

The Death Camp Eldorado: Political and Economic Effects of Mass Violence

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Abstract

Transfer and redistribution of wealth accompany most violent conflicts throughout the world, yet the local-level political and economic effects of this phenomenon remain unexplored. We address this omission by examining the long-term impact on the surrounding communities of the Nazi death camp Treblinka in Poland, where nearly a million Jews were murdered. The assets of murdered Jews sometimes ended up in the hands of the local population. We are able to identify the enduring impact of these property transfers on local economic and political outcomes because the exact location of Treblinka was exogenous to the characteristics of surrounding communities. We find that communities located closer to the camp experienced a real estate boom but do not exhibit higher levels of economic and social development. These communities also showed higher support for an anti-Semitic party, the League of Polish Families. Our findings speak to an important but overlooked challenge to post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation.

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Introduction

“Nobody had nothing. Everybody had *something*.”

– Franz Stangl, Commandant of the Treblinka death camp

Since 1945, mass violence has claimed the lives of at least twelve million civilians (Harff 2003, 57). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 2015, 65.3 million people were forcibly displaced (UNHCR 2015). An inevitable feature of any large-scale killing and displacement of civilians is a transfer of wealth. The dead lose everything, while refugees leave behind houses, land, and valuables. The possessions of even the poorest can be of use to those who kill, expel, or simply stay put and survive.

Evidence from numerous conflicts around the world shows the magnitude and the pervasiveness of this phenomenon. During the partition of India and Pakistan, millions of acres of land and thousands of businesses were abandoned (Schechtman 1951) and later redistributed. In the Pakistani city of Lahore alone, almost 500 factories changed owners after the Partition (Talbot 2006, 93). In Israel/Palestine, the value of property left behind by Palestinian refugees and later taken over by the Israeli state amounts to at least 3 billion USD; the value of Jewish property left behind in various Arab states is estimated to have a similar worth (Levin 2001, 226-27, Lewis 1996). When the Iraqi city of Sinjar was liberated from ISIS in 2015, the Yazidi residents plundered the houses of fleeing Sunni neighbors, in “compensation” for their suffering under the Islamic State (Morris 2015).

Property transfers, a general category that includes a range of possible actions, such as confiscation and redistribution of assets by states and individuals, looting, extortion, and even grave digging, are a crucial component of mass violence, displacement, and refugee return processes (Phuong 2000), yet we know little about their local-level social and political consequences. Our understanding of this phenomenon is limited by the paucity of reliable data, and even more importantly, by the difficulty of isolating the impact of property redistribution from that of other aspects of conflict. Property transfers accompany periods of social upheaval and economic turmoil, which also affect behavior and attitudes. Property transfers and their effects are also endogenous to the preexisting intergroup

relations in a given community. Finally, the location of violence is rarely random, which complicates causal identification of the political and economic effects of property transfers.

Several scholars have studied the economic impact of mass violence, but either focused on the macro (national or province) level, or analyzed violence as a holistic process without distinguishing between different channels that may drive its effects (Acemoglu, Hassan, and Robinson 2011; Grosfeld, Rodnyansky, and Zhuravskaya 2011; Rogall and Yanagizawa-Drott 2013). The micro-level research centers on post-violence human capital (Bleakley and Ferrie 2016; Voigtländer and Voth 2012) and individual-level political activism and attitudes caused by exposure to violence (Blattman 2009; Grossman, Manekin, and Miodownik 2015). Studies that do focus on violence-related property transfers, important as they are, either present a general overview of the patterns of plunder (e.g., Dean 2008; Rickman 2007) or provide isolated evidence of the process and its inherent gruesomeness (e.g., Aly 2006; Gross and Grudzinska-Gross 2012).

This article examines the lasting effects of conflict-related property transfers by focusing on a morally charged but theoretically and empirically important case study—the acquisition of Jewish valuables by the population living near the Treblinka death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland.¹ The exact location of the camp was a German decision, exogenous to the behavior and the views of the local population. This allows us to address important identification concerns that affect existing research. Located in northeastern Poland, Treblinka was the largest killing center of Operation Reinhard (*Einsatz Reinhard, ER*)—the Nazi effort to exterminate the Jews of Poland. Subsequently, the camp’s functions expanded to include the extermination of Jews from other European countries.² Overall, during the camp’s operation in 1942-1943, Nazis and their collaborators killed 850,000 to 900,000 Jews in Treblinka. Believing German assurances that Treblinka was a labor camp or a transit point from which the Jews would be sent to perform agricultural work in Nazi-occupied Ukraine, many victims took valuables with them to this final destination. After the Jews were gassed, their property – jewelry, golden dental work, money, clothing and tools – was collected, sorted, and sent to Ger-

¹Several scholars of the period, such as Dean (2008), Stola (2007), Gross (2007, 39) and Fritzsche (2016, 184) also use the term “property transfers” or “transfers of property” to describe the acquisition of Jewish goods by non-Jews.

²Treblinka was a single-purpose killing center; more Holocaust victims were killed in Auschwitz, which was a combined death/concentration/labor camp.

many. However, even though the German authorities strove to secure all Jewish loot, their ability to do so was limited, and some Jewish valuables ended up in the hands of the local Polish population, at first through trade with the camp guards and later through grave digging. Such behaviors were so widespread that a nearby village, Wólka Okrąglik, is still locally known as Golden Wólka (*Złota Wólka*).

This article focuses on the political and economic effects of the acquisition of Jewish property at the micro level by analyzing communities located within a forty-mile radius of Treblinka. We find that the effects of property transfers are highly localized: they are most pronounced in the immediate vicinity of the camp and decline precipitously with distance. Politically, proximity to the camp is associated with higher electoral support for an anti-Semitic party, the League of Polish Families, in the 2001 parliamentary election, when Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust were a salient national issue. We also find that proximity to the death camp is associated with newer and better housing stock during the Communist period. At the same time, we find no evidence that property transfers have affected levels of economic activity, migration patterns, or levels of human development in the area.

By focusing on the long-run political and socio-economic impact of wartime property transfers at the local level, this article makes an important contribution to the study of politics and society in post-conflict states and improves our understanding of the legacies of war, violence, and displacement.

Treblinka: Background

The Nazis established the Treblinka death camp (also known as Treblinka II) in July 1942, when the extermination of Jews was already underway in two other ER camps, Belżec and Sobibór. The camp's general placement was influenced by its proximity to Małkinia, a railway junction equidistant from the two major urban centers Warsaw and Białystok. At the same time, to keep the killing secret, the camp was built in a secluded area; a separate railroad was constructed to transport the victims from Małkinia to the killing center (Arad 1987; Kogon 1947).

In the vicinity of Małkinia, the exact placement of the camp was exogenous to the attributes and

behavior of the local population. Official Nazi documents offer no detailed information on the decision to locate the camp at its exact site, near the Polish village of Treblinka, and the decision appears to have been made locally by the official in charge of the camp's construction, SS Hauptsturmführer (Captain) Richard Thomalla. The specific site was likely selected due to its proximity to a small stone quarry and a penal labor camp (Treblinka I), the prisoners of which could be employed in the construction of Treblinka II. Both the quarry and the penal labor camp predated the Nazi decision to exterminate the Jews (Arad 1987, 37). The local Polish population did not know in advance about the purpose of the camp and was not involved in its operation. The camp's activities were officially secret, which suggests that Germans did not view the locals as potentially supportive of their plans.

The camp was divided into three sections. The first section contained the housing of the German staff, the barracks of the non-German guards, and the living quarters of some of the camp's Jewish prison laborers. The second section, also known as the Lower Camp, was the reception area where the trains bringing Jews to the camp were offloaded. There the Jews were ordered to undress and to hand over all their valuables for "safekeeping" (Webb and Chocholaty 2014, 38). Specially designated Jewish prison laborers conducted body searches to ensure that no valuables remained hidden. Later on, the valuables were sorted and stored in special warehouses. A detail of prison laborers, called the Goldjuden (Gold Jews), was in charge of collecting gemstones and precious metals (Arad 1987, 108).

From the Lower Camp, a path known as the "Road to Heaven" led to the Upper Camp with the gas chambers, designed to look like showers. After the chambers closed, carbon monoxide was pumped inside. Once those inside the gas chambers died, Jewish prison laborers, called the "Dentists," removed gold and platinum dental work. The money, gemstones, and precious metals collected by the Dentists and the Goldjuden were later sent to the ER headquarters in Lublin. According to one of the "Dentists," about eighty pounds of gold alone were sent each week (Arad 1987, 158). Other items, such as fountain pens, shoes, clothing, and hair were transported by special trains.

The dead were buried in mass graves. The victims' bodies were not cremated until 1943, when the camp authorities ordered the Jewish prisoners to open the graves and burn bodies in order to destroy the evidence of mass murder. However, this task was never completed. On August 2, 1943 the Jewish prisoners of Treblinka rebelled, and approximately 300 were able to escape. Most were caught and

killed, but some managed to survive.

In November 1943, after killing 850,000 to 900,000 Jews in 16 months, the camp ceased operations. The region was liberated from Nazi occupation by Soviet troops in July 1944. In large part because its victims were almost exclusively Jews, “the camp did not even figure on the map of Polish martyrdom sites” in the postwar period, remaining largely unknown to the Polish public until the 1990s (Kuwalek 2014, Woycicka 2013, 188-189). Until 1963, no commemorative ceremonies were held at the site of the camp, and a memorial to the victims was only erected in 1964 (Webb and Chocholaty 2014, 122). An on-site museum opened as late as 2006.

The key purpose of Treblinka was murder, but plunder was also important. The amount of money, gold, and gemstones stolen from the victims was gargantuan – it is estimated that 1,250-1,500 train cars full of goods were sent to Germany (Levin 2004, 179–80). The Nazi authorities sought to secure all Jewish valuables, yet in practice this was impossible. Quite a few Jews did not voluntarily deliver their valuables to the Germans, and the Dentists and the *Goldjuden* sometimes overlooked gold, gemstones, or money hidden by the victims on their bodies or inside their luggage. Additionally, theft was rampant. The Treblinka staff simply helped themselves to Jewish valuables. The Jewish prisoners were severely punished for any attempts to hide valuables, but some still managed to pocket goods later used to bribe guards, acquire weapons for the camp’s underground resistance organization, or get food (Chrostowski 2004 66, Glazar 1995, 61, 121, Rajchman 2011, 134). Franz Stangl, the second commandant of Treblinka, describes his arrival to the camp as follows:

I stepped knee-deep into money ... I waded in notes, currency, precious stones, jewelry, clothes. They were everywhere ... I went to the mess for some coffee and talked to some of the officers. They said they had great fun; shooting [Jews] was 'sport'; there was more money and stuff around than one could dream of, all there for the taking (Sereny 1974, 157, 160).

Jankiel Wiernik (1944, 10, 26), a Jewish survivor, offers an almost identical description. Treblinka’s small German staff and the more numerous non-German guards thus quickly amassed considerable wealth. “[They] had so much money that they did not even bother to touch it. I think that

they all became millionaires in Treblinka,” recalled Abraham Kszepicki, a Jewish prisoner. Going on home leave, the Germans would take along suitcases of Jewish loot (Arad 1987, 162). The non-German guards, predominately Soviet POWs who had switched allegiances during the war, spent their money on food, alcohol, and even sex in nearby villages, as the influx of cash gave rise to prostitution in exchange for money and valuables. Otto Horn, the camp’s SS nurse, recalled that the guards “were always foraging in the villages for food and drinks” (Sereny 1974, 196; see also Wiernik 1944, 22; Glazar 1995, 71). According to a Polish source, the guards paid “without even counting the bills” (Arad 1987, 163).

The trade between the guards and Poles in the surrounding rural communities took place only during the short period that the camp was operational, between 1942 and 1943. A much longer period of looting started after the camp was dismantled. The Jewish-Polish writer Rachela Auerbach, who visited Treblinka in November 1945, was appalled by “all kinds of pilferers and robbers with spades and shovels in their hands [who] were digging and searching and raking and straining the sand” (quoted in Arad 1987, 379). For years, the locals would visit the site of the camp in search of valuables that the victims might have hidden or the Dentists and the Germans might have missed.

Auerbach’s report and others like it eventually prompted the Ministry of Public Administration to urge local authorities in December 1945 to stop the plunder, but the digging continued. Some people were arrested for plundering mass graves, but no charges were brought (Woycicka 2013, 235–236). In journalistic and eyewitness accounts from the area, terms like “Eldorado”, “Klondike”, and “gold rush” are often used (Gross and Grudzinska-Gross 2012, 21; Rusiniak 2006, Woycicka 2013, 236). As late as 2008, a resident of Wólka Okraglik, the village closest to Treblinka, told journalists: “My brother-in-law found a diamond as big as a half of a big toenail. But he drank it away, didn’t even build a barn. Others have instead built houses and not only that – entire farms.” Another man encouraged the journalists to visit his neighbor: “Ask him how the jewelers came all the way from Warsaw to evaluate the gems in his backyard!” (Głuchowski and Kowalski 2008).

Case Selection

For decades, political scientists have largely overlooked the Holocaust. However, following the recent micro-level turn in violence research (e.g., Kalyvas 2006), the discipline has witnessed a growing interest in the topic (Braun 2016; Dumitru and Johnson 2011; Finkel 2015; King 2012; Kopstein and Wittenberg 2011). The key feature of these new studies is their focus on sub-national variation. Because of its geographic span, the Holocaust offers numerous opportunities for quantitative and mixed-method analysis. Other important advantages of studying the Holocaust are the availability of qualitative and quantitative data and the opportunity to analyze long-term effects of violence (Acemoglu, Hassan, and Robinson 2011; Charnysh 2015; Grosfeld, Rodnyansky, and Zhuravskaya 2011), something that cannot yet be done for more recent conflicts.

