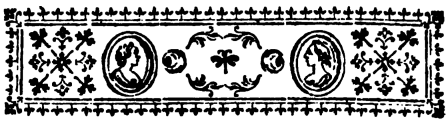
# The Clandestine Book Trade and the Market for Political Ideas in Eighteenth Century France

Julius Koschnick
University of Southern Denmark

Noah Sutter
London School of Economics



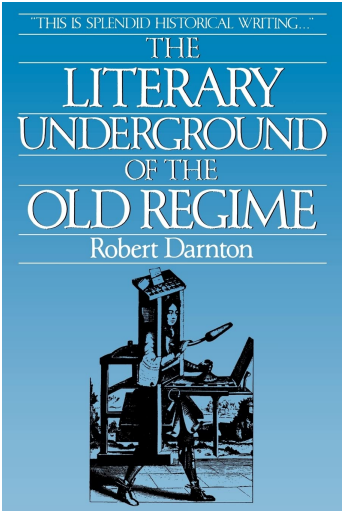
**ASREC Europe 2026**
University of Warwick Venice Centre, Venice • 25–26 September 2026

§ 1

# Motivation

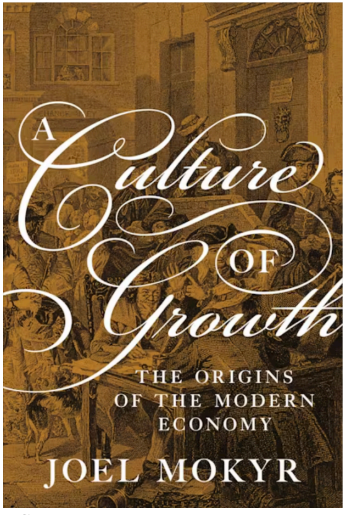


# The Start: The French Revolution and the Enlightenment Book Trade



# The European Knowledge Economy and the Market for Ideas

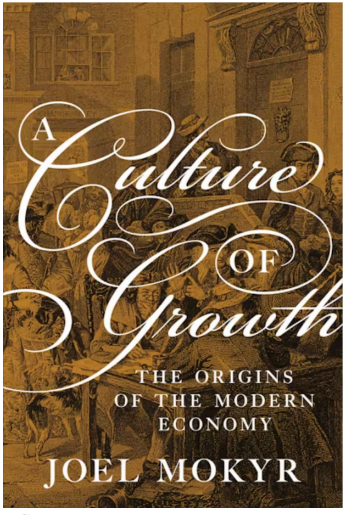
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**Source:** Princeton University Press

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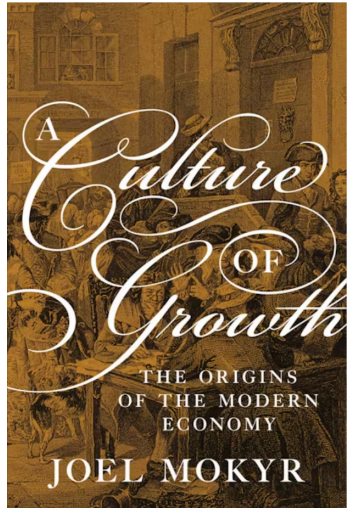
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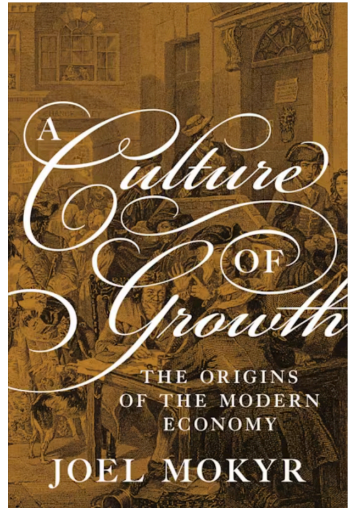
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# The Republic of Letters

*"Virtual or not, the* ***Republic of Letters was the main institution behind the meteoric takeoff of useful knowledge in Europe*** *during the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. In this context institutions should be seen as a set of rules by which the economic game is played. [...] The main rules governing the Republic of Letters were freedom of entry, contestability, that is, the right to challenge any form of knowledge, transnationality, and a commitment to placing new knowledge in the public domain." (Mokyr, 2016, p. 189)*

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# The Printing House

*"The Republic of Letters was not entirely virtual.* ***Some brick-and mortar organizations helped make it work.*** *[...] Eisenstein points to the role of* ***European printing houses in providing a material base for the institution.*** *" (Mokyr, 2016, p. 189)*

# The Printing House as the Infrastructure of the Knowledge Economy

**We find quantitative evidence that the printing house could provide the material basis for the Knowledge economy by guaranteeing the aforementioned rules:**

- **Freedom of Entry:**
  Supply was elastic and could expand in response to price shocks, no binding capacity constraints, entry on the extensive margin.

