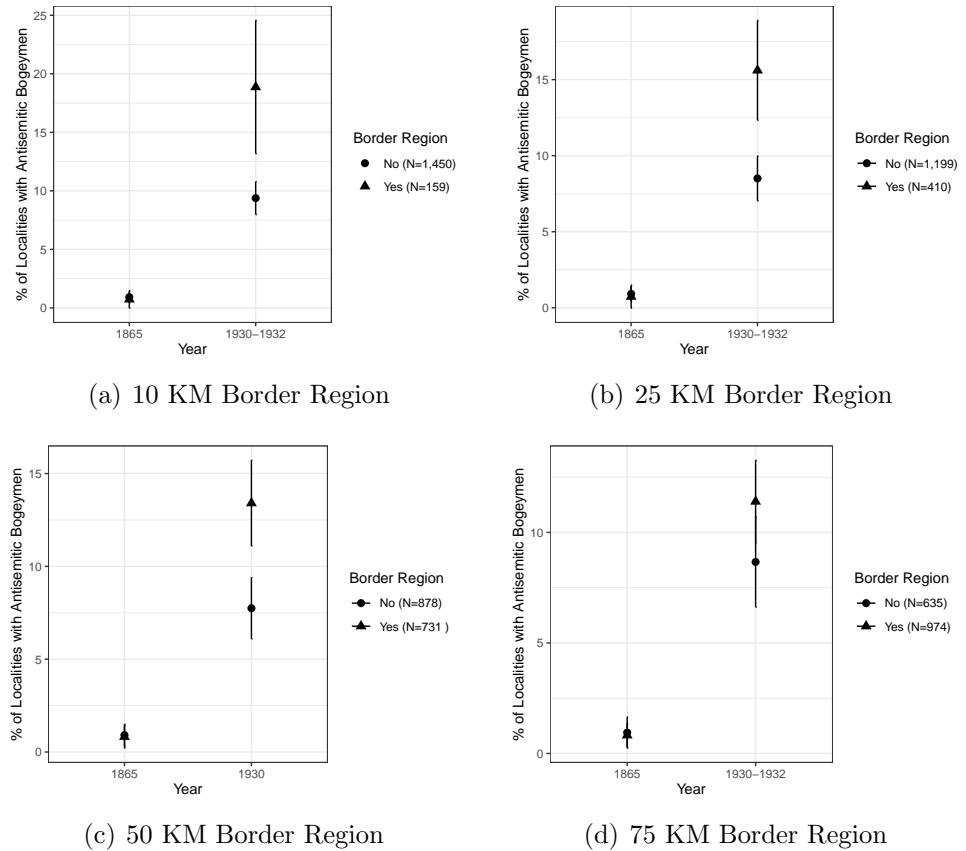


Figure 8: % of Villages with Jewish Bogeymen by Region before and after German Unification with 95 % Confidence Intervals.



(a) Translation: "The Cursed Hole in the West behind Goch is Wide Open."



(b) Translation: "Dutchmen come in Swarms because the Guilders weigh Heavily in their Pockets."

Figure 9: Emergency Money Published in the Town of Goch, 1922 (Feldman 1997).