In the case of the Holocaust, Treblinka offers a unique opportunity to study the impact of violence-related property transfers. The precise location of the camp was a German decision, exogenous to the characteristics of the local population; the trade with the guards and campsite digging were localized phenomena; the killing and the camp's day-to-day operation did not involve the Polish population; there were few Jews in the surrounding villages before and after the Holocaust; and the Polish government for decades after the war neither prevented grave digging nor held commemorative activities at the camp. During and after WWII, villages in the region were subject to the same macro-level policies and shocks regardless of whether they benefited from Jewish property. This combination of factors allows us to evaluate the impact of property transfers by analyzing the communities located in the general vicinity of the camp: the closer to the camp, the higher the level of property transfers as a result of wartime trade and post-WWII looting.

It is important to note that our empirical strategy is not that of “ideal case” causal identification. While we have no reasons to believe that communities closer to or further away from the camp systematically differed from one another before the war, pre-WWII census data do not exist at such a granular level. Yet even with these identification and data constraints, Treblinka remains the best available empirical setting for measuring the impact of Holocaust-era property transfers.

Treblinka is not the only Holocaust-era death camp for which evidence of local enrichment from

trade and grave digging exists. However, because of post-WWII border shifts, two other ER camps, Bełżec and Sobibór, wound up close to the new Soviet (now Ukrainian) border (see Figure 1). As a result, the surrounding communities were affected by population exchanges between the USSR and Poland and later experienced vastly different political, social, and economic realities.

Figure 1: **Former Nazi Extermination Camps on the Territory of Contemporary Poland.**



The Majdanek death camp is located on the outskirts of Lublin, a large and dynamic urban center that was 30% Jewish before the war, which limits our ability to isolate the effect of wartime property transfers. The region also had a sizable Ukrainian minority that was expelled after WWII, so many beneficiaries of the Holocaust left. The Chelmino (Kulmhof) death camp was in an area annexed to

the German Reich and subject to massive population movements during and after the war. The area around Auschwitz also experienced post-WWII population exchanges. Furthermore, Auschwitz is a place of martyrdom not only for Jews, but also for Poles, and has been a major site of commemoration throughout the postwar period.

Unlike all other Holocaust death camps, the Treblinka area did not witness major border shifts or population movements. The only possible concern is that during the Nazi occupation Treblinka was located 20 km from the border between the General Government (GG), which encompassed central and southeastern Poland, and *Bezirk* (District) *Bialystok* (BB), an administrative unit that the Nazis planned to annex to the German Reich. However, BB was never formally annexed to Germany and the day-to-day life of local communities was not vastly different in the two zones. Furthermore, nothing prevented the former BB population from going to Treblinka to dig for Jewish valuables after the end of the Nazi occupation.

Finally, it should be remembered that communities surrounding the death camps were not the only places where the transfer of Jewish property took place. Jewish homes and property were taken over or distributed to non-Jews all over Europe. But importantly, these other property transfers were often endogenous to pre-WWII relations between Jews and non-Jews. The Treblinka area, due to the exogenous placement of the death camp, population stability during and after the war, and the relatively small number of Jews in the countryside before the Holocaust, is a unique case that allows us to identify the effects of Jewish property on the surrounding communities.

Theory and Expectations

Economic Impact

Mass violence is generally associated with the destruction of physical and human capital as well as the interruption of productive economic activity. The resultant economic costs may be short-lived, however. In a study of the effects of the 1994 Rwandan Civil War, Verpooten and Berlage 2007 find that by 2002 household income and assets had largely returned to prewar levels. Studies on

wartime bombing conclude that societies can fully recover within two decades (Brakman, Garretsen, and Schramm 2004; Koubi 2005; Miguel and Roland 2011).

By contrast, the Holocaust, with an estimated death toll of six million Jews, had more persistent economic effects. Acemoglu, Hassan, and Robinson (2011) link the severity of the Holocaust to lower per capita income and lower population growth in Russian cities and regions. Aklubut-Yuksel and Yuksel (2015) find that the removal of Jewish professionals from the civil service lowered the level of human capital among Germans who were of school age during the Nazi period.

While studies of mass violence focus on the destruction of physical or human capital, they have not considered the implications of the redistribution of wealth from victims to perpetrators and bystanders. This is striking because greed is construed by some scholars as a key motivation in conflict (e.g., Collier and Hoeffler 2004) and because property transfers have played an important role in most historical episodes of mass violence. To the extent that the victims' possessions are redistributed to the perpetrators, bystanders, and/or survivors, mass violence may produce economic benefits. Indeed, Rogall and Yanagizawa-Drott (2013) find that six years after the Rwandan genocide, households in villages that experienced more violence owned more assets and had higher output per capita and consumption levels. In antebellum Georgia, the 1832 land lottery, which redistributed the land of the expelled Cherokee, produced long-term economic benefits for some of the winners (Bleakley and Ferrie 2013). Relatedly, studies show that the Holocaust not only enriched broad segments of the German population (Aly 2006), but also benefitted non-Jews in Nazi-occupied territories (Bartov 2008). Thus, even as WWII devastated the Polish economy as a whole, some Poles may have become materially better off at the expense of the murdered Jews.

A large portion of the newly acquired wealth in the Treblinka area was in the form of jewelry, gold, and foreign currency, the preferred means of storing capital not only in the 1940s, but also for the entire duration of state socialism (Kochanowski 2015). How and when the Jewish valuables were spent was shaped by the political and economic climate in postwar Poland. Importantly, Jewish property represented a finite resource, such that spending it in one way reduced the ability to spend it in other ways.

During and immediately after WWII, the rule of law in Poland was extremely weak. Currency

and gold could easily be destroyed, lost, or stolen. Productive assets, such as machinery or livestock, were no safer than cash as they could be confiscated by the authorities or stolen (with varying degrees of impunity) by bandits or greedy neighbors. Following the imposition of the Communist regime, order was restored but the protection of property rights remained limited. In 1946, most industries were nationalized; the remaining private businesses were marginalized through administrative and legal encroachments during the Stalinist period (1948-1956). Buying a good in order to resell it at a higher price was defined as speculation and punished with fines and prison sentences. The sale of agricultural produce by private producers was restricted and land ownership lacked constitutional protections until 1983.

Under these circumstances, consumption was a ready means to dispense wealth. A number of historic and journalistic accounts of Treblinka mention heavy drinking. Some peasant women in the area around Treblinka were seen wearing furs and expensive clothes during the war, suggesting that the Jewish valuables were used to purchase luxury goods (Arad 1987, 163). In post-war Poland, the coveted goods were radios, TV sets, and cars. If consumed immediately or hidden during uncertain times and spent on luxury goods in the 1960s and 1970s, property transfers would have a limited long-term economic impact.

H_{1A}: Property transfers increased consumption.

Another potentially attractive option was investment in real estate: houses and roofs could not be easily stolen, and the government had little interest in expropriating a rural dwelling. Anecdotal evidence from Treblinka suggests that the locals began to invest the looted valuables in building new homes and renovating existing ones as soon as the fighting ended. In 1947, journalist Jerzy Rawicz wrote: “[V]illages around Treblinka have been beautifully restored. Instead of ramshackle dwellings there are houses with tiled roofs. Where did those people get the money to do this? There were no special loans for the Treblinka district” (quoted in Wóycicka 2013, 236). Another observer noted that “thatched roofs were gone, replaced by sheet metal” (Gross and Grudzinska-Gross 2012, 31).

H_{1B}: Property transfers increased investment in real estate.

Alternatively, the loot could have been invested in productive assets such as agricultural equipment, farm animals, and workshop tools (Kochanowski 2015). In the long run, such investment could

produce higher incomes, greater entrepreneurship, and higher human capital. After 1956, such use of acquired wealth was not impossible as Poland maintained private ownership of agricultural property and allowed private activities in the retail and craft sectors, unlike many other Communist countries (Kornai 1992). Nevertheless, the danger of expropriation was ever present and arbitrary taxation and frequent regulatory changes hampered private economic activity until the 1980s. Furthermore, holding on to the loot and investing it in productive assets once the political environment changed would require considerable foresight, risk propensity, skills, and entrepreneurial spirit. Studies of wealth transfers in states with property rights protections superior to Poland have found no evidence that a one-time increase in a family's assets improves economic wellbeing in the long run. In particular, Bleakley and Ferrie (2016, 1492) conclude that children of the 1832 Cherokee Land Lottery winners "did not have more wealth, literacy, or income as adults." We investigate whether the long-run economic benefits were similarly negligible in communities that benefitted from Treblinka by testing the following hypothesis:

H_{1c}: Property transfers led to (a) the investment in productive assets in the medium term and (b) better developmental outcomes in the long term.

Political Impact

Existing studies have not systematically explored the political impact of wartime property transfers. Studies on the political effects of the Holocaust have linked the elimination of the Jewish middle class to greater electoral support for the Communists in Russian regions (Acemoglu, Hassan, and Robinson 2011) and to lower interest in politics among the affected cohorts in Germany (Akbulut-Yuksel and Yuksel 2015).

Can mass violence affect political attitudes via property transfers, a channel distinct from changes in social structure? An implicit argument in research on Nazi economic policies is that benefitting from Jewish wealth made the German population more supportive of the Nazis (Aly 2006). This article considers two channels connecting wartime property transfers to political attitudes. One is material interest: beneficiaries of wartime redistribution acquire a stake in perpetuating the new status

quo and perceive victims as a threat to their new possessions. Material interest could partly explain why postwar property restitution initiatives are fraught with tension and, in the case of the Holocaust-era transfers, have been argued to produce anti-Semitism (Dean 2008, 213; Fritzsche 2016, 184; Gross 2007; Polonsky 1997, 200-203; Stola 2007).

The second channel draws on the social psychology literature and emphasizes the need for cognitive consistency. Research on cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) shows that people who have acted immorally and inconsistently with their beliefs experience psychological discomfort and may seek to restore a positive self-image by vilifying the victims, denying wrongdoing, or blaming the circumstances (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006; Iyer, Leach, and Crosby 2003). Rationalization may be most likely when past actions are exposed and criticized (Staub 1997). This type of reaction is common not only among those who acted immorally, but also among their descendants, co-nationals, and co-ethnics. Revelations about ingroup transgressions were found to evoke defensive responses, such as derogating the victims and minimizing ingroup complicity (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Schiffhauer 2007; Rotella and Richeson 2013). Facing criticism for behavior during the Holocaust may increase negative attitudes toward Jews and undermine reconciliation, as posited by the “secondary anti-Semitism” theory (Imhoff and Banse 2009).

According to a number of scholars, in the case of Poland, the material and psychological factors are so closely intertwined that they cannot be analytically separated from each other (Gross 2007; Polonsky 1997, 203; Tymowski 2002, 303).³ Theoretically, both mechanisms lead us to expect that communities in the vicinity of the death camp will demonstrate greater support for parties that protect the existing status quo, both material and normative/psychological.

H_{2A}: Property transfers led to greater electoral support for parties that deny any Polish wrongdoing during the Holocaust.

Relatedly, if residents of areas that benefitted from Jewish wealth have more at stake in the elections centered on Polish-Jewish relations, they may be more likely to vote in such elections.

H_{2B}: Property transfers led to higher turnout in elections focused on the Holocaust.

³For example, in a study of a town in central Poland, Törnquist-Plewa (2006, 218) suggests that antisemitism helped to view property transfer during WWII “as historical justice” and “to morally legitimise, for oneself and for others, the right to the acquired Jewish property.”

Data and Methods

Unit of Analysis

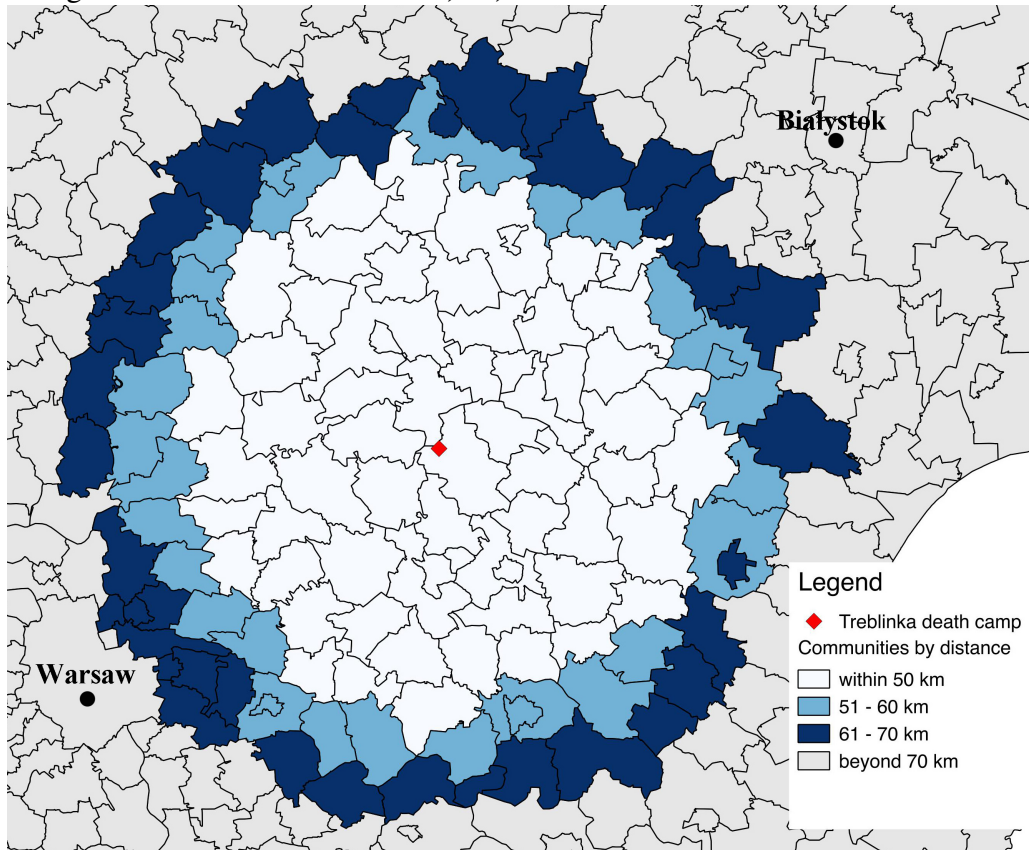
Our unit of analysis is community (*gmina*, pl. *gminy*), the smallest administrative unit for which statistical data are available. Because Polish Jews were predominantly town and city dwellers, we exclude urban *gminas* where the impact of property transfers cannot be isolated from other aspects of Polish-Jewish relations before, during, and after the Holocaust. First, we sample communities located up to 50 km (~31 miles) from Treblinka, then we increase the distance from the camp to 60 km (~37 miles) and 70 km (~44 miles). The 50-km radius offers the best test: it allows for holding constant important confounders, such as regional histories, economy, geography, or modes of agricultural work, and yet accounts for the important variation in the exposure to the property of Jews murdered in Treblinka. In the 1940s, people living 50 km away from the camp could still travel to Treblinka and back in one day. However, their motivation to do so would be weaker than that of the population at shorter distances, because they would need to devote more time and effort to an activity with uncertain returns. The key disadvantage of restricting the sample to the communities within a 50-km radius is small sample size. Expanding the radius increases the sample but introduces more sources of heterogeneity into the data. We do not consider communities located outside the 70-km radius because, as clearly seen in Figure 2, they include the exurbs of Warsaw and Białystok, which are quite different from rural communities in the vicinity of the camp.