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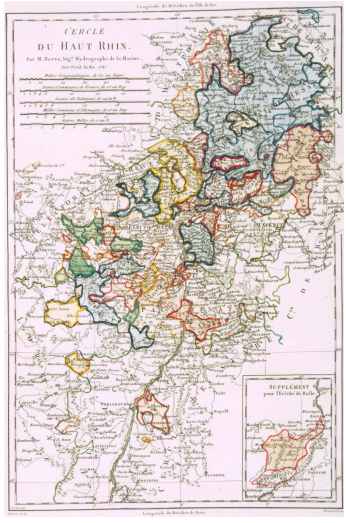
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- **Knowledge in the Public Domain:**
  De facto non-excludability of ideas, state-granted monopolies (*privilège*) cannot be enforced.

# Competition and Political Fragmentation

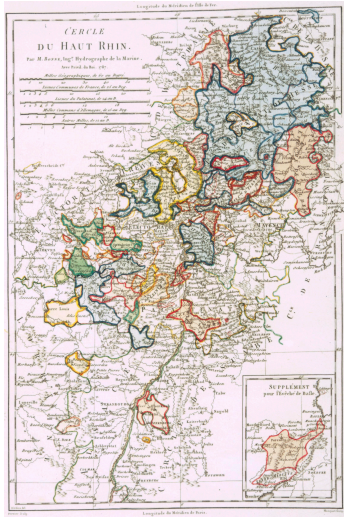
- *The institutional background of the intellectual community in early modern Europe consisted of a polycentric political environment coexisting with a transnational Republic of Letters [...]."* (Mokyr, 2016, p. 179)




**Source:** Cercle du Haut Rhin, par M. Bonne, University of Bern, Collection Ryhiner

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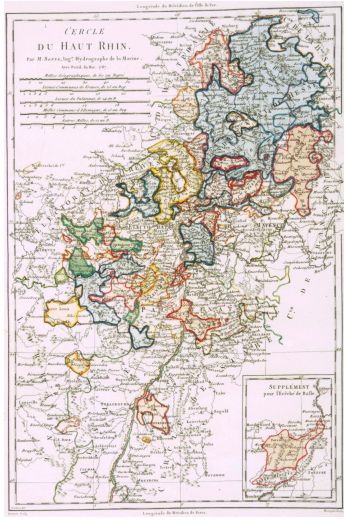
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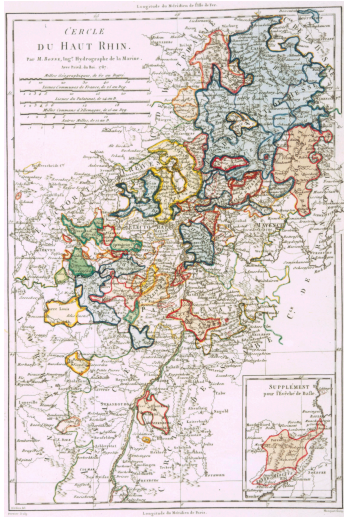
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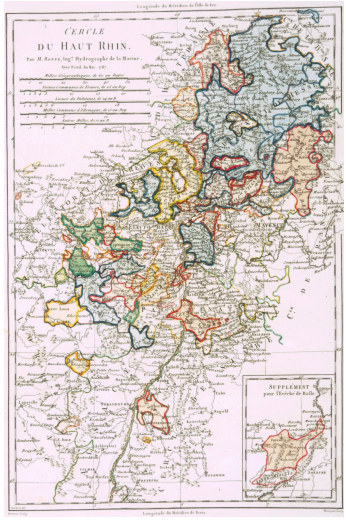
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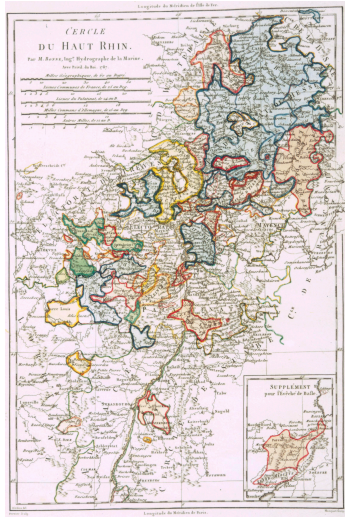
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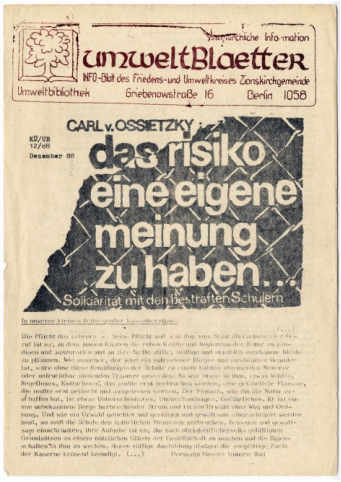
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# The Political Economy of Seditious Literature

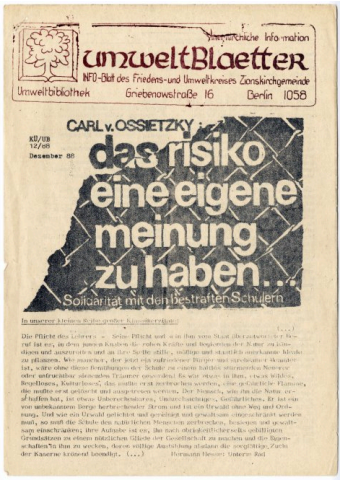
- Governments try to limit influence of **seditious media**.