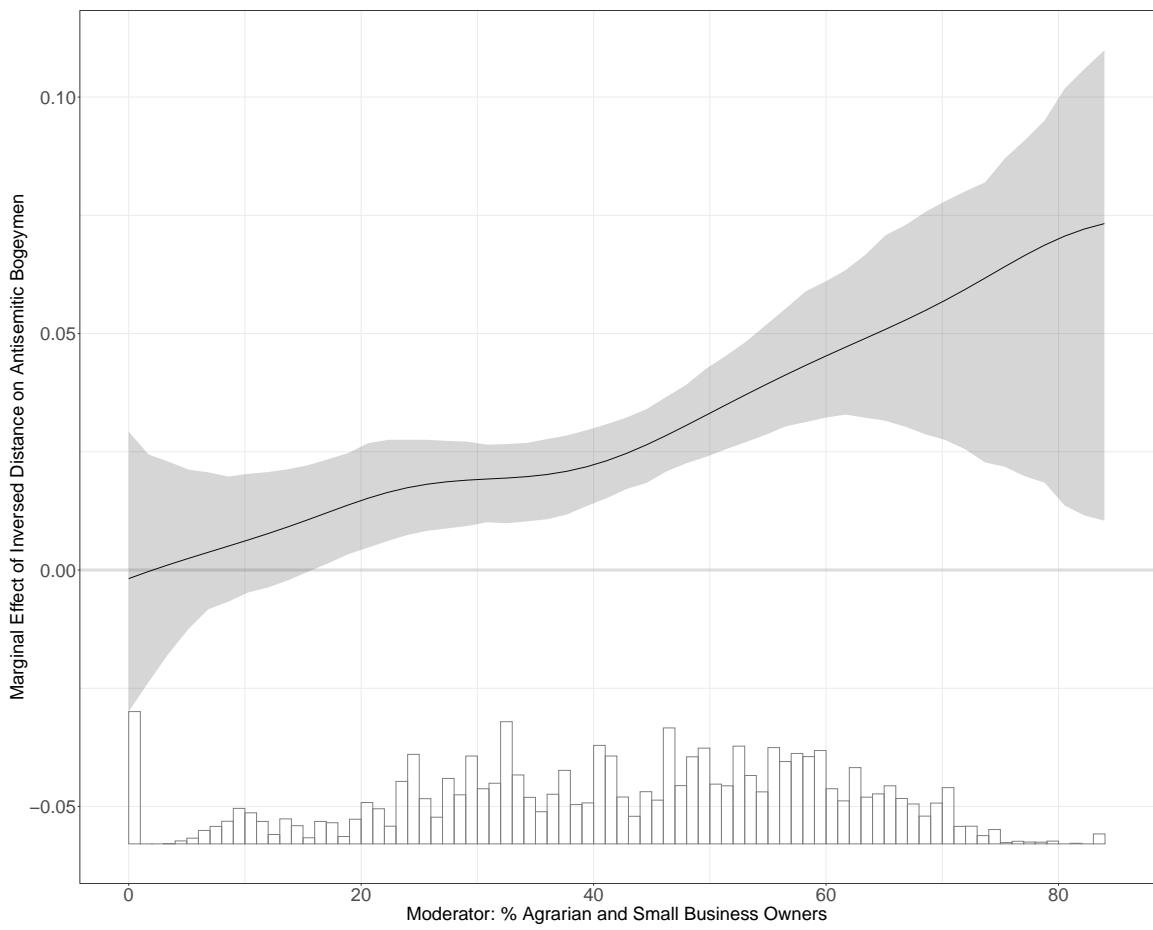
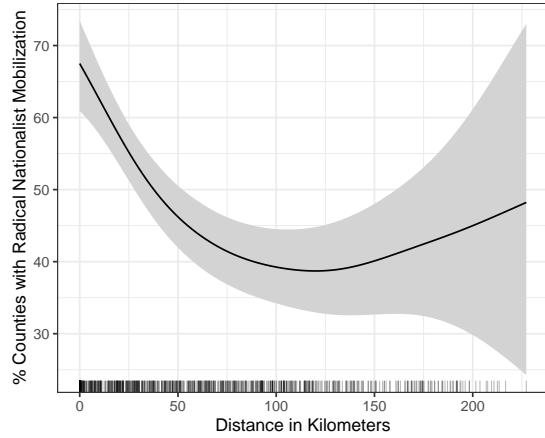
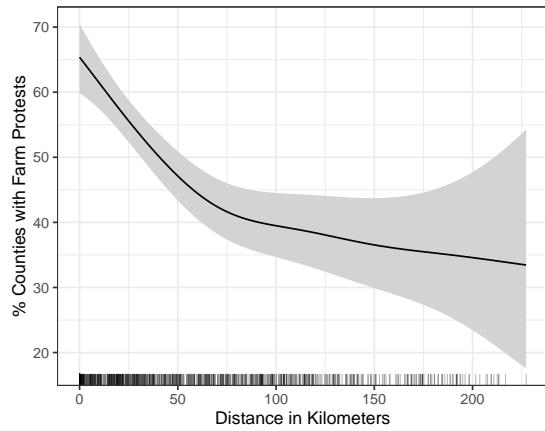


