What explains the electoral success of the AfD?
An analysis of the March 2016 state elections Germany

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INTRODUCTION

- Within less than three years of being founded, the **Alternative for Germany** (AfD) has achieved extraordinary vote share in the General election of 2013, and the European Parliament election of 2014 (Arzheimer 2015)
- March 2016: **15.1%** in Baden-Württemberg, **12.6%** in Rhineland-Palatinate, **24.3%** in Saxony-Anhalt
- "**a landslide**"(Pausch 2016)
- The AfD has **"arrived in German mainstream politics"** (Gathmann and Wittrock 2016)

- AfD can be described as a "**functional equivalent for a right-wing populist party** in a country where right-wing politics are strongly stigmatised" (Berbuir, Lewandowsky, and Siri 2015)

- Ivarsflaten (2008) : Successful RRWP parties almost always use **anti-immigration rhethorics**

- Swank and Betz (2003) : **Volume of refugees**, level of **immigration**, domestic **tax burden**, and strong presence of **left-wing parties** positively influences right wing-populist electoral success

- AfD was especially successful in mobilizing former **non-voters** and the **unemployed** (Gathmann and Wittrock 2016)

"What explains the recent electoral success of the AfD in the different districts of Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Saxony-Anhalt?"

- What structural factors correlate with the success
- Same factors as found for other western European countries?

ELECTION DATA

Source: Baden-Wuerttemberg (2016), Rheinland-Pfalz (2016), Sachsen-Anhalt (2016)

Variable	Name in dataset	Description
Dependent Variable (DV)	**vote.AfD**	The vote share of the Alternative for Germany in the current state election
Independent Variable 1 (IV1)	**lag.turnout**	Overall voter turnout of the previous state election
IV2, IV3, IV4, IV5, IV6	**lag.CDU**, **lag.Greens**, **lag.SPD**, **lag.FDP**, **lag.Linke**	The vote share of political parties in the previous state election (CDU, SPD, Greens, FDP, and Linke)

Structural data

Source: Bundesamt (2015)

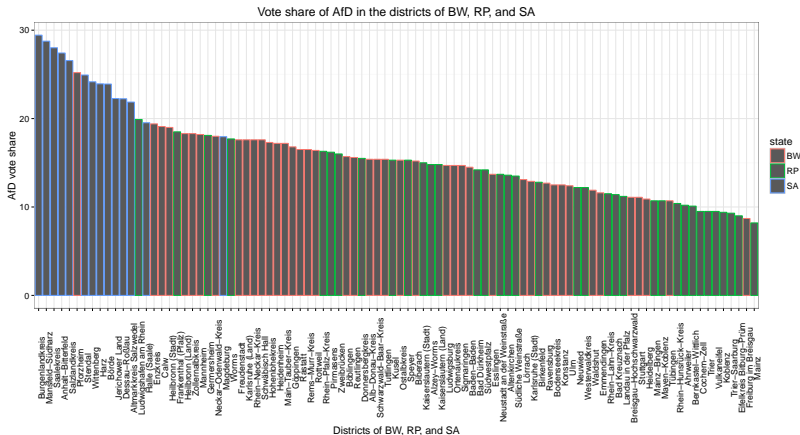| Variable	Name in dataset	Description
IV7	**abitur.ratio**	Ratio of school leavers per district with general qualification for university entrance (Abitur)
IV8	**nodegree.ratio**	Ratio of school leavers per district with no school degree
IV9	**GDP.cap**	Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita
IV10	**unemp.rate**	Unemployment rate in the district
IV11	**n.refugees**	Number of asylum seekers per district

TABLE 3: Summary statistics of the covariates

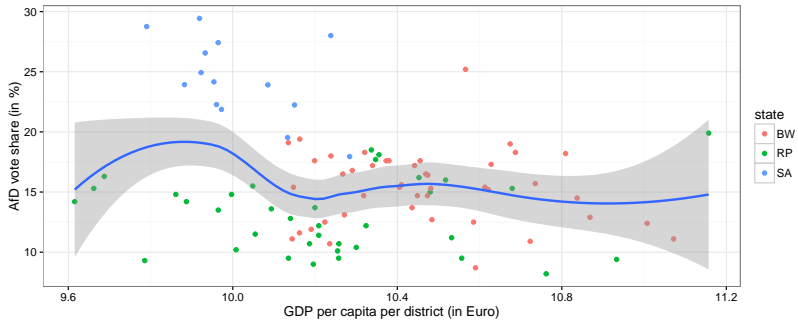| Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote share of AfD in 2016	94	15.825	4.856	8.200	29.440
Vote turnout in 2011	94	61.587	6.176	47.060	73.400
Vote share of CDU in 2011	94	36.675	6.350	21.500	51.200
Vote share of Greens in 2011	94	17.303	8.288	2.830	43.000
Vote share of SPD in 2011	94	27.731	7.606	16.600	46.300
Vote share of FDP in 2011	94	4.107	1.987	0.090	8.400
Vote share of Linke in 2011	94	5.986	7.283	2.000	25.180
High school ratio	94	29.524	8.957	13.900	55.200
No degree ratio	94	5.798	2.594	1.600	15.900
GDP per capita	94	31,543.490	10,577.930	14,998	70,052
Unemployment rate	94	6.246	3.032	2.900	15.100
Number of refugees	94	423.266	283.213	97	1,487