**Source:** Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft

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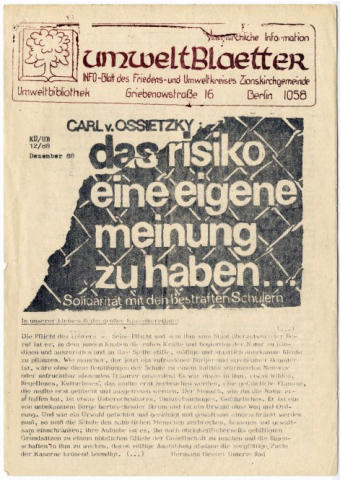
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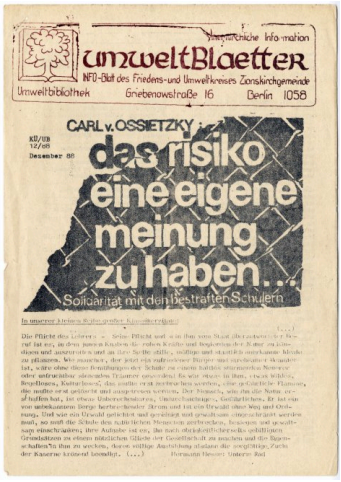
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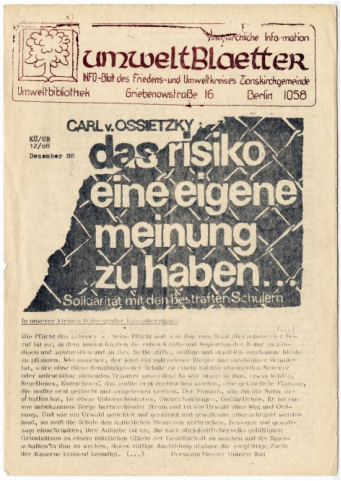
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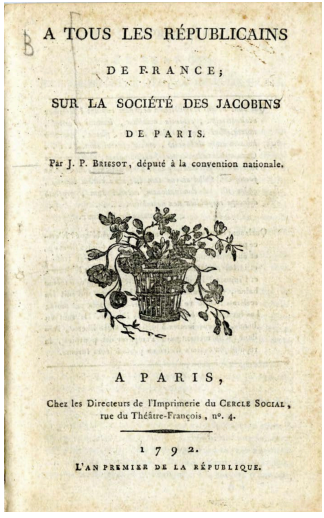
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- **Endogeneity:** Does demand drive supply or does supply increase demand? (Discussions around *Deplatforming)*




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# Research Design

- We make use of **exogenous variation** in the price of domestically produced books.



A TOUS LES RÉPUBLICAINS

DE FRANCE;

SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DES JACOBINS

DE PARIS.

Par J. P. Brissot, député à la convention nationale.

A PARIS,

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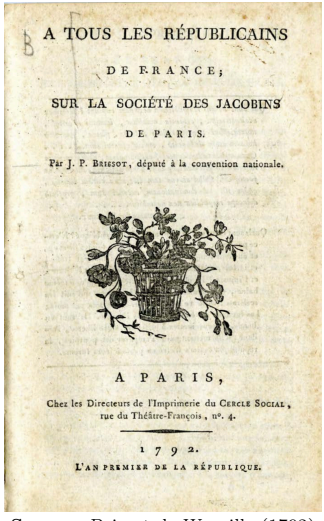
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L'AN PREMIER DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE.

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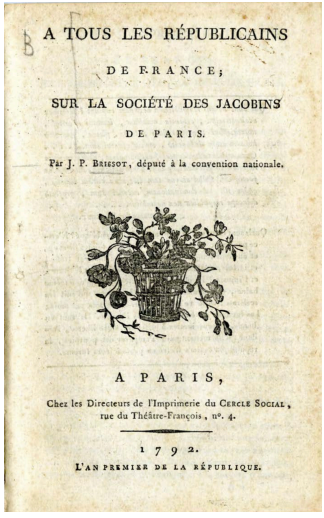
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- Notoriously cash-strapped Crown inadvertently creates a **tax advantage for clandestine trade**.


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# Research Questions

**Question 1**

How did a clandestine enlightenment publishing house in Neuchâtel react to a tax shock in the Kingdom of France?