Independent Variable

Our “treatment” is the acquisition of the Holocaust victims’ property by residents of local communities during and after the operation of the death camp. We use *Distance to Treblinka* as a proxy for the exposure to Jewish valuables. This approach is not a perfect solution, as not everyone in the vicinity of the camp engaged in trade with guards or dug through the ashes and graves. However, the opportunities for enrichment certainly declined as a function of distance to Treblinka. The closer to the death camp a community was, the more likely would some of its residents have learned about “Treblinka gold,” traded with the camp guards, or later dug for gold.

We measure Euclidian distance (“as the crow flies”) from the geometric center of each community.

Figure 2: Communities at a 50, 60, and 70-km Distance from Treblinka.



A more accurate distance measure for communities located further from the camp would take into account historical roads, bridges and natural obstacles. However, we lack the comprehensive data needed to measure such distances, as historical maps include only major paved roads, which were less likely to be used by peasants travelling by bicycle, crossing fields and forests, or avoiding paved roads in fear of encountering a checkpoint or getting robbed.

We use the natural logarithm of distance to account for the fact that enrichment opportunities dropped more precipitously at shorter distances than at longer distances. First, anecdotal evidence suggests that the local population protected “their” Jewish loot from outsiders (Bikont 2015; Grabowski 2013). In a telling example, after a pogrom in Radziłów (July 1941), peasants from Wąsosz tried to join the looting, but were turned away because Wąsosz is 17 km (10.5 miles) away from the town, while the peasants from Konopki, located only 4 km (2.5 miles) away, were allowed by the local plunderers to take part (Gross 2007, 42). Relatedly, residents of communities at relatively short distances

were able to visit the camp more frequently and thus could benefit from Jewish wealth disproportionately more than people from more distant localities. Second, peasants at more proximate distances did not need to rely on transportation, so for them each additional kilometer would matter more than for peasants travelling from greater distances who were forced to rely on bicycles, horses, trains, and buses. Using the logarithmic transformation allows us to account for this dynamic: the differences between short distances matter more than differences between long distances.⁴

Dependent Variables

To measure the effects of exposure to Jewish property, we draw on community-level data from a variety of historical and contemporary sources, summarized in Table A1 in the Appendix. We use the earliest community-level measures that are available for each indicator. Because communities' borders changed over time, our sample size varies slightly across periods. We digitized community-level maps for interwar, immediate postwar, pre-1999 and post-1999 Poland to adjust distance measurement in accordance with administrative changes.

Consumption

The data on immediate post-WWII consumption at the community level are unavailable. We are, however, able to measure the prevalence of (1) radio subscribers (*Radios*) and (2) TV subscribers (*TVs*) per 1,000 people in each community in 1976 (earliest available). TVs and radios were highly sought-after luxury goods during the socialist period. It is possible that Jewish valuables were used to purchase other items, such as cars, but such data are unavailable at the community level. It should be emphasized that we do not analyze whether luxury goods acquired immediately after the Holocaust were still owned and used in the 1970s. Rather, we examine the possibility that Jewish valuables were hidden during the immediate post-war period and spent when radios and TVs became available.

Real Estate

To examine whether the areas located closer to the death camp experienced a construction boom, we use the 1988 national census available from Poland's Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS*). The census groups dwellings in each community by period of construction into the following categories: (1) before 1918; (2) 1918-1944; (3) 1945-1970; (4) 1971-1978; and (5)

⁴In the Appendix Table A6, we explore alternative functional forms.

1979-1988. We use the share of *Dwellings Built in 1945-1970* as a dependent variable.⁵

The 1988 census also provides data on the quality of the roof material. It groups dwellings into those with (1) metal (*blacha*) roofs; (2) asbestos or asphalt shingle (*eternit i dachówka*) roofs; (3) tar (*papa*) roofs; and (4) “other” roofs. In postwar Poland, tar and asbestos were cheaper than asphalt shingle, which, in turn, was cheaper than metal. Thus, we use community-level shares of *Dwellings with Metal Roofs* from the total number of dwellings as an indicator of higher investment in real estate.

An obvious explanation for the variation in the quality of housing could be the extent of wartime destruction. To account for this possibility, we control for *Shares Farmhouses Destroyed* in 1945.⁶ The extent of rural destruction in the vicinity of Treblinka – Węgrow (18%) and Sokołów (14%) counties – is lower than in Warsaw county (27%) and suggests that the area suffered relatively mild damage.

Productive Assets

The data on individual investment decisions in socialist Poland are extremely limited. To evaluate investment in productive assets, we collected data on private entrepreneurship outside of agriculture in 1982 (*In Handicrafts*⁷ per 1,000 people); on the number of privately owned shops (*Shops* per 1,000 people); and on trade volume (*Trade* in Złoty per person). We also collected data on privately owned *Cattle* per 100 hectares (ha) in 1976 as a measure of productive assets in agriculture. Here, we are interested in the medium- and long-term effects, but do not assume a time lag between property transfers and investment. Both immediate post-WWII and delayed investment in productive assets might have had enduring downstream economic effects.

Political Effects

Communist-era elections, neither free nor fair, are unhelpful for measuring local political attitudes. In the post-communist period, most elections focused on economic reforms and communist legacies rather than on WWII issues. The main exception is the 2001 parliamentary election, in which the Holocaust was salient due to the 2000 publication of *Neighbors (Sąsiedzi)*, by the Polish-American

⁵Because it is possible that some of the new homes and roofs appeared during the camp’s operation, we may be underestimating the effects of property transfers by using this variable.

⁶Available only at the county level.

⁷In communist Poland, most small private industries were classified as handicrafts.

historian Jan Tomasz Gross. The book exposed the Jedwabne massacre of the summer of 1941, in which Jews were killed by their Polish neighbors. The controversy surrounding the book, likened in salience to the Vietnam War in the United States (Tymowski 2002, 292), gave politicians “an opportunity to formulate and show their differences of opinion on the Polish past” (Wolentarska-Ochman 2003, 172).

Three main positions emerged in this debate. The left and center parties expressed full acceptance of Poland’s responsibility for the murder of the Jedwabne Jews.⁸ Parties associated with the disintegrating Solidarity camp, on the other hand, were divided. On the extreme right side of the debate was the League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR*), formed in May 2000. LPR politicians campaigned by denying the pogrom and claimed that blaming Poles for the massacre was a provocation by Jews seeking to undermine Poland’s reputation (Pankowski 2010). This extreme right party was also no stranger to anti-Semitic rhetoric. We discuss the LPR position in more detail in the Appendix (p. 4 and Figures A1 and A2).

Unlike the LPR, the less radical Solidarity offshoots—the Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS*), which quickly emerged as the main party of the Polish right, Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska, PO*), and the Solidarity Electoral Action of the Right (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność Prawicy, AWSP*) – accepted that individual Poles murdered Jews, but criticized Gross’s research as inaccurate. PiS leadership, in particular, became an important force among those who adopted the “restrained criticism” approach (Wolentarska-Ochman 2003).⁹

Another, though substantially less salient debate taking place in Poland prior to the 2001 election focused on the restitution of property expropriated by the Nazi and Communist regimes. In January 2001, the lower house of the Polish Parliament (*Sejm*) passed a reprivatization law that entitled former property owners and their descendants to receive restitution in kind (when possible) or monetary compensation for up to 50% of the current value of the lost assets. The law restricted the beneficiaries of restitution to Polish citizens, both at the time of loss of property *and* on December, 31, 1999, which

⁸In 2001, these were represented by the Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD*) and the Union of Freedom (*Unia Wolności, UW*). SLD’s leader Aleksandr Kwasniewski served as President of Poland from 1995 to 2005. In a controversial decision, he apologized for the Jedwabne massacre two months before the election.

⁹For instance, PiS co-founder Lech Kaczyński claimed that “Poles were not as guilty as Gross had suggested” (Wolentarska-Ochman 2003, 181).

excluded most Jewish claimants.¹⁰ The President vetoed the law, and the Sejm failed to gather enough votes to override the veto before the 2001 election.

Candidates who ran on the center-right PiS list in the Treblinka area in the 2001 election voted for the law and against the Presidential veto. Candidates who ran on the extreme-right LPR list voted against the law (see Appendix Table A3). At the same time, the LPR's overall position was convoluted, as it did not reject reprivatization in principle when it applied to ethnic Poles and portrayed the President's veto as "bowing to Jewish interests" (Lipiński 2001). While the draft law did not explicitly mention Jewish property, it could be construed as helping those who benefited from the Treblinka camp because it resolved the ongoing debates on property transfers during and after WWII and excluded Polish Jews who emigrated after the war. However, the topic of Holocaust-era property transfers did come up during the reprivatization debate and the LPR capitalized on the Presidential veto to channel the issue into the realm of Polish-Jewish relations. By voting against the law, future LPR candidates in the Treblinka area effectively rejected, even if implicitly, any possibility of restitution.

To summarize, on the Jedwabne issue, the main choice on the right of the political spectrum was between a minimal and limited recognition of Poles' improper behavior during the Holocaust, advocated by the PiS, and a total rejection of any wrongdoing, championed by the LPR. The reprivatization debate can also be framed as a choice between the possibility of restitution and a complete rejection of it, although we do not have sufficient data to support this claim. What is clear, though, is that as Sejm members before the 2001 election, the PiS candidates in the Treblinka area did support a law that envisioned some, even if extremely limited, compensation to Jews whose property had been expropriated, while the LPR candidates voted against it. Thus, we view a vote for the LPR as a defense of the psychological and material status quo by rejecting and denying transgressions committed by Poles against Jews or their property. A vote for PiS, on the other hand, indicates an acceptance of at least some wrongdoings by the Poles during and after the Holocaust.

While both debates defined the political fault lines of the 2001 election, it is important to empha-

¹⁰The legislators' intention was to discourage claims by millions of Germans dispossessed following the 1945 border changes.

size that neither focused explicitly on Treblinka. The Jedwabne debate centered on physical violence inflicted upon Jews by ethnic Poles. During the restitution debate the key concern was the formerly Jewish, German, or Polish private property expropriated by the Nazi and Communist governments. Whereas the mere fact of being in the national spotlight likely affected citizens' political attitudes in Jedwabne, the same cannot be said about the Treblinka area. What the Jedwabne and restitution debates did, however, was provide an opportunity to express existing political attitudes. Thus, our main dependent variables are *LPR Vote Choice* and *Turnout* in the 2001 election. We also examine vote for *PiS*, *PO* and *AWSP* to eliminate the possibility that LPR support is explained by greater overall right-wing preferences in the area.

Even though there is evidence of intergenerational transmission of anti-Semitic attitudes in Poland (Törnquist-Plewa 2006), the 2001 election still presents a rather hard test for the durability of political attitudes shaped by property transfers as the majority of people who participated in the plunder of Jewish property had likely died. By looking at the community-level outcomes in 2001, we are in a good position to evaluate whether property transfers indeed have a long-term political impact.

Control Variables

Even though the exact location of the camp was exogenous to local economic characteristics, proximity to the rail network between Warsaw and Białystok influenced Treblinka's general placement. Because distance to the railway may have also affected economic activity, we control for *Railway Distance* in 1945, as measured from the center of each municipality (in km). We also control for *Distance to City* (Warsaw or Białystok), as the decision to locate the camp at Treblinka was influenced by the presence of large Jewish ghettos in these urban centers and by the relative isolation of the area from heavily populated regions that helped keep the mass murder of Jews secret. Descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis are presented in Table A2 in the Appendix.

Poland has an open-list PR system with different party candidates running from different electoral districts, and this feature of the Polish electoral system might potentially bias our results. As Figure A3 in the Appendix demonstrates, most communities in the vicinity of Treblinka are located in Siedlce electoral district; however, some communities fall into two additional electoral districts, Białystok and Warsaw II. To control for district-level factors, such as the identity of party candidates, we use fixed

effects.

Results

Economic Impact

First, we analyze whether the proximity to Treblinka is associated with greater consumption (*HIA*). As noted above, we are unable to measure immediate postwar spending and instead examine the prevalence of luxury goods in the 1970s, which would require peasants to hide their wealth until the possession of gold and foreign currency was legalized (1956) and luxury goods became easier to purchase (1960s and 1970s). Results of an OLS regression are presented in Table 1. Models (1)-(2) show that proximity to Treblinka is not associated with greater ownership of radios and TV sets. The coefficients on the logged *Distance to Treblinka* are small and not statistically significant. Of course, it is still possible that much of the wealth was consumed immediately on food, alcohol, and other items.