TABLE 4: Correlation matrix of all the variables

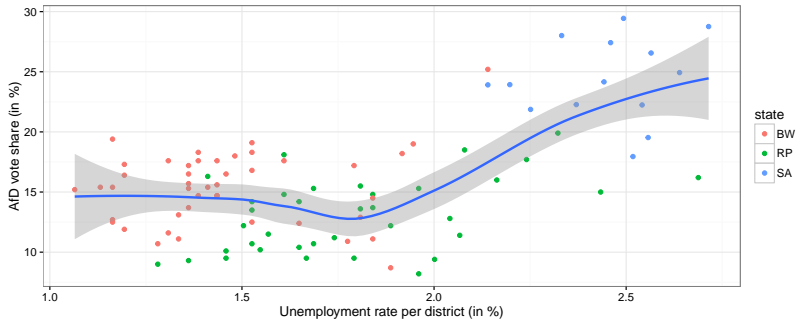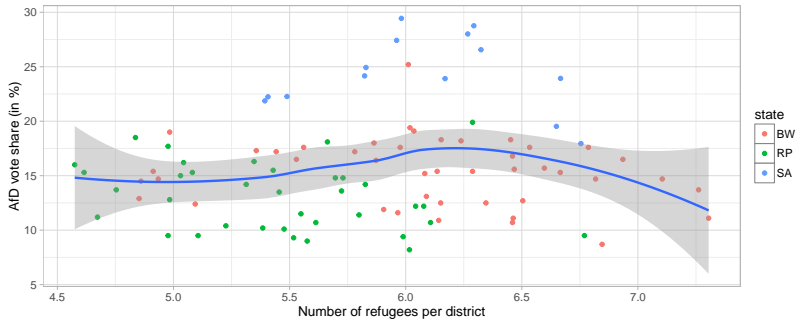|	vote.AfD	lag.CDU	lag.SPD	GDP.capita	unempl.rate	n.refugees	abitur.ratio
vote.AfD	1	-0.079	-0.337	-0.232	0.615	0.020	-0.298
lag.CDU	-0.079	1	-0.409	-0.019	-0.527	-0.037	-0.481
lag.SPD	-0.337	-0.409	1	-0.119	0.045	-0.400	0.227
GDP.capita	-0.232	-0.019	-0.119	1	-0.119	0.185	0.468
unempl.rate	0.615	-0.527	0.045	-0.119	1	-0.079	0.236
n.refugees	0.020	-0.037	-0.400	0.185	-0.079	1	-0.021
abitur.ratio	-0.298	-0.481	0.227	0.468	0.236	-0.021	1

DISTRIBUTION OF AfD VOTE SHARE

Vote share of AfD in the districts of BW, RP, and SA

INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

	Dependent variable:			
	Vote share of AfD			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
GDP per capita	−0.0001**	−0.0001**	0.00004	0.00001
	(0.00004)	(0.00003)	(0.00004)	(0.00004)
Unemployment rate	0.963***	0.682***	1.103***	0.973***
	(0.130)	(0.222)	(0.181)	(0.233)
Number of refugees	0.002	0.001	0.001	−0.0003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Vote share of CDU in 2011 election		0.091		−0.033
		(0.074)		(0.073)
Vote share of SPD in 2011 election		−0.205***		−0.201***
		(0.058)		(0.055)
High school ratio		−0.241**		−0.136
		(0.105)		(0.099)
No degree ratio			−0.267***	−0.224***
			(0.048)	(0.050)
(Intercept)			0.148	−0.118
			(0.208)	(0.203)
Constant	11.675***	30.800***	14.225***	32.175***
	(1.618)	(8.649)	(1.731)	(8.277)
District FE?	NO	NO	NO	NO
Observations	94	94	94	94
R^2	0.413	0.588	0.597	0.669
Adjusted R^2	0.394	0.560	0.574	0.638

Note: *$p<0.1$; **$p<0.05$; ***$p<0.01$

- Analysis of all state elections in Germany where the AfD is present in order to have more observations
- Access more recent data on refugee numbers
- Additional variables, like "immigrants per district"
- Spatial analysis

Thank you for your attention

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