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**Question 2**

What can this teach us about the role of the clandestine publishing industry in the European Knowledge Economy?

# Literature Review

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- **Enlightenment Book Publishing Industry**
  Darnton (2014, 1973, 1982, 1987, 1995, 1996, 2012, 2021, 2024); Darnton and Schlup (2005); Chartier (1991); Febvre and Martin (1958); Burrows (2013a,b); Burrows and Curran (2012); Curran (2010a,b, 2013); Schlup et al. (2002); Freedman (2012); Anderson (2016); Habermas (1991)

# Outline

1. Motivation
2. Historical Background
3. Data
4. Domestic Book Production
   - Empirical Approach
   - Results
5. Effects on Imports into France
   - Empirical Approach
   - Results
6. Effects on the Production of Ideas
   - Empirical Approach
   - Results
7. Discussion and Conclusion



§ 2

# Historical Background



# The Ancien Régime Book Trade

**A Firm Paris Monopoly:**

- Production and distribution of books is firmly in the hand of the ***Communauté des libraires et imprimeurs de Paris***.

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- ***Privilèges*** could be **inherited**.

# The Ancien Régime Book Trade

**Shades of Grey of Illegality**

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# The Ancien Régime Book Trade

**Shades of Grey of Illegality**

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- **Sliding scale of (il)legality:** p*ermissions tacites, permissions simples, permissions de polices*, or just a simple *tolérances* - not technically legal but tacitly tolerated.
- Clearly **illegal offensive, seditious or libertine *livres philosophiques***

# The Ancien Régime Book Trade

**Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes (*directeur de la Librairie*/state censor):**

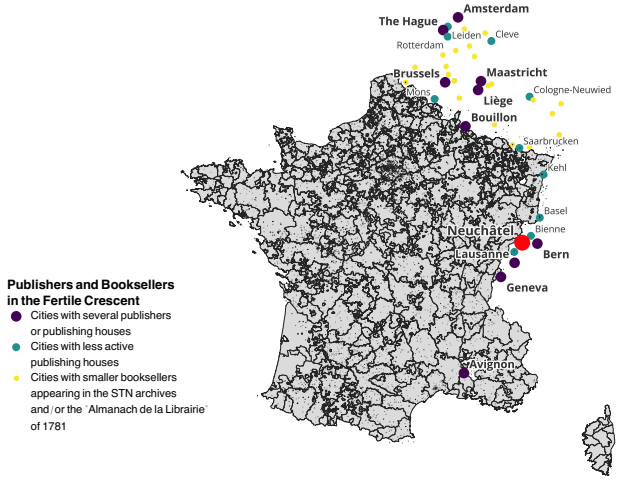
> *"A man who had only read books that originally appeared with the formal approval of the government [...] would be behind his contemporaries by nearly a century" (Darnton, 1996, p. xix)*



**Source:** *Musée Carnavalet*

# The *Fertile Crescent* of Clandestine Publishing

Figure: The Fertile Crescent, after Darnton (2021, p. 60)



