

Politics and Protection:

Refugees and the AfD in Germany, 2017

Research Questions

- Where is a high concentration of support for the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party?
- Where are high concentrations of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany?
- Is there a correlation between high AfD support and high number of refugees?

Introduction

Since the beginning of the global refugee crisis in 2015, Germany has taken in more than one million refugees and asylum seekers. During this same time the country saw the rise of far-right nationalistic parties raging against foreigners, oftentimes using racist and xenophobic language. The biggest of these parties is the AfD. In the 2017 federal elections they won more than 12% of the vote, an almost 8% increase from the 2013 elections. This project displays the correlation between support for the AfD and number of protection seekers. The term protection seekers is used because that is the umbrella term in Germany that encompasses the many classifications of refugees and asylum seekers.

Techniques

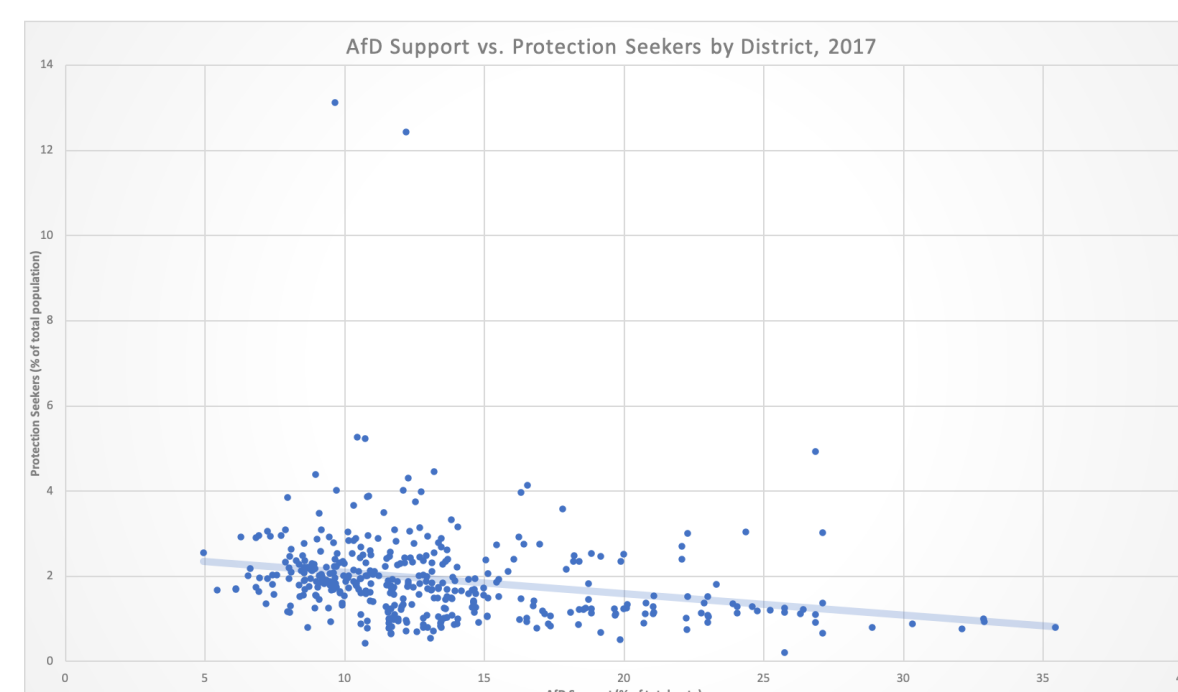
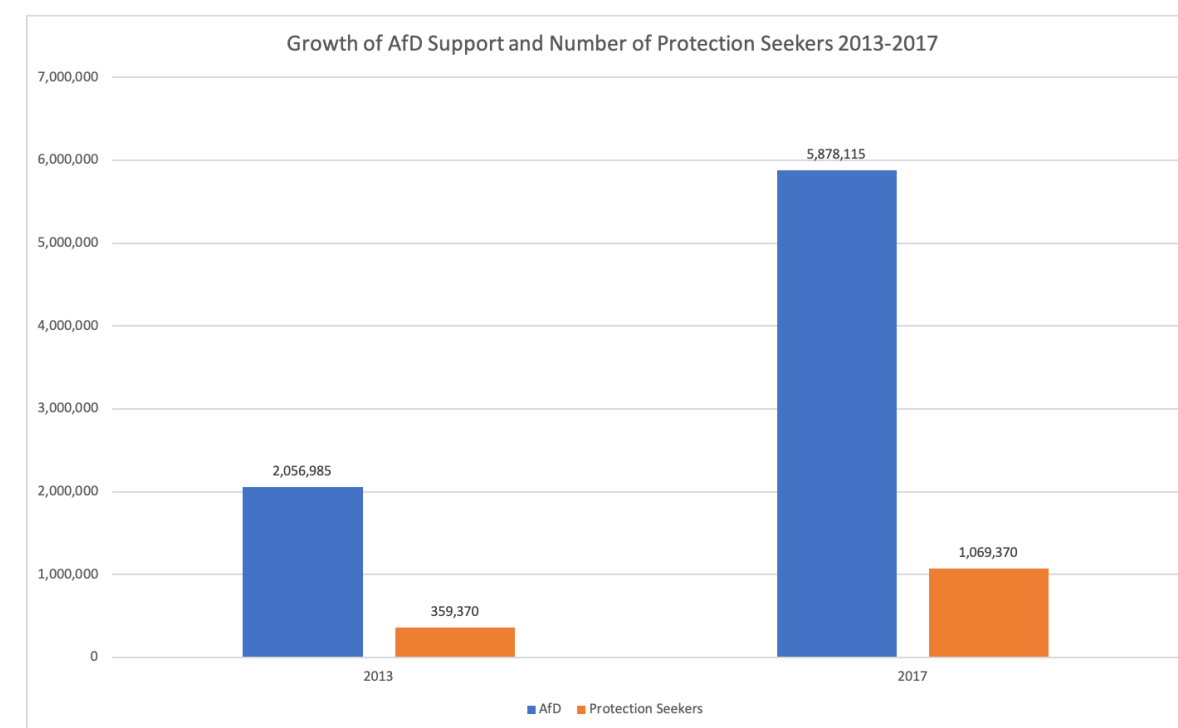
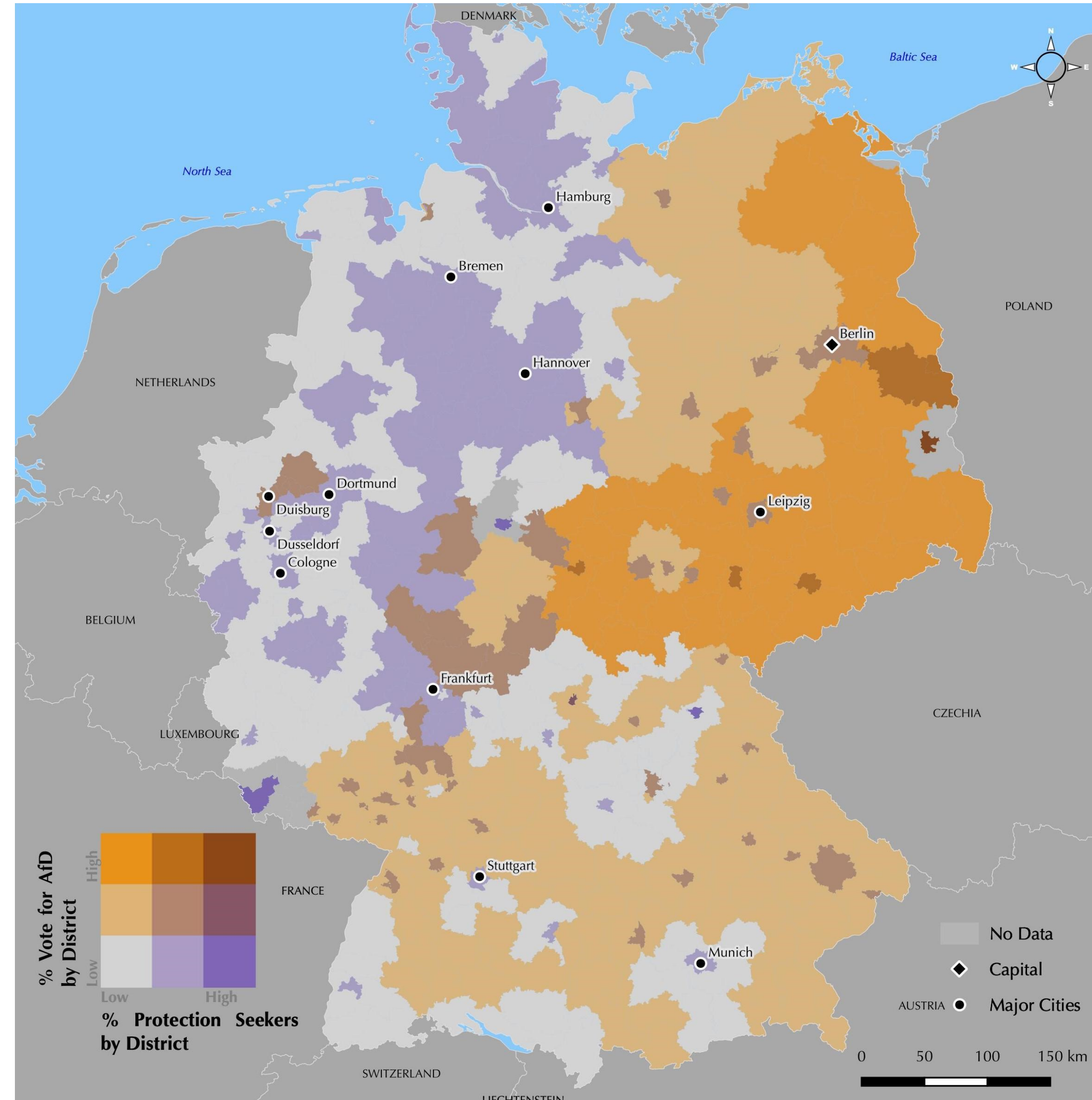
The data was compiled by Kreise (administrative districts) and by Wahlkreise (electoral districts). The AfD data in the 299 Wahlkreise was first normalized by total votes, and then rasterized to join onto the 425 Kreise layer. To join this data from a different set of polygons,