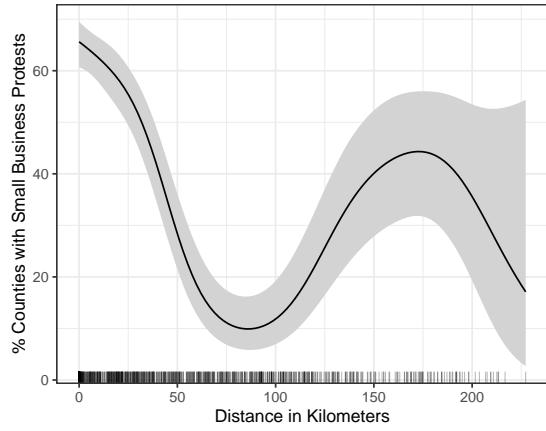
Figure 10: Marginal Effect of Increasing Proximity (logged) one SD Conditional on % Farmers + % Small Business Owners with 95 % Confidence Intervals.



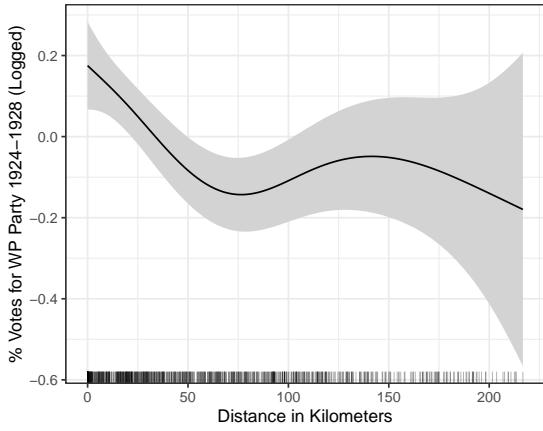
(a) % Counties with Radical Nationalist Mobilization



(b) % Countries with Pro-Protectionism Farmers



(c) % Countries with Small Business Owners  
Participation in Pro-Protectionism Protests



(d) % Votes for Business Party 1924-1928  
(Logged)

Figure 11: Generalized Additive Model (Full Set of Controls) of Radical Nationalist Mobilization, Pro-Protectionism Protests, Votes for Business Party and Distance to Border Crossings with 95 % Confidence Intervals

## Tables

Table 1: The Validity of Pre-Plague Border Crossroads as an Instrument.

	<i>1st stage:</i>		<i>Exclusion Test</i>	
	<i>OLS</i>		<i>Probit</i>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Prox. Border Crossing		Pogrom, 1349	Jewish Bogeyman, 1865
Prox. Pre-Plague Crossing	1.539*** (.065)	.404*** (.046)	-.085 (.283)	1.2788 (1.289)
Moran Eigen Vector	Y	Y	Y	Y
Demographic Controls	Y	Y	N	N
Legacies	Y	Y	N	N
Economic Controls	Y	Y	N	N
Political Controls	Y	Y	N	N
War Controls	Y	Y	N	N
Distance Borderline	N	Y	N	N
Communities	16,322	16,322	16,322	1,325
Counties	843	843	843	415
F-Statistic	556.37	76.11		

Model 1-2: Entries are Unstandardized Regression Coefficients.

Model 3-4: Entries are Probit Regression Coefficients.

County Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses.

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001 (Two-Tailed).

Table 2: The Effect of Exposure to Border Crossings on Presence Antisemitic Bogeymen:  
Results based on Pre-Plague Border Crossings.

	<i>Reduced Form:</i>		<i>Second Stage:</i>	
	<i>Probit</i>		<i>Probit</i>	
	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Jewish Bogeyman		Jewish Bogeyman	
Prox. Pre-Plague Crossing	.052*** (.011)	.033** (.013)		
Instrument			.318*** (.073)	.793** (.326)
Moran Eigen Vector	Y	Y	Y	Y
Demographic Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Legacies	Y	Y	Y	Y
Economic Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Political Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
War Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Distance Borderline	N	Y	N	Y
Communities	16,322	16,322	16,322	16,322
Counties	843	843	843	843

Entries are Probit Regression Coefficients.

County Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses.

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001 (Two-Tailed).