Table 1: **OLS Regression, Luxury Goods (1-2) and Productive Assets (3-6).**

	Radios	TVs	In Handicrafts	Shops	Trade (Zl)	Cattle
	<i>Per 1000 People</i>				<i>Per Person</i>	<i>Per 100 ha</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	5.657 (13.552)	4.319 (10.101)	-1.016 (1.108)	-0.090 (0.220)	-1.444 (3.627)	3.434 (2.735)
Constant	125.075** (46.747)	93.333** (34.989)	13.342*** (3.839)	1.853** (0.764)	33.644*** (12.565)	51.660*** (9.433)
Observations	53	55	55	55	55	53
R ²	0.003	0.003	0.016	0.003	0.003	0.030

Notes: Communities within 50 km of Treblinka. Standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

An alternative to consumption is investment in productive assets (*HIC*). As noted earlier, such

investment was risky, but not impossible in Poland after the end of Stalinism. Models (3)-(6) in Table 1 examine the effects of property transfers on the size of the population engaged in private handicrafts, on the prevalence of private shops, and on the volume of local trade in 1982 as well as on the number of cattle owned by individual farmers in 1976. Regression results do not support H1C: the coefficients are small and not statistically significant, and *Distance to Treblinka* explains little variation in the models. Additional analysis (Tables A4 and A5 in the Appendix) demonstrates that proximity to Treblinka is not associated with greater education levels in 1978 and 1988, or with higher incomes and greater entrepreneurship after 1989.

Finally, we consider H1B that the exposure to Jewish wealth led to greater investment in real estate, as measured by *Dwellings Built in 1950-1970* and *Dwellings with Metal Roofs*. Because our dependent variable is a proportion, we use a generalized linear model with quasibinomial error structure to correct for boundedness, non-constant variance, and non-normal errors as well as overdispersion.¹¹

Analysis presented in Table 2 suggests that the share of houses built after the war diminishes with distance from the death camp. The coefficient on *Distance to Treblinka* is negative and significant in four out of five models. The results are robust to controlling for *Railway Distance* and the extent of wartime damage, which may have necessitated higher levels of postwar reconstruction. However, in the 50-km radius sample, the coefficient on *Distance to Treblinka* diminishes and is no longer statistically significant when we control for distance to the nearest city. Yet the negative coefficient on *Distance to Treblinka* regains statistical significance in larger, 60- and 70-km radius samples (GG-located communities only). The effects are substantively meaningful: moving from a distance of 5 km to 15 km away from the death camp is associated with a 4% decrease in the share of houses built between 1945 and 1970 (see Figure 3).

Investment in real estate might mean not only the construction of new homes, but also the renovation of existing ones. In Table 3 we analyze whether dwellings in communities located closer to the death camp are more likely to have roofs made of sheet metal, the most expensive roof material at the time. The coefficient on *Distance to Treblinka* is negative and statistically significant in all models,

¹¹In the Appendix, we also present results from OLS regression with robust standard errors and spatial error regression (Tables A7, A8, A10).

Table 2: **Logit Regression, Investment in New Houses.**

	Dwellings Built in 1945-1970				
	50 km			60 km, only GG	70 km, only GG
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.133** (0.065)	-0.131** (0.061)	-0.105 (0.067)	-0.113* (0.058)	-0.142** (0.064)
log(Railway Distance)		0.054*** (0.018)	0.048** (0.019)	-0.001 (0.026)	0.022 (0.027)
log(Distance to Nearest City)			0.127 (0.131)	-0.128 (0.099)	0.085 (0.082)
Share Farmhouses Destroyed		0.147 (0.163)	0.145 (0.163)	0.077 (0.187)	0.146 (0.210)
Constant	0.312 (0.225)	0.196 (0.218)	-0.420 (0.667)	0.787 (0.537)	-0.085 (0.515)
Observations	55	55	55	45	56

Notes: Models (4) and (5) exclude communities located outside the General Government (GG). Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

even after controlling for distance to the railroad or the nearest city. The closer to the camp, the better the roofs: as we move from 5 km to 15 km away from Treblinka, the share of dwellings with metal roofs decreases by 18% (see Figure 3).

Our analysis indicates that the wartime property transfers had tangible and lasting consequences: wealth acquired in Treblinka affected the local patterns of investment in real estate. At the same time, the acquisition of Jewish valuables did not increase consumption of luxury goods in the 1970s or investment in productive assets and human capital in the 1970s and 1980s. As discussed earlier, in the wake of WWII the rule of law was weak, protection of private property was extremely limited, and many economic assets were expropriated by the communist regime. Even though the expropriations largely stopped after 1956, peasants who still had Jewish valuables might have been wary of risky investments. Against this background, spending on real estate was arguably the best option. Our find-

Table 3: **Logit Regression, Investment in Better Roofs.**

	Dwellings with Metal Roofs				
	50 km			60 km, only GG	70 km, only GG
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.670*** (0.208)	-0.730*** (0.201)	-0.506*** (0.187)	-0.362** (0.144)	-0.300** (0.148)
log(Railway Distance)		0.232*** (0.084)	0.169** (0.074)	0.222*** (0.069)	0.114* (0.068)
log(Distance to Nearest City)			1.168*** (0.418)	0.810*** (0.285)	0.666** (0.257)
Share Farmhouses Destroyed			-1.613*** (0.484)	-3.108*** (0.562)	-2.777*** (0.609)
Constant	1.402* (0.708)	1.256* (0.675)	-3.870* (2.058)	-2.531* (1.464)	-2.021 (1.395)
Observations	55	55	55	45	56

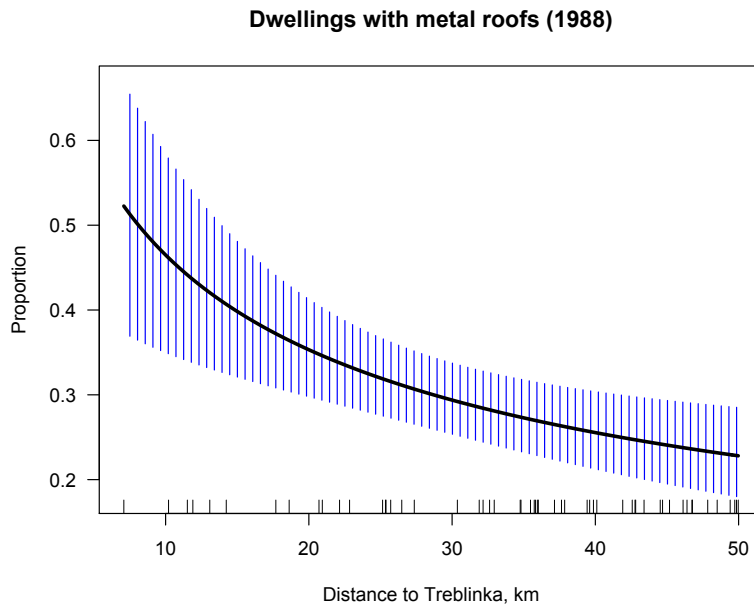
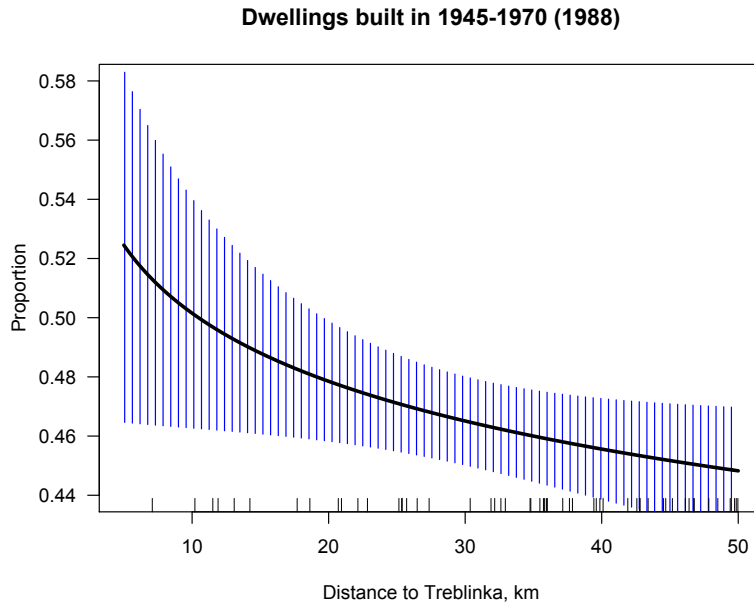
Notes: Models (4) and (5) exclude communities located outside the General Government (GG). Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

ings should also be viewed against the background of communist policies, which promoted economic equality. Under such conditions, the presence of *any* lasting economic effects of wartime property transfers is remarkable.

Political Effects

What are the political effects of property transfers? First, we analyze whether the Treblinka-area population was more likely to vote for the LPR (*H2A*) by regressing the share of the LPR vote on the logarithm of *Distance to Treblinka*. As can be seen in Table 4, the coefficient on *Distance to Treblinka* is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that wartime property transfers likely affected voting behavior more than fifty-five years after the Holocaust. Moving from 5 km to 15 km away from the death camp is associated with a 2.7% decrease in electoral support for the anti-Semitic

Figure 3: Investment in Real Estate and Distance to Treblinka Death Camp.



Notes: Predicted values based on logit regression coefficients in Model 1 of Table 2 and Table 3. Shaded regions are 95% confidence intervals.

LPR, a substantively meaningful effect given that the party's overall vote share in 2001 was 8% (see Figure 4). In the community of Kosów Lacki, where Treblinka is located, LPR won 14% of the vote,

whereas in communities 50 km away from the camp LPR support is estimated at 9.5%, i.e. closer to its national-level result.

Table 4: **Logit Regression, Support for the LPR in the 2001 election.**

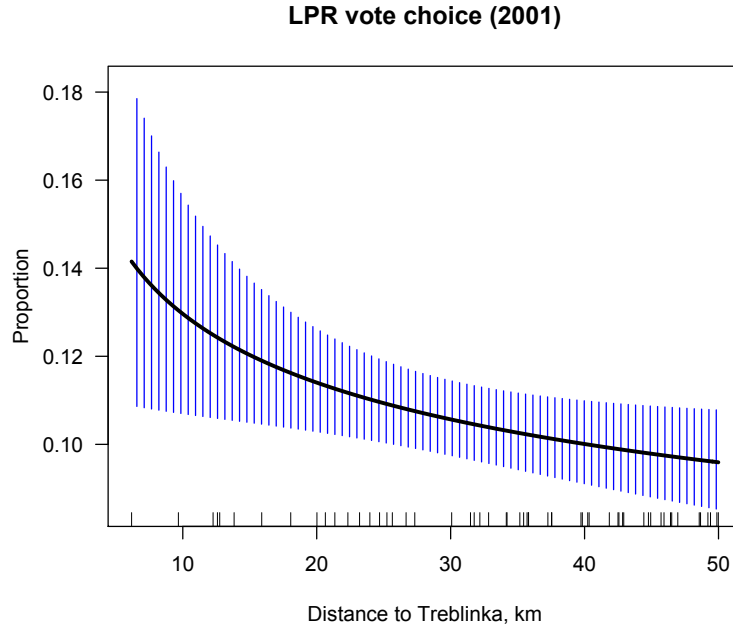
	LPR Vote Choice				
	50 km		60 km, only GG	70 km, only GG	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.211** (0.093)	-0.237** (0.099)	-0.226** (0.102)	-0.309*** (0.095)	-0.244*** (0.075)
log(Railway Distance)			0.024 (0.032)	0.021 (0.031)	0.030 (0.026)
log(Distance to Nearest City)			-0.005 (0.197)	-0.279 (0.213)	-0.217* (0.127)
Constant	-1.419*** (0.318)	-1.225*** (0.378)	-1.303 (0.936)	0.012 (1.048)	-0.499 (0.734)
Fixed Effects: Electoral District	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	57	57	57	48	63

Notes: Models (4) and (5) exclude communities located outside the General Government (GG). Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

At the same time, we find no effect of property transfers on the vote for other right-wing parties from the Solidarity camp, such as PiS, PO, and AWSP (see Table 5, Models (1)-(4)). This finding suggests that exposure to the Jewish wealth did not result in overall higher support for the right in the Treblinka area. Model (5) in Table 5 shows that even in a political environment infused with debates over Polish participation in the persecution of Jews and potential restitution, communities closer to Treblinka did not exhibit higher turnout (*H2B*).

The results demonstrate that living near the death camp and benefiting from Jewish property indeed made local Poles more likely to support the xenophobic LPR, but not other right-wing parties. It is important to note that the results hold even after excluding communities located in Bezirk Bi-lystok, parts of which (though not the area close to Treblinka) have historically been a hotbed of

Figure 4: Support for the LPR and Distance to Treblinka Death Camp.



Notes: Predicted values based on logit regression coefficients in Model 1, Table 4. Shaded regions are 95% confidence intervals.

Table 5: Logit Regression, Support for the Right and Turnout in the 2001 Election.

	Vote Choice				Turnout
	PiS (1)	AWSP (2)	PO (3)	PiS, AWSP & PO (4)	
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.195 (0.156)	0.456 (0.331)	0.424 (0.362)	0.177 (0.170)	-0.014 (0.077)
Constant	-1.803*** (0.535)	-4.410*** (1.170)	-4.247*** (1.276)	-2.041*** (0.592)	-0.202 (0.267)
Observations	57	57	57	57	57

Notes: Communities within 50 km of Treblinka. Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

anti-Semitism (Bikont 2015; Kopstein and Wittenberg 2011). We believe that acquiring Jewish property was *the* reason for higher support for the LPR in the area around Treblinka.

Alternative Explanations and Robustness Checks

Could higher support for the LPR near Treblinka be explained by the persistence of pre-WWII voting patterns? Because the LPR is often viewed as a reincarnation of the interwar National Democrats (*Endecja*) (De Lange and Guerra 2009), we regress the support for Endecja in the 1928 Parliamentary election (the last free and fair election in interwar Poland) on *Distance to Treblinka*. We also examine whether the area in the vicinity of Treblinka was the site of greater political polarization, following Kopstein and Wittenberg (2011, 267) by using 1928 vote shares for the Bloc of National Minorities. Table A11 in the Appendix demonstrates that political attitudes did not systematically vary with distance to Treblinka before WWII.