the mean of two or more electoral districts that fell within one administrative district was taken as the value to represent percent of AfD votes. Protection seeker data was normalized on each Kreis by total population. Each variable set was broken into 3 classifications and

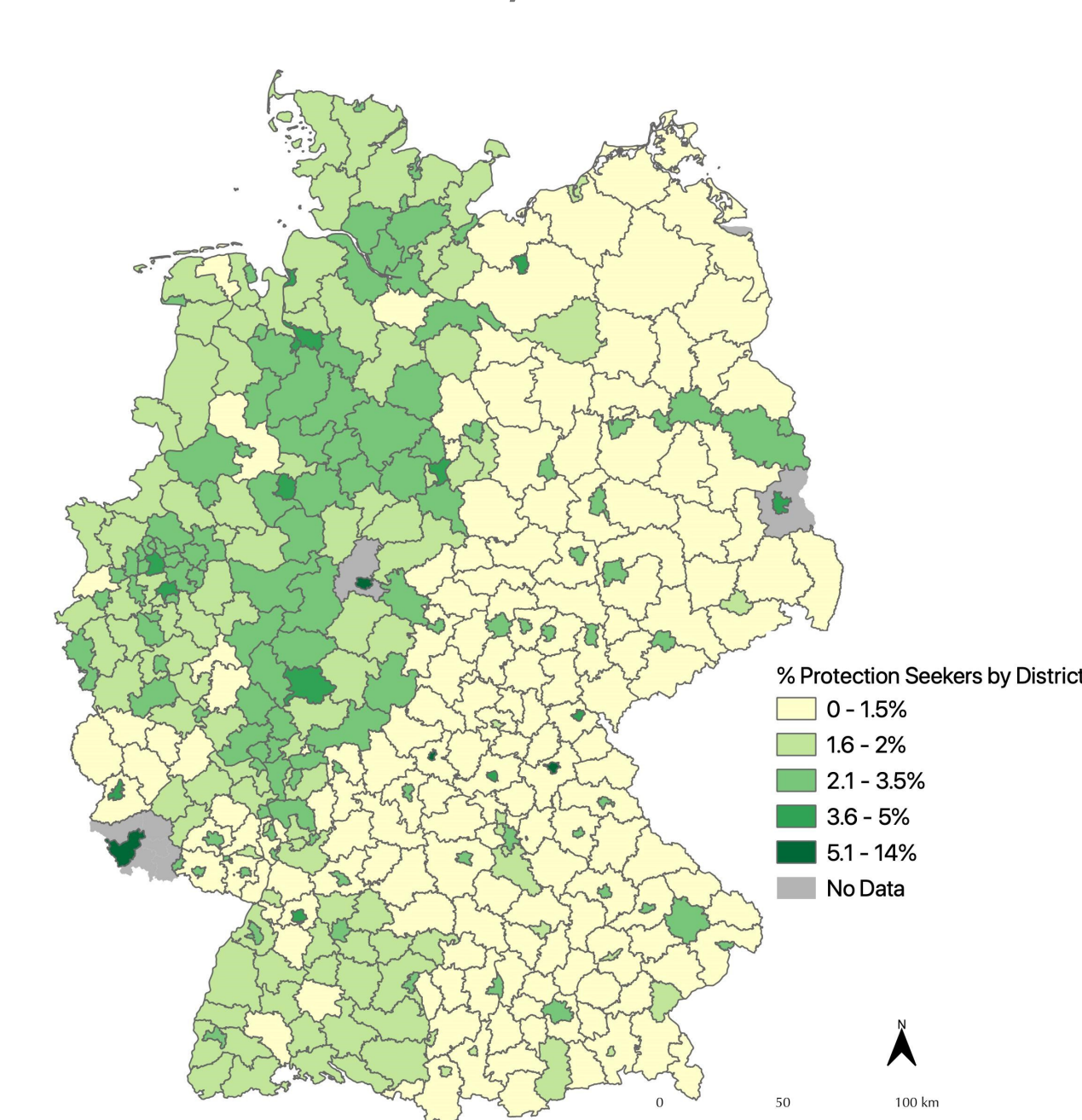
given a label of A, B, or C for the protection seeker data and 1, 2, or 3 for the AfD data. These six new classifications were then combined from A1 (representing low concentrations of either) to C3 (representing high concentrations of both). The result was nine new

classifications. Each was given a color as shown on the map above to show the correlation between the two variables and then displayed by administrative district.