# The *Société Typographique de Neuchâtel*



**Source:** ARCINFO

# Policy Shocks in the French Book Trade

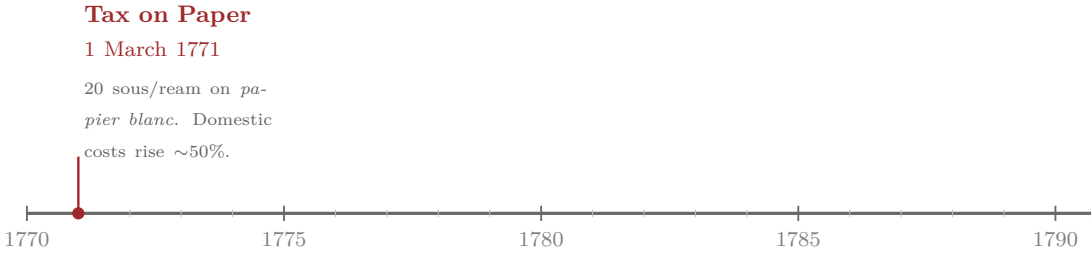
1771 – 1789




● Tax / cost shocks ● Regulatory reforms ● Enforcement ● Revolution

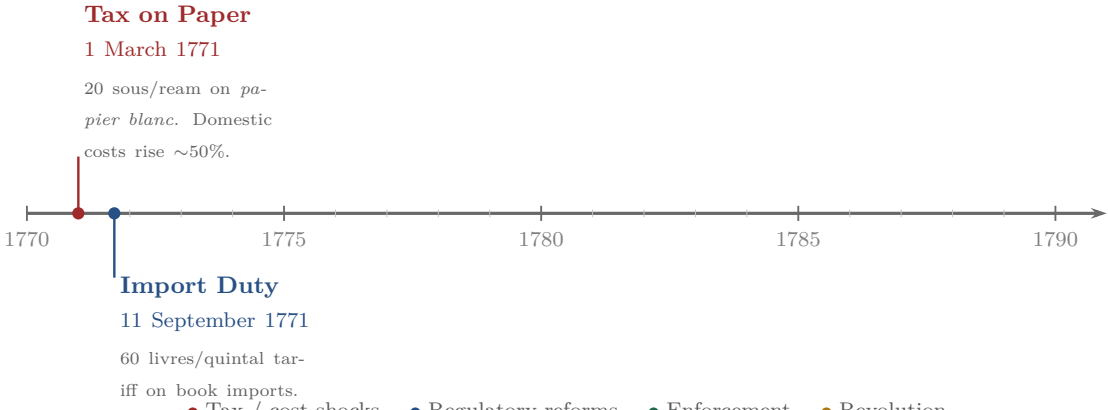
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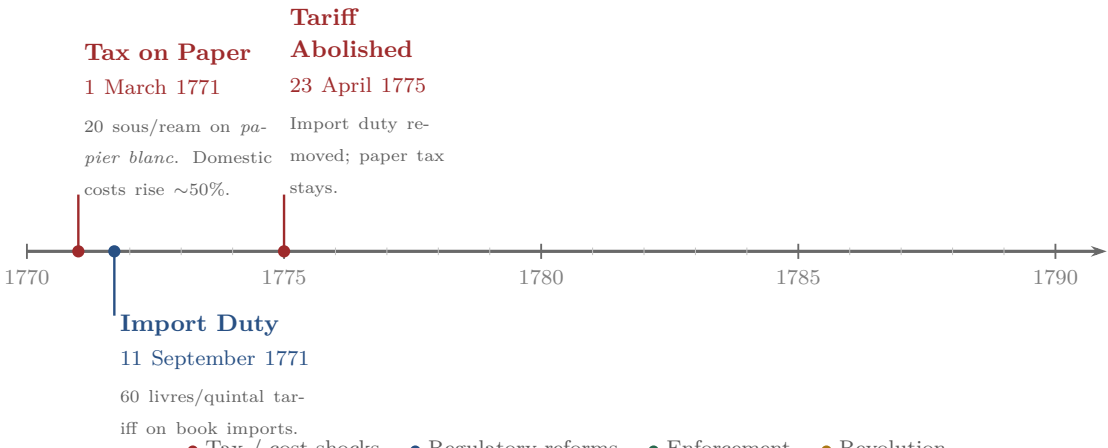