To further eliminate the possibility that the Treblinka area is more prone to vote for right-wing parties regardless of their position on the Holocaust, we demonstrate that the distance to Treblinka is not associated with support for the LPR or the Solidarity Block in the parliamentary elections just before and after 2001 (Appendix Table A12), in which Polish-Jewish relations were not salient in political discourse. The Table also examines the 2015 election, in which some PiS candidates drew on WWII and the Holocaust to gain votes.

Could exposure to mass violence – simply living close to a site of mass murder, witnessing it and interacting with perpetrators – make people more likely to vote for the LPR? While the existing data do not allow us to completely reject this possibility, we believe it is unlikely to explain our findings. Here, it is important to remember how localized and geographically concentrated the political and economic effects of Treblinka are. The persecution and murder of Jews took place all over Poland and was generally known. Furthermore, recent work on the Holocaust demonstrates that during Treblinka's operation the residents of Białystok, located 93 km (~58 miles) from the camp, were well aware of the camp's purpose (Finkel 2017, Chap. 3). Thus, it is extremely unlikely that peasants living just 15 km from the camp knew less about or were substantially less exposed to mass violence than those in a village literally next door. We also argue against this possibility by examining support for the LPR at the sites of Polish and Jewish martyrdom in WWII. Perhaps the best-known German massacre of ethnic Poles occurred at Palmiry (community Czosnów), where some 1,700 victims (including

members of the Polish political and cultural elite) were murdered in 1939. And yet, the LPR won a mere 6% of the vote in this community in 2001. Even more importantly, the LPR won just 6% of the vote, below the national average of 8%, in Lipniak-Majorat where Germans murdered 448 ethnic Poles in 1941. This community is located just 30 km (19 miles) away from Treblinka. Support for the LPR was also below the national average, at 7.7%, in the community of Szulborze Wielkie, 20 km (12 miles) away from Treblinka, where in 1941 some 5,000 Jews from nearby towns were shot in the forest near Mianówek. In this case, the Polish community witnessed the violence but was largely unaffected by property transfers, as the Jewish victims were dispossessed by Germans in their native towns, before being transported to the killing site.

Sites of mass violence in Poland are different from other areas due to contemporary commemoration activities. Localities close to Treblinka are affected by Holocaust commemoration and frequent visits by Jewish groups. It is possible that foreign Jewish visitors, seen as intruders, would fuel resentment and lead to higher support for the LPR in the area. Yet we believe that Holocaust commemoration does not explain the observed results, as the LPR did not advocate forcefully against commemoration as such. Second, unlike other major commemoration sites, Treblinka is located in the forest outside residential settlements, which limits the potential for contact and friction between the Jewish commemorators and the local population (Feldman 2008, Chap.4). Indeed, while Auschwitz has witnessed high-profile political and even physical confrontations between Jews and Poles, the Treblinka site has not. Finally, while disentangling the two explanations is challenging—almost all places that witnessed large-scale killing of Jews experienced both wartime property transfers and post-Holocaust commemoration—we do make such an attempt by looking at the former Warsaw ghetto in the Appendix (p. 19).

Examining the effects of mass violence on political and economic outcomes half a century later raises the possibility that migration in and out of the area drives our results. First, anti-Semitic Poles looking for gold may have been more likely to move closer to Treblinka in the 1940s. In-migration in search of wealth would also create the need for new homes, which could explain our findings on investment in real estate. Appendix Table A13 eliminates this possibility by demonstrating that in-migration rates are not associated with *Distance to Treblinka*. Another possibility is that people who

benefited from Jewish property became wealthy enough to leave the countryside altogether. While we cannot fully eliminate this possibility, out-migration of those who benefited the most would likely weaken the effects of property transfers still visible in the Treblinka area, and thus presents less of a concern for our findings. We also show that communities close to Treblinka are not different from communities located further away in (1) gender and (2) age structure both immediately after the war and in the 1990s (Appendix Tables A14 and A15).

Additional support for our argument comes from the analysis of how the coefficient on *Distance to Treblinka* changes when the camp coordinates are shifted away from the original location to counterfactual sites in the area (see Appendix Figure A5 and Table A16) and from the examination of spatial structure of the data by plotting the 20-km averages for the main dependent variables for all communities in the 50-km radius (Appendix Figure A6).

Discussion and Conclusion

This article analyzes the political and economic effects of an important, widespread, but understudied feature of violent conflict—the transfer of victims’ property. Because mass violence is a complex and multifaceted social process, identifying and measuring the downstream effects of wartime property transfers is extremely challenging. We utilize a setting that allows us to tease out these effects by focusing on the communities in the vicinity of the Treblinka death camp. The camp placement was exogenous to the attitudes and characteristics of the local population, and the property transfers were geographically limited. Both before and after WWII, the communities that benefited from property transfers were subject to the same macro-level policies and conditions as the communities that did not benefit from the Holocaust.

Our approach is analytical rather than normative: we do not comment on the moral aspects of the channels through which the Jewish victims’ property enriched the local communities, such as grave digging. However, we do recognize the ethical challenges of using the Holocaust in value-neutral social science research, selecting Treblinka as a “case study,” and applying the neutral term of “property transfers” when “talk[ing] of terrible things so matter-of-factly in this language of science,”

as Carpenter aptly puts it. At the same time, we agree with Carpenter (2012, 366) on the necessity of such detached abstraction, as “it protects the scientific community and the idea of research for its own sake from the kind of politicization that can undermine the scientific enterprise.”

We find that property transfers left a tangible, enduring, but also highly localized impact. Politically, communities near Treblinka exhibited higher levels of electoral support for the LPR, an anti-Semitic party that in the 2001 election campaigned against recognizing Polish complicity in the killing of Jedwabne Jews. At the same time, the proximity of the death camp did not make the local population more politically active or generically right-wing. The economic implications of property transfers – investment in new and better homes – also endured despite the communist regime’s efforts to remake the country’s economic landscape. We found no evidence that the acquisition of Jewish valuables led to the purchase of luxury goods, invigorated local economies or translated into higher levels of human capital. We also demonstrate that our findings cannot be explained by prewar political attitudes, migration patterns, or commemoration activities.

Our findings are significant for theoretical, empirical, and policy reasons. With regards to political attitudes, our research speaks to an important but often ignored challenge to post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Wartime property transfers generate postwar restitution concerns, which in turn may increase support for extremist political views. Qualitative historical research on the aftermath of the Holocaust has identified similar processes in the immediate postwar period (Cichopek-Gajraj 2014; Gross 2007), but only now are we able to demonstrate how persistent these effects can be. Our finding that the influx of valuables into a community did not produce long-term positive economic and social outcomes supports the emerging but still extremely limited research on the topic (Bleakley and Ferrie 2016). At the same time, one should also remember that the investment choices made by the beneficiaries of property transfers “no doubt depended on the range of choices they perceived as available to them” (Bleakley and Ferrie 2016, 1487) – in this case, in predominantly rural areas, against the background of communist economic policies, weak rule of law, and state-provided healthcare and education.

This combination of the political and economic effects of property transfers has important implications for post-conflict development. Scholars and the international community currently view

restitution of or compensation for lost property as important components of post-conflict reconstruction (e.g., Das 2004; Houtte et al. 2008; Phuong 2000) and transitional justice (Appel 2005; Elster 2004, 170–75; Nalepa 2010, 5; Teitel 2000, chap. 4). Although scholars of transitional justice do recognize the distinction between perpetrators and beneficiaries of wrongdoings (Elster 2004, 99), they focus primarily on how states “settle scores with members and collaborators” (Nalepa 2010, 5) of regimes that engaged in wrongdoings, while overlooking the accidental beneficiaries of such crimes. Our findings suggest that property transfers can, in some cases, pose an obstacle to post-conflict stability and reconciliation. Counterintuitively, places that benefited most from mass violence may be in greatest need of investment – both social and economic – to combat their support for extremist views. The international community should take this into account when devising post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation programs. The reconstruction and transitional justice policies should also pay closer attention to local conditions and legacies, rather than devise and implement one-size-fits-all national level solutions, as the effects of property transfers are highly localized.

Empirically, our findings illuminate political and social debates about mass violence in general and the Holocaust specifically. We show that mass violence and the resulting redistribution of wealth during WWII in Poland affected voting behavior more than fifty years after the Holocaust and remains visible in the houses in which many locals still reside. Unfortunately, we lack the fine-grained data necessary to distinguish between the two possible mechanisms linking property transfers to the LPR vote. Both material interest in preventing restitution and psychological factors, such as shame for benefitting from the Holocaust, are likely to have increased support for the radical right in the Treblinka area.

While this article identifies a significant long-run impact of wartime property transfers, it only constitutes a first attempt to quantitatively examine the phenomenon. An important limitation is our inability to directly test the psychological mechanisms that may explain the higher levels of LPR support in the vicinity of Treblinka. In line with research in social psychology, revelations about ingroup transgressions may provoke defensive responses ranging from minimizing ingroup complicity to derogating the victims. Reactions of the local population to stories about “Treblinka gold” support both possibilities. In particular, the locals who acknowledge enrichment from Treblinka often seek

to justify it by contrasting Jewish “wealth” to Polish destitution. “No one was harmed. Jews are still rich, and people are forced to work for them,” explains a 90-year old resident of Nowa Wieś (Kački 2011). Perhaps to minimize their shame, some local respondents claimed that the merchant buying gold and diamonds from the local peasants after the war was himself Jewish. Others minimize the Poles’ transgressions by pointing to much more disturbing behavior by the Nazis or by shifting the blame entirely (Kački 2011).

Yet another strategy of dealing with the past is by emphasizing that Poles helped Jews during the Holocaust, often followed by assertions that Jews are ungrateful and blame the Poles in order to receive compensation. Jan and Halina Rytel-Skorek, who live in the village of Treblinka, gathered recollections of local residents into a book about Poles rescuing Jews (Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik 2011). According to memories published in this book, the local Poles not only brought Jews food at night, risking German retribution, but also refused money they were offered in return (Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik 2011, 405). An employee of the Treblinka museum told one of the authors that no one wants to talk about the past as “local men are seen as gold diggers and local women as prostitutes.”

There are also important scope conditions of our argument. In this study, we examined predominantly rural communities around Treblinka and excluded urban *gminas*. It is possible that the impact of property transfers would be different – for instance, with regards to investment decisions – in cities, where the population is involved in non-agricultural occupations and is more geographically mobile. At the same time, the focus on the countryside is important because this is precisely where many armed conflicts take place (Kalyvas 2006).

It should also be remembered that in our setting, Jewish property was appropriated independently and voluntarily by the population, not distributed or sold by the government or the occupying authorities, resulting in “dual ownership,” a situation in which both the original and the new owners have a legal claim on the property (Elster 2004, 170-75). As Bleakley and Ferrie (2016) show, the government-sanctioned distribution of Cherokee land in Georgia has not led to higher levels of human capital and economic development, but the political impact of state-led distribution remains unexplored.

Finally, we should bear in mind that the Polish population in the vicinity of the death camp did

not participate in the killing of the Jews from whose property they benefited. The Treblinka-area beneficiaries of the Holocaust can also be certain that the previous owners are long dead. The beneficiaries thus have fewer reasons to worry about restitution. One can only speculate how people might have behaved had they, rather than Germans, carried out the killings. Examining the impact of property transfers on different types of beneficiaries and wrongdoers is a promising direction for future research.

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1 Summary of Variables and Data Sources

Table A1: Sources for the Historical and Contemporary Variables Used in the Analyses.

Variable	Source and Additional Information
Distance to Treblinka Death Camp	All distances were measured by the authors in km from the centroid of each community in QGIS
Distance to Nearest City	Warsaw or Białystok are coded as nearest city
Railway Distance	Based on the Map of Railway Lines published by Kraków's Institute of Cartography in 1945, digitized by the authors
Dwellings built in 1945-70	1988 National Census
Dwellings with Metal Roofs	1988 National Census
Share Farmhouses Destroyed	Measured in 1945 and published in Osikowski (1968)
TV subscribers per 1000 people Radio subscribers per 1000 people Cattle per 100 ha	Measured in 1976 and published in Statistical Yearbooks (<i>Rocznik Statystyczny</i>) for Siedlce, Łomża, Ostrołęka, Białystok, Ciechanow, Biała Podlaska provinces in 1977
People Engaged in Private Handicrafts Private shops Trade volume in thousand Zloty per person*	Measured in 1982 and published in Community Statistics (<i>Statystyka Gmin</i>) in 1984 * Available only for socialized retail outlets
Share of LPR, PO, PiS, and AWSP Vote and Turnout in the 2001 Election	Available on the website of the State Electoral Commission (<i>Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza</i>)
Post-1989 economic variables	Available on the website of the Main Statistical Office (<i>Główny Urząd Statystyczny</i>)
Share of Endecja and Block of National Minorities Vote	Published in Statistics of Elections to the Sejm and Senate on March 4 and 11, 1928 (<i>Statystyka Wyborów do Sejmu i Senatu Odbytych w Dniu 4 i 11 Marca 1928 Roku</i>) in 1930
Population with Secondary Education in 1978	1978 National Census
Population with Secondary Education in 1988	1988 National Census
Share Men in 1946	1946 National Census
Share Aged 60 and Older in 1946	1946 National Census
Share Living in Community from Birth	1988 National Census

Table A2: **Descriptive Statistics for the Main Variables Used in the Analyses.**

Variable	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Railway Distance, km (1945)	8.23	6.55	0.05	26.17
Distance to Nearest City, km	71.06	15.84	36.77	98.53
Distance to Treblinka, km	33.57	11.98	6.18	49.99
Share Dwellings Built in 1945-77 (1988)	0.47	0.05	0.35	0.58
Share Dwellings with Metal Roofs (1988)	0.32	0.17	0.06	0.71
Share of Farmhouses Destroyed (1945)	0.32	0.19	0.09	0.69
Radio Subscribers per 1000 People (1976)	144.2	44.6	44.8	250.9
TV Subscribers per 1000 People (1976)	108.5	34.1	27.0	177.0
In Handicrafts (1982)	9.85	3.72	1.88	19.13
Private Shops per 1000 people (1982)	1.55	0.74	0.00	4.28
Trade Volume in Thousand Zloty per person (1982)	28.68	12.11	4.97	78.68
Cattle per 100 ha (1976)	63.4	9.11	49.8	88.7
Share of the LPR Vote (2001)	0.11	0.04	0.04	0.19
Share of the PiS Vote (2001)	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.22
Share of the PO Vote (2001)	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.39
Share of the AWSP Vote (2001)	0.06	0.06	0.02	0.29
Turnout (2001)	0.45	0.07	0.27	0.59
Share of Population with Secondary Education (1978)	0.07	0.02	0.02	0.13
Share of Population with Secondary Education (1988)	0.12	0.03	0.06	0.23
Share Living in Community from Birth (1988)	0.73	0.03	0.66	0.81
Share of Endecja Vote (1928)	0.26	0.16	0.02	0.72
Share of the Vote for Block of National Minorities (1928)	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.15
Income Tax Per Capita (1995)	62.39	5.88	54.73	84.05
Number of Private Enterprises per 1000 people (1995)	21.43	8.62	8.34	63.25
Share Male in 1946	0.48	0.01	0.45	0.50
Share Aged 60 and Older in 1946	0.09	0.01	0.06	0.12

Note: Values computed for rural communities within 50 km of Treblinka.