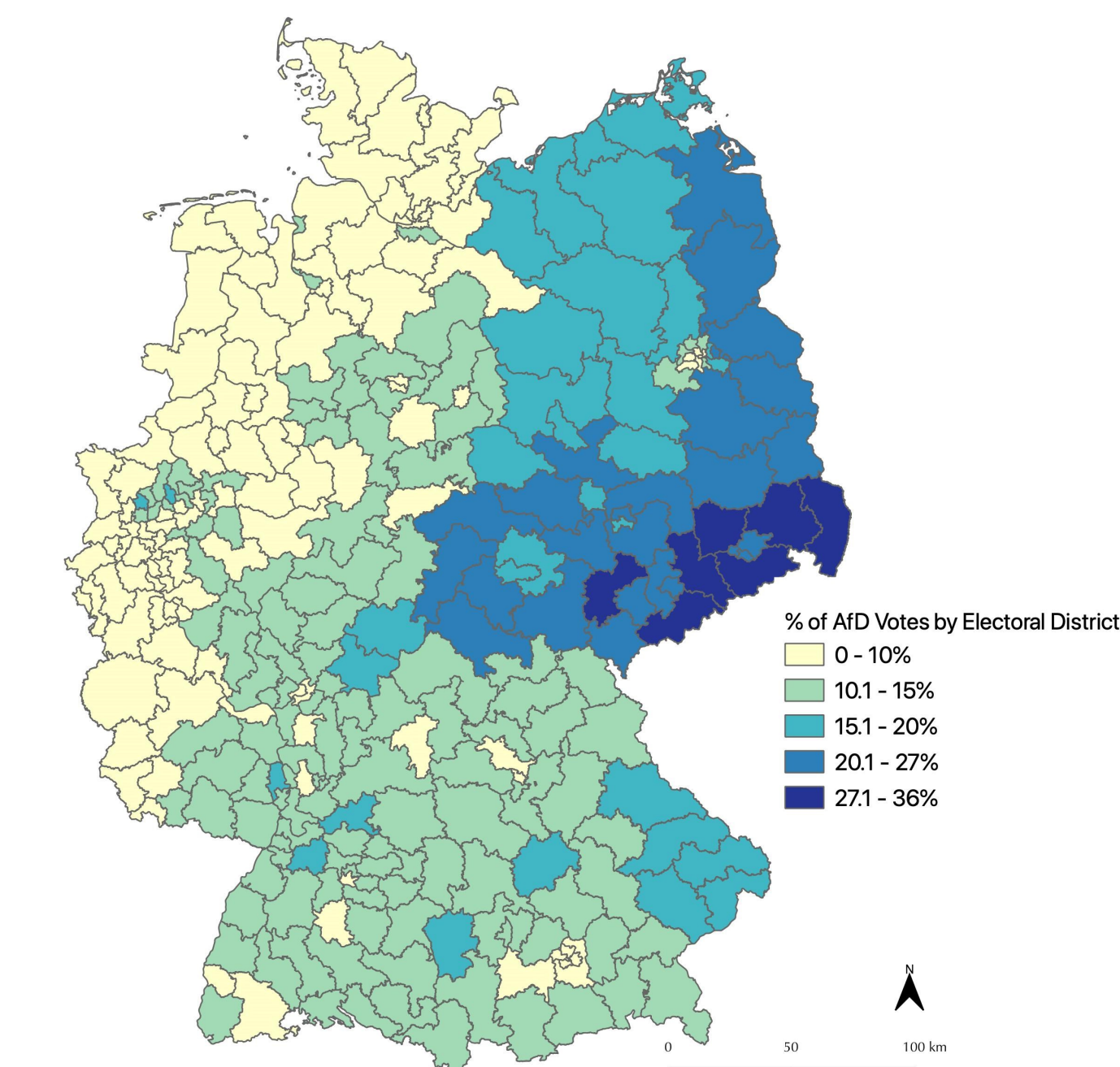
Correlation of AfD Votes and Protection Seekers in Germany, 2017