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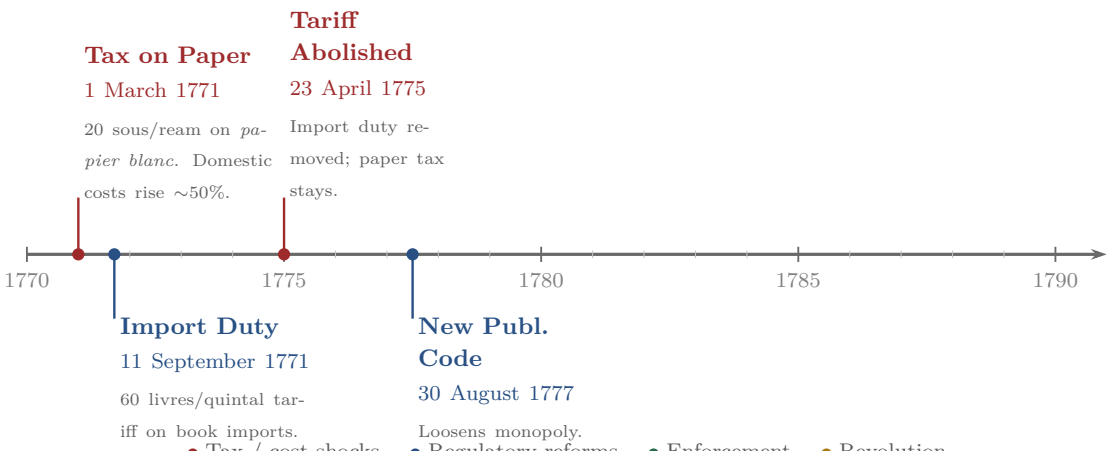
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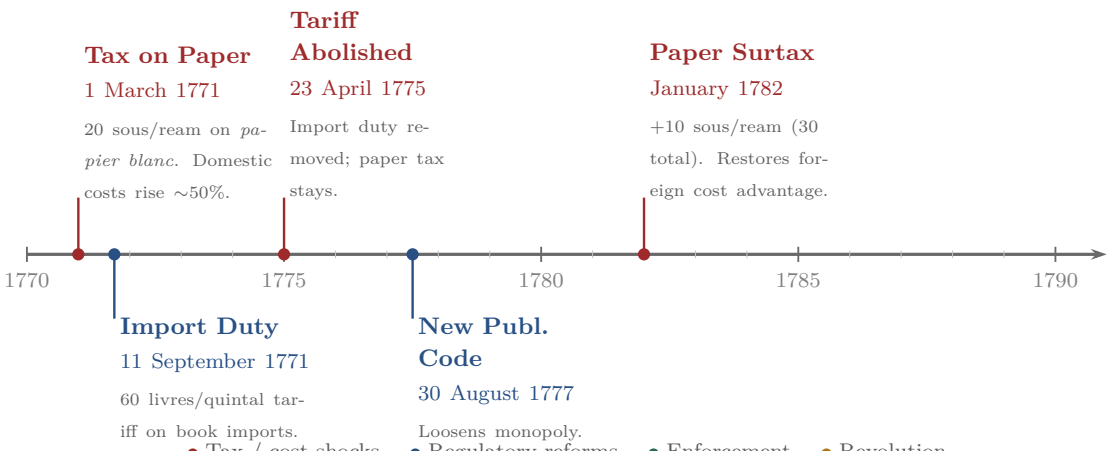
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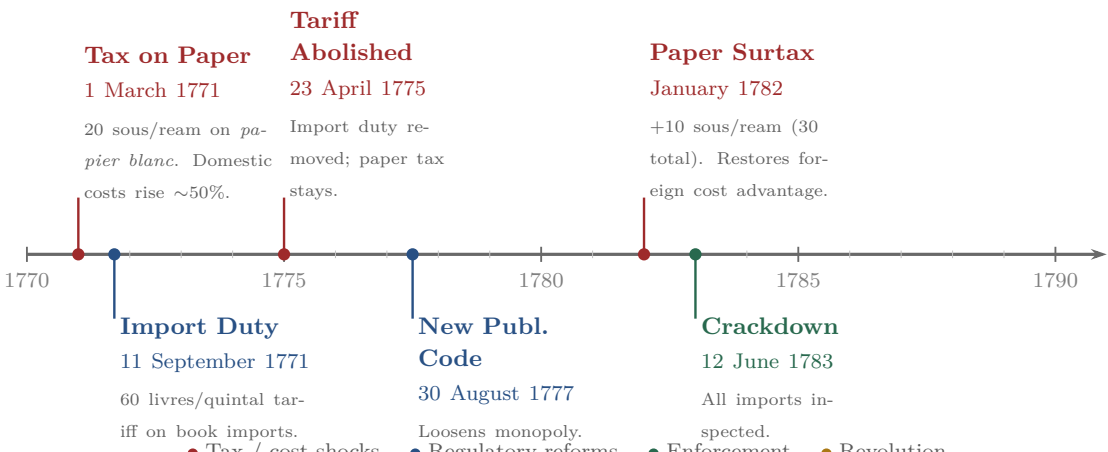
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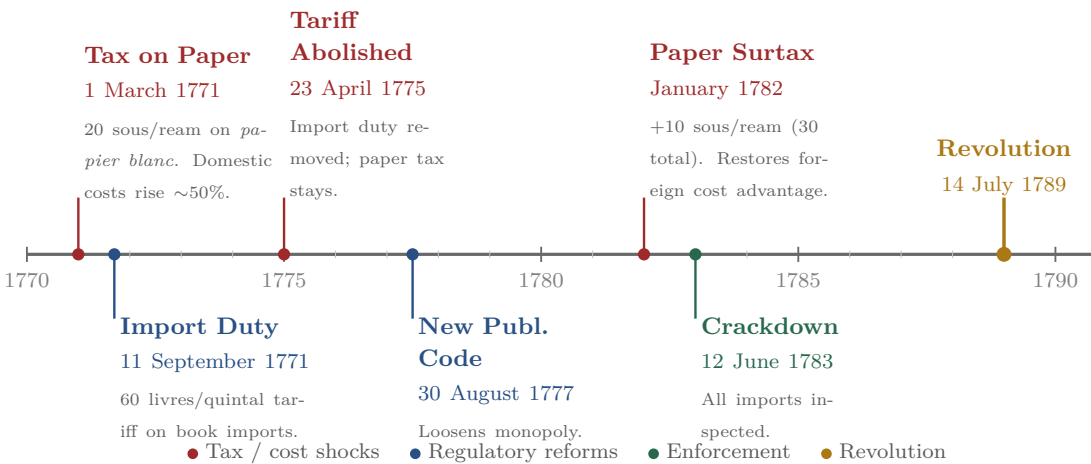
# Policy Shocks in the French Book Trade