2 Information about the 2001 Parliamentary Election

The League of Polish Families (LPR)

The LPR did not exist as a party before 2001. It was formed in February 2001 from the bits of several right-wing parties and groupings. It included some members of the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) and Christian National Union (ZChN), as well as most of the members of the National Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowe, SN*), the National Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowo-Demokratyczne, SND*), and Club “Thought for Poland” (“*Mysł dla Polski*”) in Kraków. Among the party’s founders and leaders were Antoni Macierewicz, the publisher of an anti-Semitic paper *Głos (Voice)*; Ryszard Bender, who publicly denied that Auschwitz was a death camp; and Maciej and Roman Giertych, the son and grandson of Jędrzej Giertych, the ideologue of the 1930s National Democrats, “notorious for his obsessive anti-Semitism” (Pankowski and Kornak, 2005, 159).

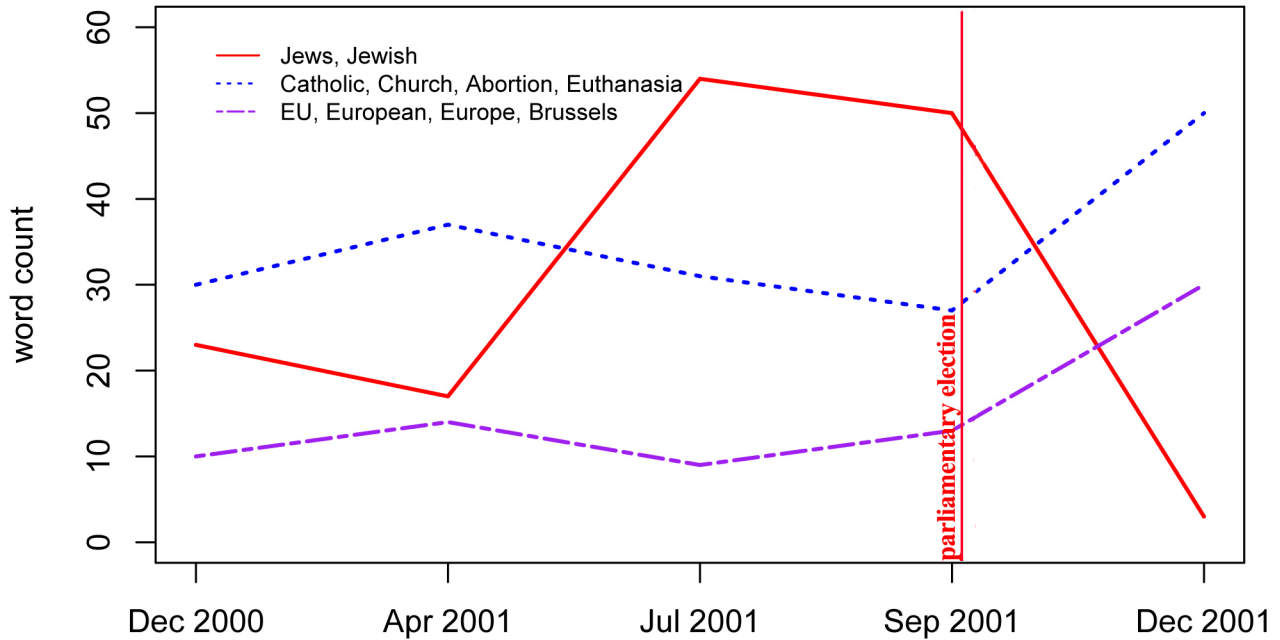
In 2001, at the center of the party’s platform were three issues: the Jedwabne controversy, EU negotiations, and the economy. The party was fundamentally opposed to what it perceived as the surrender of Polish sovereignty to Germans, Jews, and other foreigners through EU membership. It also presented itself as supporting the interests of the poor, the elderly, the traditional family, and small business. Importantly, these two positions were shared by other political parties in 2001. For example, Self-Defense (*Samoobrona*) was also staunchly opposed to the EU, and virtually all political parties claimed to represent the interests of the poor and the elderly. By contrast, anti-Semitism and opposition to acknowledging Polish involvement in the Jedwabne massacre is what distinguished the LPR from all other parties running in the 2001 election. The LPR campaigned by denying the pogrom and claimed that President Aleksander Kwaśniewski “stoned the Polish nation” by apologizing for the negative aspects of Polish-Jewish relations (Stankiewicz, 2002).

Given the party’s xenophobic ideology, it is not surprising that it perceived Jews as the main “foreign other”. We provide evidence for the centrality of the “Jewish threat” in the LPR rhetoric by analyzing the 2000-2001 issues of *Opoka w Kraju (The Bedrock in a Country)*, published by Maciej Giertych, in Figures A1 and A2. In 2001, the LPR was also the preferred party of Radio Maryja, led by anti-Semitic Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, as well as by the extreme right organization All-Polish Youth (*Młodzież Wszechpolska*), which fraternized with Neo-Nazis.

Importantly, the vote for the party is an ideological rather than protest vote (De Lange and Guerra, 2009, 542). Although the LPR spoke “in covert terms about race and nationality, it openly attack[ed] the roles Jews and homosexuals fulfill in Polish society” (De Lange and Guerra, 2009, 538). Krzysztof Jasiewicz (2008, 8) called the LPR “a reincarnation of Polish extreme nationalism in its ideologically purest form.”

With time, the LPR became more programmatic. By the 2005 parliamentary election, the party moderated its radicalism, censored most openly anti-Semitic MPs, and emphasized economic and political rather than cultural aspects of its platform (Moroska, 2010, 249).

Figure A2: Text Analysis of *Opoka w Kraju* between December 2000 and December 2001.



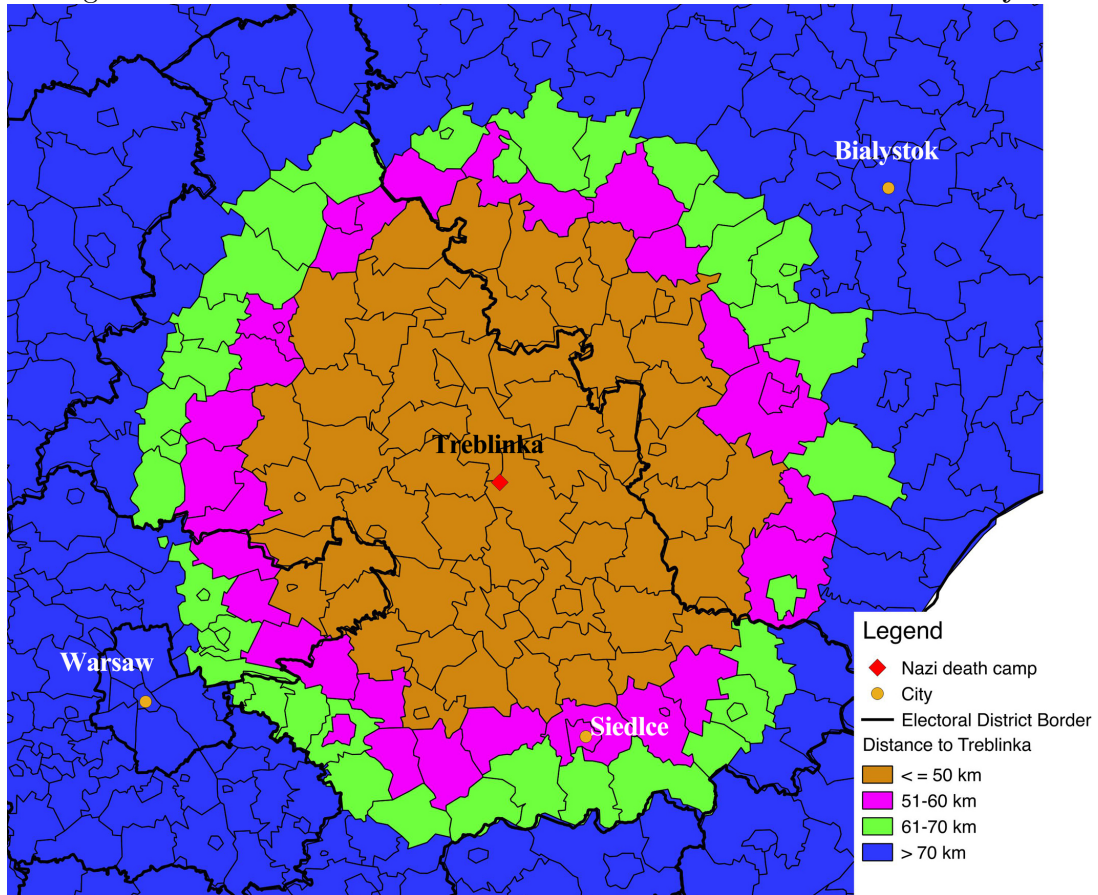
The plot demonstrates the rise in the use of words “Jews” and “Jewish” in the LPR rhetoric in the summer of 2001, ahead of the September 23, 2001 parliamentary election. The rise coincides with the discussion of the Jedwabne controversy in Poland. The graph demonstrates the importance of the “Jewish Theme” relative to other themes in the LPR Program, such as Euroskepticism (words “EU”, “European”, “Europe” and “Brussels”) and opposition to abortion and euthanasia, justified by the references to the Catholic Church (words “Catholic”, “Church”, “Abortion” and “Euthanasia”).

Table A3: **Information about PiS and LPR Candidates Elected in Siedlce and Bialystok Districts in 2001.**

Candidate name	<i>1997 election</i>				<i>Vote on the Reprivatization law</i>			<i>2001 election</i>	
	Electoral district	Party	Votes	Vote Share	First draft Jan 2001	Citizen clause Mar 2001	Post-veto May 2001	Electoral district	Party
G. Janowski	Siedlce	AWS	22620	0.32	Against	For	Against	Siedlce	LPR
M. Pilka	Siedlce	AWS	15274	0.22	For	For	For	Siedlce	PiS
A. Fedorowicz	Bialystok	-	-	-	-	-	-	Bialystok	LPR
P. Krutul	Bialystok	AWS	10200	0.09	Against	For	Against	Bialystok	LPR
K. Jurgiel	Bialystok	AWS	55100	0.48	For	For	For	Bialystok	PiS
M. T. Kaminski	Lomza	AWS	20806	0.39	Absent	For	For	Bialystok	PP-PiS

Notes: The MP's vote shares are calculated from the total of party votes in a given district.

Figure A3: Electoral Districts and Communities Used in the Analysis.



Notes: 42 out of 57 communities (excluding towns) within 50-km radius of Treblinka are in Siedlce electoral district.

3 Additional Economic Variables

Table A4: OLS Regression, Human Capital.

	<i>Population with Secondary Education or Above:</i>					
	1978			1988		
	50 km	60 km, GG		50 km	60 km, GG	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.004 (0.007)	-0.002 (0.007)	0.001 (0.008)	0.003 (0.012)	0.006 (0.011)	0.007 (0.013)
log(Railway Distance)		-0.007*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.003)		-0.008*** (0.003)	-0.012** (0.005)
log(Distance to Nearest City)		0.006 (0.012)	0.002 (0.013)		0.015 (0.015)	0.008 (0.019)
Constant	0.083*** (0.027)	0.110* (0.059)	0.133** (0.067)	0.114** (0.045)	0.108 (0.071)	0.165* (0.099)
Observations	55	55	45	55	55	45
R ²	0.007	0.170	0.132	0.002	0.129	0.145

Notes: Rural communities within 50 and 60 km of Treblinka are included in the analysis. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

To measure income differences, we use the natural logarithm of personal income tax per capita (in Polish Złoty), collected within each community - $\log(\text{Income Tax Per Capita})$. Because the basic tax rate (39.34%) does not vary across communities, differences in collected taxes represent actual differences in personal incomes. Using this measure would be problematic if the rates of tax compliance varied across communities. This is a relatively minor concern for Poland, however.

