Research question:
- How persistent is history? What is the role of institutions in this?
- Large natural experiment: Partitions of Poland
- Austria, Prussia and Russia ruled over Poland from 1792 to 1918
- Imperial institutions caused large differences in human capital
- Polish independence 1918: Harmonization of educational institutions
- Sample spans 1911-1961 to observe impact of institutional change
- Decompression of Polish educational history across (former) Partitions

Empirical strategy:
- Spatial RDD at Partition borders
- Grosfeld & Zhuravskaya, 2015: Randomness of borders
- This paper adds: No discontinuities in population prior to Partitions
- $y_{it} = \alpha \cdot Empire_{i} + f(X_{it},Y_{it}) + \delta \cdot C_{i} + \epsilon_{it}$
- $Empire_{i} = 1$ if county is in Prussian or Austrian Partition
- $f(X_{it}, Y_{it})$: Second-order polynomial in longitude and latitude

Results:
- Large differences in enrollment due to the Partitions in 1911 – 80 percentage points gap between Russian and Prussian Partition
- But both former Partitions are close to full enrollment in 1931 – only 13 years after harmonization of educational institutions
  - Russian legacy is embodied in human capital of older cohorts - literacy is equalized after WWII due to intergenerational mobility
  - Gender access to schooling was highly unequal in the Russian Partition, but is quickly equalized by Polish institutions
  - High share of informally or self-taught population in former Russian Partition in 1921, but formalization till 1961
  - No differences in educational attainment between the former Partitions at medium and high levels of education
  - Growth of publications but lower utilization of postal services in former Russian Partition between WWI and WWII
  - Robustness to placebo borders, smaller RDD bandwidth and population controls

Conclusion:
- Wittenberg (2015): History is both persistence and change
- This paper shows that institutional change rapidly reshapes human capital in post-WWI Poland
- This paper shows how “legacy” effects turn into “zero” effects, no long-run associations (Voth, 2020)
- Control over institutions allows Poland to change trajectory of former Russian Partition (Acemoglu et al., 2020)
- History – from the persistence perspective – still matters!
- Bukowski (2019): Positive norms towards schooling in former Austrian Partition today \(\rightarrow\) Limit to non-persistence
- Persistence of “good” schooling systems in the former Austrian and Prussian Partitions \(\rightarrow\) Adopted by Poles after WWI