1771 – 1789



# Policy Shocks in the French Book Trade

1771 – 1789



§ 3

# Data



# The *Société Typographique de Neuchâtel*



**Source:** ARCINFO

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- Burrows (2013b, p. 5) calls it *"[...] universally estimated to be the **richest source on the international book trade** during the enlightenment."* Darnton (1996, p. xxi) writes that the *"[...] only papers that have survived come from a single source: the Société typographique de Neuchâtel [...]."*

# *FBTEE: The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe*

## *FBTEE: The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe*

- The dataset used throughout in this presentation is the *French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe (FBTEE)* database. (Burrows et al., 2014)
- This dataset is based on the archives of the *Société Typographique de Neuchâtel (STN)* (day books, the stock books, the order books, letters etc.) and should theoretically offer a complete and consistent database for the sales of the *STN*.
- Publishing houses also acted as wholesalers for books during that period and tried to satisfy all of their customers demands, so the dataset does not only contain *STN*-published books.

## Publications

- Burrows (2013a, 2013b), Burrows and Curran (2012), Curran (2010a, 2010b, 2013)
- Review by Darnton (2012)

# FBTEE - Summary of the Data (1/2)

## Summary of Data

- We have **63,395 registered trades**;
- **52,773** of which are **sales**;
- Only **14,945** involve **books published by the *STN***. The others are from other publishers;
- Sold to **229 towns**;
- To **815 individual clients** (mostly booksellers);
- **3,696 book titles**;
- **853,945 copies**.

# FBTEE - Summary of the Data (2/2)

## For every Trade we have the following information:

**The transaction**

- Date of Trade;
- Number of Copies;
- Number of Crate.

**The client**

- Name of Client;
- Occupation of Client;
- Location of Client;
- Distance of Client from Neuchâtel;
- Sex of Client;
- Name and Address of potential Middlemen.

**The book**

- Title of Book;
- Publisher of Book/Edition Type;
- Source of Manuscript;
- Location of Publication of Book;
- Language of Book;
- "Keywords" for Book;
- *"Parisian Category"*.

From Bairoch et al. (1988), we obtain data on historical municipal-level population.

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  - French custom confiscations

# *La France Littéraire (Quérard, 1839b)*

- Compiled by the **bibliographer Joseph-Marie Quérard**;
- The idea: A *"complete national bibliography"*.
- Claims to contain **all works published in French between 1700 and 1830.**
- Supported by a **government subsidy** granted by François Guizot (the dominant political figure of the July Monarchy).

# *La France Littéraire (Quérard, 1839b)* - Summary

**From Quérard (1839b) we have information on:**

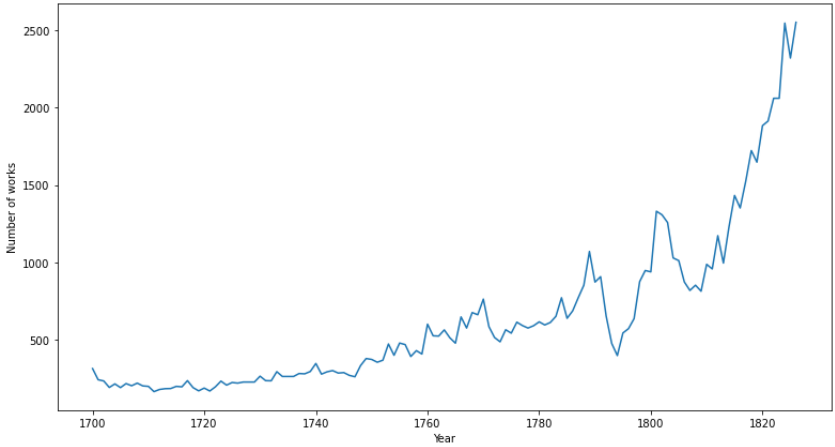
- 29,447 authors;
- 104,549 titles.

**We have the following datapoints for each author/book:**

- Name;
- Date and location of birth and death;
- Membership in learned societies;
- Works;
- Publisher, location, and year of publishing;
- Book format;
- Volume;
- Price in 1839;
- Number of pages.

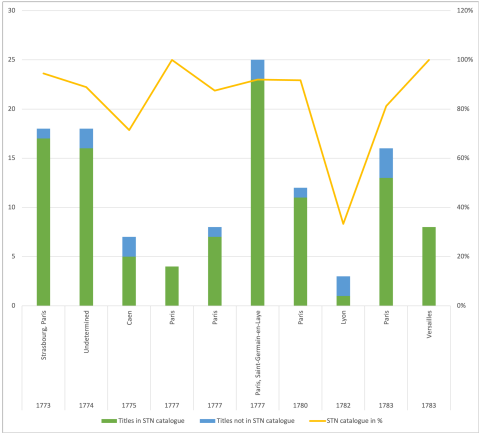
# *La France Littéraire (Quérard, 1839b)* - Summary