Table A5: OLS Regression, Income Levels and Entrepreneurship Rates in 1995.

	log(Income Tax Per Capita)		log(Private Enterprises per 1000)			
	50km		60km, GG	50km		60km, GG
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	0.018 (0.025)	0.018 (0.026)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.125 (0.105)	-0.142 (0.096)	-0.046 (0.088)
log(Railway Distance)		0.011 (0.009)	0.002 (0.001)		-0.109*** (0.035)	-0.100*** (0.034)
log(Distance to Nearest City)		0.016 (0.042)	0.014*** (0.005)		-0.324** (0.156)	-0.185 (0.137)
Constant	4.068*** (0.088)	3.982*** (0.214)	4.095*** (0.026)	3.427*** (0.363)	5.039*** (0.791)	4.154*** (0.740)
Observations	57	57	48	57	57	48
R ²	0.009	0.036	0.248	0.025	0.236	0.201

Notes: Rural communities within 50 and 60 km of Treblinka. Standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

4 Alternative functional forms

4.1 Modeling Distance

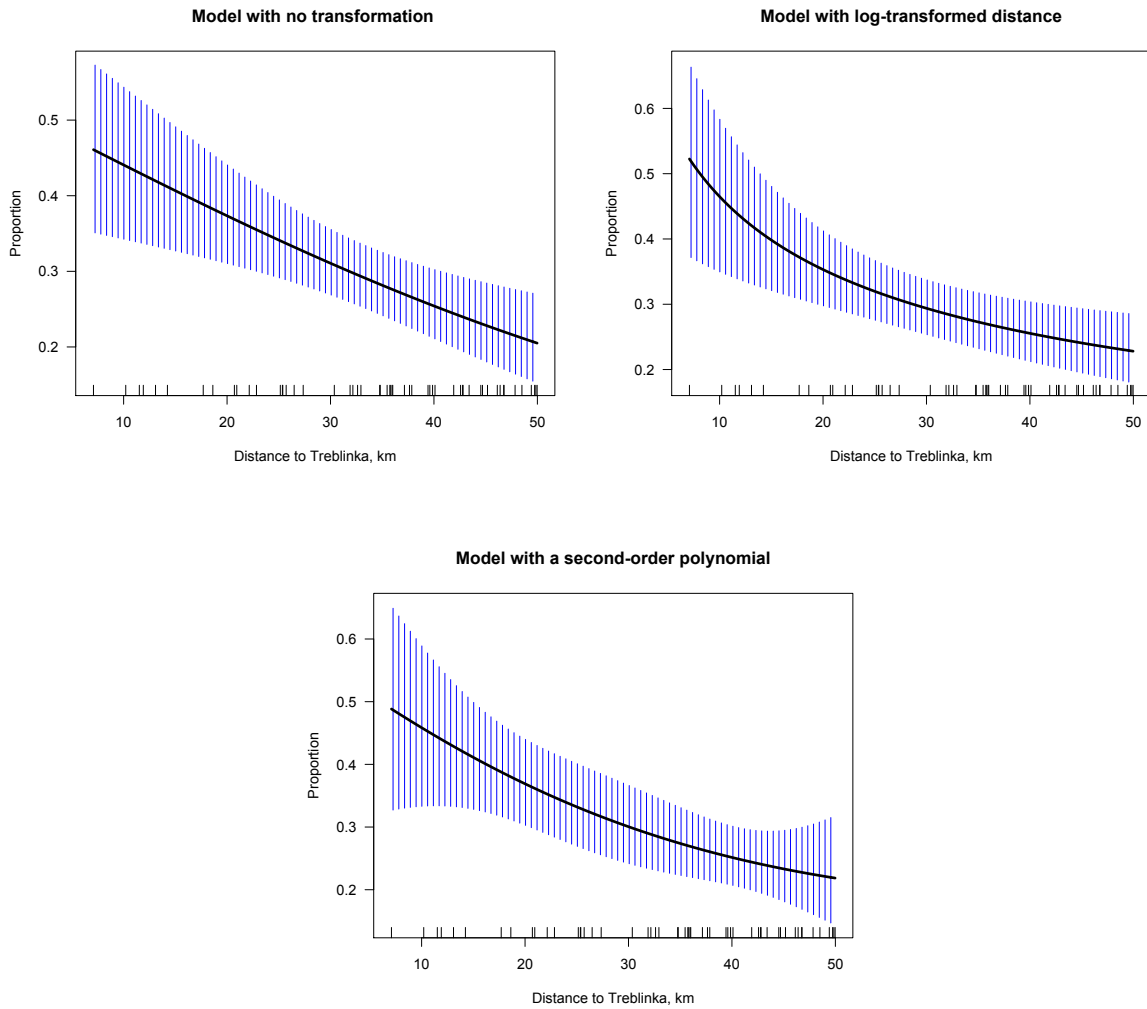
In the article we use the natural logarithm of distance to Treblinka to accommodate the relationship where the exposure to Jewish valuables first falls off rapidly with small increases in distance from the death camp and then continues to decrease, but only slightly at greater distances. Here we explore the robustness of our findings to two alternative functional forms. Using non-log-transformed distance variable (Models 1, 3, and 5 in Table A6) yields similar results. However, the coefficients lose significance when we use a second-order polynomial, which suggests that this transformation does not fit the data. Figure 4.1 facilitates interpretation of the result. In our dataset, quadratic form would fit the data better of the exposure to Jewish valuables first diminished with distance from the camp but then, beyond a certain inflection point, the effect of distance were reversed. This could be the case, for example, if people living more than 30 km away from the camp would have to travel by train from Warsaw or Białystok (i.e., living further away from Treblinka would also mean greater access to trains and buses). Historical accounts of Treblinka suggest this was not the case.

Table A6: **Logit Regression, Exploration of Functional Forms of Distance to Treblinka.**

	Dwellings (1945-70)		Metal Roofs		LPR Vote Choice	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Distance to Treblinka	-0.005*	-0.018	-0.028***	-0.046	-0.008**	-0.026
	(0.003)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.043)	(0.004)	(0.019)
(Distance to Treblinka) ²		0.0002		0.0003		0.0003
		(0.0002)		(0.001)		(0.0003)
Constant	0.031	0.193	0.041	0.266	-1.862***	-1.644***
	(0.092)	(0.191)	(0.288)	(0.593)	(0.135)	(0.267)
Observations	55	55	55	55	57	57

Notes: Models (1), (3), and (5) use non-transformed distance. Models (2), (4), and (6) use the quadratic transformation. Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure A4: **Interpreting Different Transformations of the Distance.**



Notes: Predicted values of the proportion of dwellings with metal roofs. Shaded regions are 95% confidence intervals. Top graph on the right was presented in the article in Figure 3.

4.2 Alternative Regression Models

Table A7: OLS Regression, Investment in New Houses.

	<i>Dwellings Built in 1950-1970</i>				
	50 km			60 km, only GG	70 km, only GG
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.037** (0.015)	-0.037** (0.017)	-0.034* (0.018)	-0.037** (0.016)	-0.039*** (0.013)
log(Railway Distance)		0.002 (0.008)	0.001 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.006)
log(Distance to Nearest City)			0.018 (0.029)	-0.033 (0.025)	-0.016 (0.025)
Share Farmhouses Destroyed		0.055 (0.034)	0.055 (0.034)	0.021 (0.049)	0.020 (0.041)
Constant	0.601*** (0.053)	0.582*** (0.055)	0.494*** (0.153)	0.737*** (0.137)	0.669*** (0.131)
Observations	55	55	55	45	56
R ²	0.103	0.141	0.148	0.166	0.171

Notes: Models (4) and (5) exclude communities located outside the General Government (GG). Robust standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table A8: **OLS Regression, Investment in Better Roofs.**

	<i>Dwellings with Metal Roofs</i>				
	50 km			60 km, only GG	70 km, only GG
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.151*** (0.042)	-0.155*** (0.041)	-0.117*** (0.041)	-0.079** (0.037)	-0.050 (0.038)
log(Railway Distance)		0.036*** (0.014)	0.025** (0.011)	0.043*** (0.013)	0.019 (0.019)
log(Distance to Nearest City)			0.207*** (0.063)	0.149*** (0.046)	0.128*** (0.043)
Share Farmhouses Destroyed			-0.315*** (0.097)	-0.642*** (0.086)	-0.526*** (0.118)
Constant	0.833*** (0.151)	0.540*** (0.169)	-0.272 (0.340)	0.072 (0.287)	0.080 (0.277)
Observations	55	55	55	45	56
R ²	0.169	0.239	0.443	0.663	0.529

Notes: Models (4) and (5) exclude communities located outside the General Government (GG). Robust standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table A9: **OLS Regression, Support for the LPR in the 2001 Election.**

	<i>LPR Vote Choice</i>				
	50 km			60 km, only GG	70 km, only GG
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.022** (0.009)	-0.025*** (0.009)	-0.025*** (0.009)	-0.034*** (0.008)	-0.027*** (0.007)
log(Railway Distance)			0.001 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)	0.0002 (0.003)
log(Distance to Nearest City)			-0.007 (0.013)	-0.034 (0.021)	-0.023* (0.012)
Fixed effects: electoral district	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.185*** (0.030)	0.207*** (0.036)	0.236*** (0.071)	0.363*** (0.097)	0.293*** (0.059)
Observations	57	57	57	48	63
R ²	0.082	0.112	0.115	0.273	0.233

Notes: Models (4) and (5) exclude communities located outside the General Government (GG). Robust standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table A10: **Spatial Error Regression, Investment in Real Estate (1988) and Support for the LPR in the 2001 Election.**

	<i>Dwellings built in 1945-70</i>		<i>Metal Roofs</i>		<i>LPR Vote Choice</i>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.036** (0.018)	-0.034* (0.017)	-0.131** (0.064)	-0.102* (0.059)	-0.022** (0.011)	-0.026** (0.012)
log(Railway Distance)		0.001 (0.006)		0.011 (0.013)		0.002 (0.004)
log(Distance to Nearest City)		0.018 (0.033)		0.240* (0.128)		-0.015 (0.019)
Share Farmhouses Destroyed		0.049 (0.039)		-0.160 (0.122)		
Fixed effects: electoral district					No	Yes
Constant	0.598*** (0.061)	0.494*** (0.170)	0.773*** (0.234)	-0.312 (0.645)	0.186*** (0.038)	0.272*** (0.095)
Observations	55	55	55	55	57	57
Log Likelihood	87.971	88.766	41.030	43.395	112.771	114.217
σ^2	0.002	0.002	0.011	0.011	0.001	0.001
AIC	-167.943	-163.531	-74.061	-72.789	-217.542	-212.434

Notes: Spatial Error Regression. Rural communities within 50 km of Treblinka are included in the analysis. Standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

5 Alternative explanations

5.1 Persistence of Pre-WWII voting patterns

Table A11: Logit Regression, Vote for Endecja and the Block of National Minorities (BNM) in the 1928 Parliamentary Election.

	<i>Endecja Vote</i>		<i>BNM Vote</i>	
	50 km	60 km	50 km	60 km
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.177 (0.223)	-0.199 (0.168)	-0.581 (0.362)	-0.369 (0.304)
Constant	-0.557 (0.734)	-0.490 (0.583)	-1.837 (1.144)	-2.435** (1.029)
Observations	50	66	50	66

Notes: Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5.2 General preference for right-wing parties

To further eliminate the possibility that the Treblinka area is more prone to vote for right-wing parties regardless of their position on the Holocaust, we explore electoral outcomes in the 1997 and 2005 parliamentary elections, in which Polish-Jewish relations were not salient in political discourse. Because the LPR did not exist until 2001, we use the support for the AWS, a coalition of right-wing groups including those that formed the LPR, in the 1997 election. The 2005 election was also the last election in which the LPR won seats in the Sejm. Results are presented in Table A12.

Table A12 also examines data from the 2015 election, in which some PiS candidates drew on WWII and the Holocaust to gain votes. In the simple bivariate regression model, the coefficient on the natural logarithm of *Distance to Treblinka* is negative but not statistically significant; it is negative and statistically significant (as our theory predicts) when we include district fixed effects. A likely explanation for the difference is that while in 2015 PiS was the key right wing party and thus people could vote for it for a host of reasons, in the Siedlce electoral district some PiS candidates (most notably Arkadiusz Czartoryski) were behind the 2013 draft law celebrating the local population for “helping their Jewish brothers” and campaigned against Gross and Grudzinska Gross’s book *Golden Harvest (Złote Żniwa)* discussing grave digging in Treblinka. Thus, in this case the characteristics of district-level candidates may have played an important role. While the result is consistent with our broader argument, the analysis of 2015 election does not allow us to distinguish whether support for PiS candidates in 2015 decreases with distance to the camp due to contemporary factors, such as the legislators’ explicit focus on Treblinka, or due to the legacies of property transfers during the war.

Table A12: **Logit Regression, Support for Right-Wing Parties in the 1997, 2005, and 2015 Parliamentary Elections.**

	AWS 1997	LPR 2005	PiS 2005	PiS 2015	PiS 2015
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	−0.005 (0.118)	−0.300 (0.209)	−0.221 (0.182)	−0.103 (0.090)	−0.185** (0.083)
Constant	−0.158 (0.517)	−0.467 (0.801)	−0.196 (0.693)	0.652** (0.315)	0.868*** (0.282)
Fixed effects: electoral district	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	55	57	57	57	57

Notes: Rural communities within 50 km of Treblinka are included in the analysis. Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5.3 Holocaust commemoration

Like Treblinka, the Warsaw ghetto is one of the key sites of Holocaust commemoration with monuments, plaques, and streets named after Jewish figures and a constant stream of visitors and groups. Yet because of the ghetto and the city's history under the Nazi occupation, the local residents of the area did not personally benefit from Jewish property. The Warsaw neighborhoods further away from the former ghetto area experience no Holocaust commemoration whatsoever. If the vote for the LPR is driven by negative attitudes towards Holocaust commemoration only and is not related to property transfers, then the parts of Warsaw where the ghetto was located should exhibit higher support for the LPR than adjacent socio-economically similar neighborhoods that had neither WWII-era property transfers nor contemporary Holocaust commemoration. However, examining electoral outcomes in Warsaw's 11 districts (2001 boundaries) shows that support in Warszawa-Centrum, where the ghetto was located, was 6.65%, or just slightly below the average level of support in Warsaw (7.07%). This finding should be viewed as a crude plausibility test only, but the combination of factors presented in this section makes us skeptical that the Holocaust commemoration explains our results.