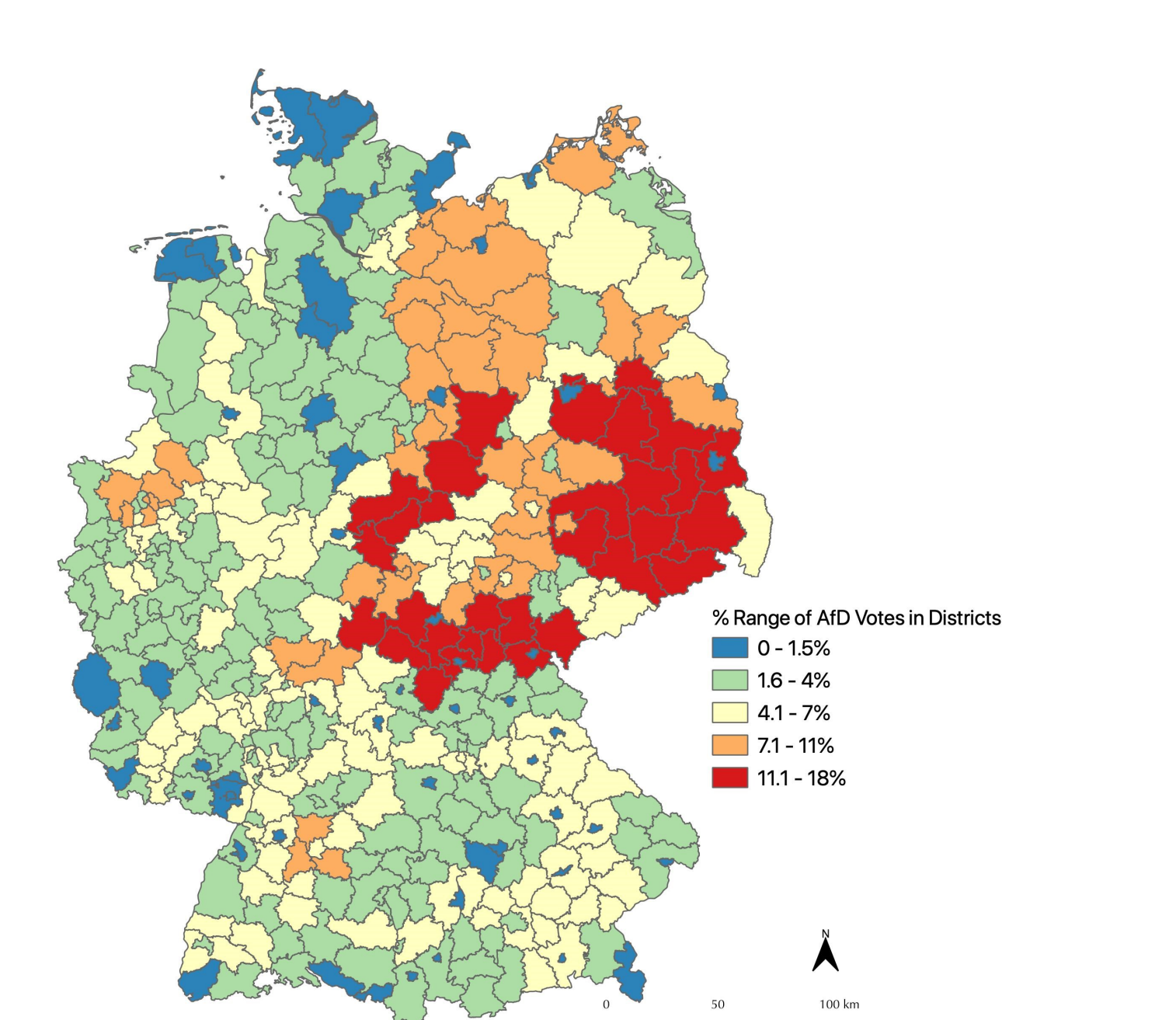
Protection Seekers, 2017



AfD Votes, 2017



Range of AfD Votes, 2017



Results

The results show that there is a negative correlation between high concentrations of AfD voters and high concentration of protection seekers. This is not surprising given the demographics, politics, and wealth distributions in Germany. There is only one Kreis with a high concentration of both, the city of Cottbus, a small city in eastern Germany, near the border with Poland. The

other darker areas in eastern Germany show that there are pockets of protection seekers, mainly in urban areas, places that are better suited for taking in refugees. There are several other areas of low concentrations of both in the rest of Germany, showing the increasing support for the AfD.

Limitations

There were several limitations compiling and analyzing this data. The biggest one was joining data from two separate district levels that did not overlap. The raster method used was the best workaround available. But it means that some Kreise have a large range in AfD votes. Both the range and original data by electoral district are shown below. The different number of AfD votes from two or more electoral districts joined

into one administrative district is represented by the range map. This slightly skews the subsequent correlation analysis. But it is still valuable because the range is not significant enough to have a high impact. The higher ranges are largely in areas of low to no protection seeker presence.

Conclusions

This project concludes that there is little correlation between AfD votes and number of protection seekers in Germany. It is outside the scope of this project to determine causation, but there is a clear correlation between the rise in protection seekers and the rise in AfD support between 2013 and 2017 (the two election years in which the AfD has gained seats in the German Bundestag). There is little question that the increased

presence of over one million refugees has been a target for the AfD and other far-right nationalist groups. They have been able to profit from their xenophobic rhetoric to attract supporters. It is notable that this support largely comes from areas with small to no amounts of refugees.

Sources

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Projection: ETRS89/ UTM Zone 32N

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