Scars of the Gestapo: Remembrance and Privacy Concerns

Sebastián D. Bauer
Florencia M. Hnilo

Discussion by Gabriel Ahlfeldt, Humboldt University
UEA, Montreal

Summary

- **Research question:** Do reminders of Germany's authoritarian past (*Stolpersteine*) heighten contemporary privacy concerns?
  - Salience of historical data misuse → higher propensity to blur homes on Street View.
- **Highlights**
  - Novel use of data: blurring andmemorial locations
  - Identification leverages **quasi-random commuting exposure**
  - Great hyper-micro-geographic GIS job!
- **Improvements**
  - Clarify remaining endogeneity channels and strengthen causal interpretation
  - Refine station-*entrance* modeling for commuting exposure
  - Discuss policy relevance beyond "trust-building"

Identification: Own-Parcel Effect

- **Exposure** of residents to plaques as good as **random**
  - Key identifying assumptions
- No **selection** ✓
  - Controls: concentric bins of victim counts + small-area fixed effects.
  - Balance tests: little correlation with block covariates within neighborhoods
  - Permutation tests using (potential sites)

Identification: Own-Parcel Effect

- **Exposure** of residents to plaques as good as **random**
  - Key identifying assumptions
- No **selection** ✓
  - Controls: concentric bins of victim counts + small-area fixed effects.
  - Balance tests: little correlation with block covariates within neighborhoods
  - Permutation tests using (potential sites)
- No **reverse causality**—plausible?
  - Residents valuing privacy may push for plaques (**history-conscious types**)
  - Naturally **start research at own nuilding**, or next one
- Need an **IV** to break link between local residents and plaques
  - Explore relatives' **veto/consent** as an IV for plaque placement—observable?

Functional form

- **First**, show functional form of distance decay: Go directly to Figure 5
  - Shows action mainly within 100m
  - 100m or linear distance specs add little, Table 2 could be dropped
- **Then**, informed by Figure 5, parameterize the functional form to gain precision
  - **Option 1**: Effect within 100m

$$Outcome = \alpha + \beta_1 D_{100} + \beta_2 D_{100} \times DIST$$

    - β_1: effect at the premise, β_2: decay within 100m
    - Effect at 100m: $\beta_1 - 100 \times \beta_2$
  - **Option 2**: Effect up to 1000m with kink at 100m

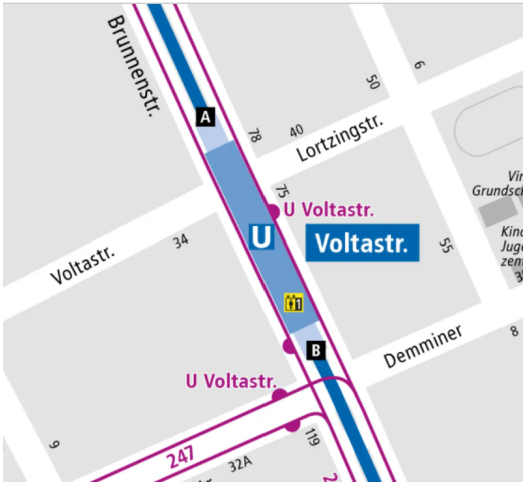
$$Outcome = \alpha + \beta_1 D_{1000} + \beta_2 D_{1000} \times DIST + \beta_3 D_{1000} \cdot 1(DIST > 100)(DIST - 100)$$

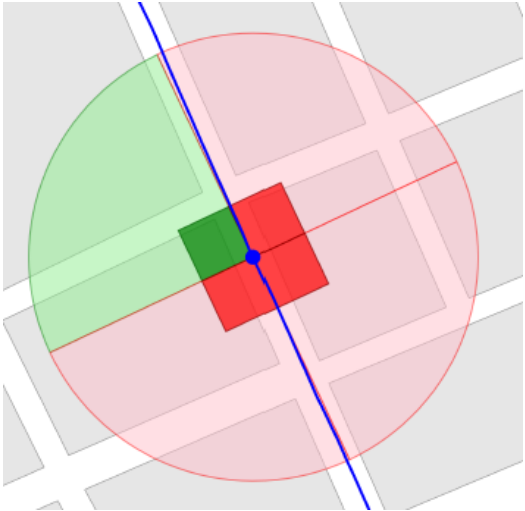
    - β_1 and β_2 like before, $\beta_2 + \beta_3$ is slope between 100 and 1000m

Commuting Exposure

- **Great GIS idea**: shortest path from home to station entrance via plaques
  - **Mitigates the reverse-causality concern**
  - History-conscious types research at their doorstep
  - Others get exposed on their way to transit stations
  - Identification conditional on station fixed effects very smart!
  - W**ould put these models centre-stage**
- BUT: Current shapefile gets **U-Bahn entrances wrong**!
  - U-Bahn has **multiple entrances**, just like S-Bahn
- Recommendation:
  - Try to get entrance **shapefile from BVG** (public transit provider)
  - **Redo analysis with entrances/entrance FE**
  - Want to know if smaller ATT due to avoided **reverse causality or attenuation bias** (measurement error)

Commuting exposure





Minor points

- Tenure: Are requesters mainly renters? Clarify eligibility.
- Figure 2: Prefer density normalization; consider interpolation.
- Standard errors: Report Conley with explicit spatial ranges.
- Pitch/relevance
  - Key variables original, but also context-specific (blurring and plaques)
  - Can we further develop relevance in broader economics contexts?
  - Should we link to behavioural economics literatuer on salience?
  - Policy implication unclear, should we do something about Germans' privacy concerns?

Download from www.ahlfeldt.com → presentations → Slides: Discussion