5.4 Migration and changes in social structure

The existing quantitative data point to the lack of large-scale population movement. According to the 1988 census, which allows us to measure in-migration, 73% of people living in rural communities in the 50-km radius from the camp were born in the very community in which they resided. Among the remaining 27%, we assume at least some were born nearby (e.g., in a neighboring village within a similar distance to the camp) and married into their current village of residence, as is common in rural areas.

To examine whether rates of in-migration are associated with the distance to the death camp, we regress the share of *Population Living from Birth* (in 1988) on the natural logarithm of *Distance to Treblinka*. Results in Table A13 reject this possibility. Of course, it is still plausible that people left for more distant places, but this process is hard to reconcile with the lack of in-migration and the growing number of new homes built around the same period.

Table A13: **Logit Regression, Migration as Measured by the 1988 Census.**

	<i>Population Living from Birth</i>				
	Rural Only			Rural & Urban	
	50 km	50 km	60 km, GG	50 km	60 km, GG
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	0.023 (0.050)	0.012 (0.054)	-0.092 (0.063)	0.007 (0.063)	-0.109 (0.071)
log(Railway Distance)		0.033* (0.019)	0.093*** (0.031)	0.044*** (0.015)	0.062** (0.025)
Town				0.751 (0.601)	0.060 (0.485)
I(Town *log(Distance to Treblinka))				-0.446** (0.172)	-0.221 (0.132)
log(Distance to Nearest City)		-0.018 (0.111)	-0.054 (0.118)	-0.032 (0.119)	-0.163* (0.087)
Constant	0.911*** (0.172)	0.979* (0.561)	1.386** (0.604)	1.040* (0.608)	1.945*** (0.478)
Observations	53	53	42	65	53

Notes: Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A14: **Logit Regression, Demographic Characteristics in 1946.**

	<i>Population in 1946:</i>			
	Share Male		Share Aged 60 and Older	
	50 km	60 km	50 km	60 km
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.011 (0.009)	-0.009 (0.007)	0.028 (0.051)	0.028 (0.044)
log(Railway Distance)	-0.014*** (0.005)	-0.014*** (0.004)	0.039 (0.026)	0.036* (0.022)
log(Population)	0.004 (0.012)	0.001 (0.010)	0.039 (0.065)	0.042 (0.058)
Constant	0.129 (0.108)	0.156* (0.089)	-2.874*** (0.585)	-2.896*** (0.517)
Observations	66	91	66	91

Notes: Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The regression results show that there is no statistically significant association between *Distance to Treblinka* and *Share Male* (Models (1) and (2)) or *Share Aged 60 and Older* (Models (3) and (4)).

Table A15: **Logit Regression, Demographic Characteristics in 1995.**

	<i>Proportion Male Aged:</i>				
	70 & older	65-69	60-64	55-60	34-54
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
log(Distance to Treblinka)	-0.014 (0.089)	0.019 (0.129)	0.153 (0.167)	0.162 (0.151)	-0.010 (0.022)
Constant	-0.045 (0.306)	1.204*** (0.444)	-0.629 (0.573)	-0.482 (0.523)	0.162** (0.077)
Observations	55	55	55	55	55

Notes: Rural communities within 50 km of Treblinka are included in the analysis. Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The results suggest that there is no gender imbalance in various age groups in areas proximate to Treblinka in the 1990s. While it is still possible that some locals “drank the Jewish money away,” the phenomenon was not widespread because alcoholism and alcoholism-related illnesses are much more likely to affect males than females. Herein lies an additional reason to reject the immediate consumption scenario.

6 Robustness tests

6.1 Placebo Camp Locations

Treblinka is located in the south-west corner of the Małkinia railway junction, and localities at the other three corners are sufficiently similar in infrastructure, but did not experience property transfers at the same rate (see Figure A5). We find that despite the quite small distance between Treblinka and the placebo locations, the coefficient on the distance to a placebo camp location decreases in magnitude in all models and loses significance for two out of three placebos (Table A16). Note that for Placebo 2, while the size of the effect diminishes, the results are still statistically significant. We believe that the reason is that compared to other placebo locations, Placebo 2 is the closest to Małkinia and because of that did benefit from Jewish property, though to a much smaller extent than the Treblinka area. Trains transporting Jews to the camp would sometimes stop at the railroad junction for hours and even days without any food or water, which the locals would then sell to dehydrated Jews for astronomical prices (Wiernik, 1944, 7-8). The guards going in and out of the camp would also pass through the station, likely trading with the locals. Taken together, the results demonstrate that these are the property transfers that are explaining our results and also highlight the very localized, geographically constrained effects these property transfers have.

Figure A5: Locations of Placebo Camp Sites Around the Malkinia Railway Junction.

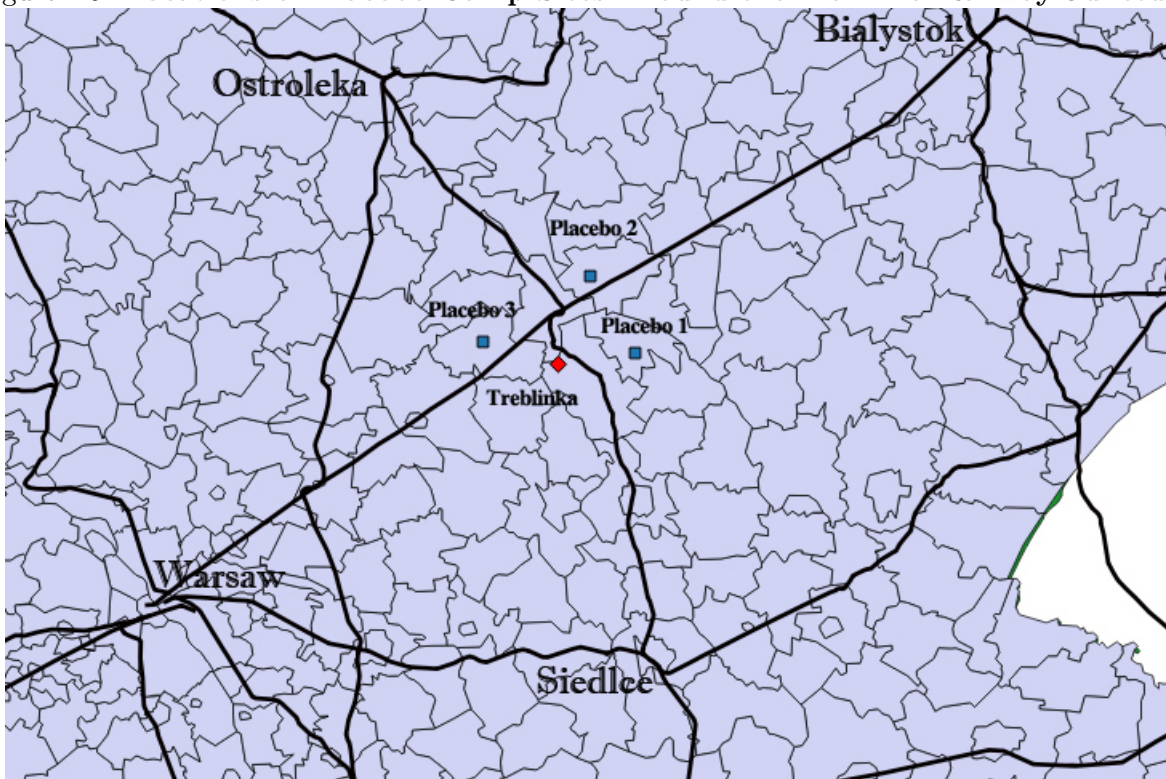


Table A16: **Logit Regression, Support for the LPR in 2001 and Distance to Placebo Camp Sites.**

	Placebo 1		LPR Vote Choice Placebo 2		Placebo 3	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
log(Distance to Placebo 1)	-0.085 (0.090)	-0.063 (0.092)				
log(Distance to Placebo 2)			-0.149* (0.084)	-0.156* (0.087)		
log(Distance to Placebo 3)					-0.085 (0.090)	-0.063 (0.092)
log(Railway Distance)		0.040 (0.033)		0.014 (0.032)		0.040 (0.033)
log(Distance to Nearest City)		0.137 (0.192)		0.005 (0.148)		0.137 (0.192)
Constant	-1.765*** (0.310)	-2.477** (0.930)	-1.598*** (0.286)	-1.609** (0.717)	-1.765*** (0.310)	-2.477** (0.930)
Observations	52	52	60	60	52	52

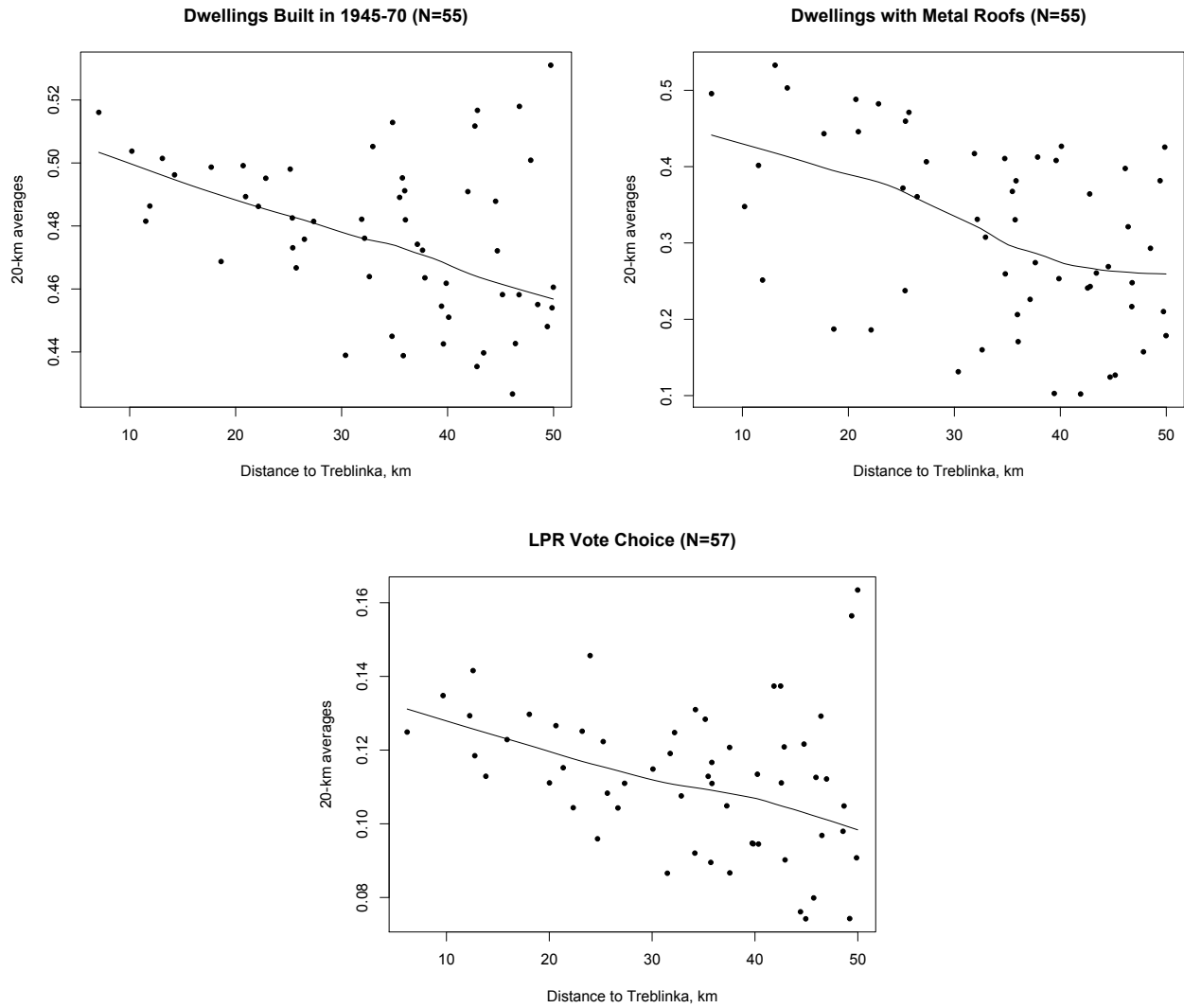
Notes: Standard errors corrected for overdispersion in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

6.2 Spatial properties of the data

One possibility for observing a cluster of communities with greater support for the LPR or with higher levels of investment in real estate in the vicinity of Treblinka might be the structure of the data considered. To identify clustering of the dependent variables in our dataset, we averaged the proportions of *Dwellings Built in 1945-70*, *Dwellings with Metal Roofs*, and *Vote for the LPR* for each community over a 20-km radius around this community. If these dependent variables have significant clustering properties in other locations in our data, Treblinka-like high-average clusters would be more likely to emerge in distant municipalities while low-average clusters might emerge near Treblinka, weakening their relationship with the explanatory variable, *Distance to Treblinka*. The results of our analysis are presented in Figure A6.

Overall, averaging the dependent variables over a 20-km radius improved the predictive power of *Distance to Treblinka*, further emphasizing that higher values of the dependent variables are significantly clustered only around Treblinka. Furthermore, we found that clustering is not a general feature of the data. The graph of the share of *Dwellings with Metal Roofs* shows no clustering at greater distances from the death camp. The plot of the share of *Dwellings Built in 1945-70* reveals some clustering at larger distances from Treblinka, probably caused by the uneven distribution of wartime destruction, as noted in the article. The plot of the *LPR Vote* has only one cluster with high values, around Śniadowo, situated 50 km away from the death camp. Śniadowo, now a rural community, was classified as a small town until 1900 and thus had a Jewish population. In 1941-42, Nazis operated a small ghetto in Śniadowo. This case demonstrates that our empirical strategy of excluding communities classified as “urban” during and after WWII to isolate the impact of property transfers from other aspects of Polish-Jewish relations may miss communities that had lost their urban status in the beginning of the 20th century due to their small size. This is a relative minor concern for our analysis, however: the death camp was constructed in a secluded and largely agricultural area, as noted in the article.

Figure A6: Distribution of 20-km averages for investment in real estate and support for the LPR in rural communities within 50 km of Treblinka.



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