Figure: *La France Littéraire (Quérard, 1839a)*



# Market Share of the *Société Typographique de Neuchâtel*

Figure: STN Books Confiscated in Police Raids




**Source:** Darnton (1995)

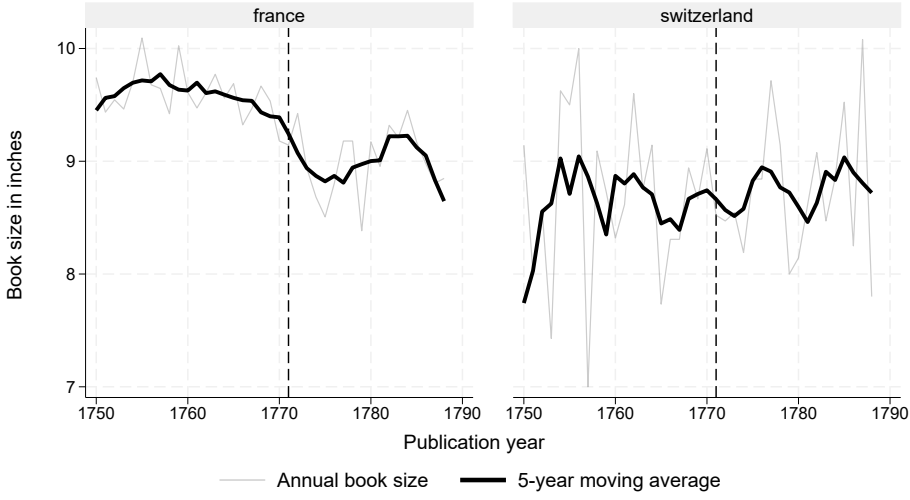
Venn Diagram: *STN* Quérard (1839a) overlap

§ 4

# Domestic Book Production



# Tax has immediate effects on paper use




Graphs by country

# Long-term Trends in the French Language Publishing Industry

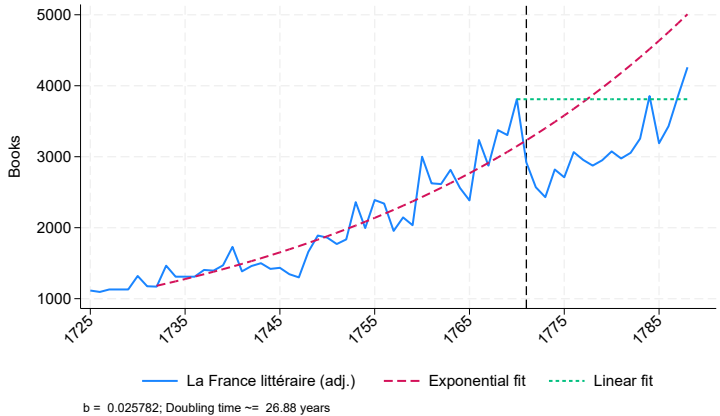



Figure: Long-term Trends in the French Language Publishing Industry

§ 4.1

# Empirical Approach

Domestic Book Production



# SDID: Synthetic French Publishing Industry

## Domestic production

Did the tax on paper affect the **French publishing industry** itself?

$$Y_{c,t} = \alpha_c + \lambda_t + \tau \cdot D_{c,t} + \varepsilon_{c,t} \tag{1}$$

where:

- $Y_{c,t}$: works published in country $c$ in year $t$ indexed to $1770 = 100$
- $\alpha_c$: country fixed effects
- $\lambda_t$: year fixed effects
- $D_{c,t} = \mathbf{1}[\, c = \text{France} \,] \times \mathbf{1}[\, t \geq \mathbf{1771} \,]$

Note: The relevant shock for *domestic producers* is the tax itself (1771); for *importers* it is the tariff abolition (1775).

Synthetic France constructed from *La France Littéraire*.

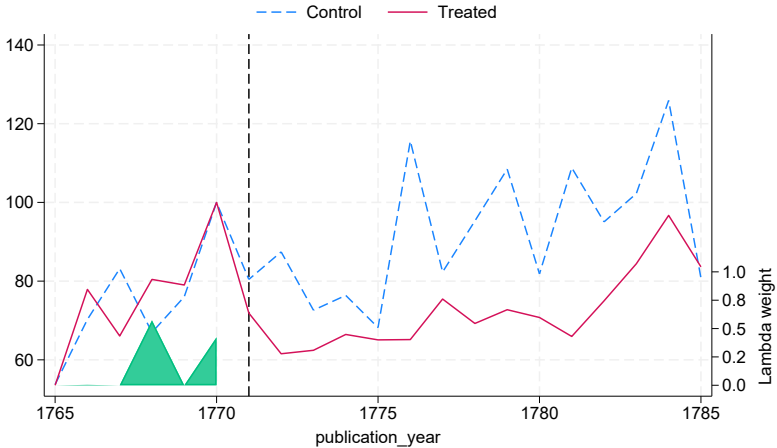
§ 4.2

# Results

Domestic Book Production



Figure: SDID Trends: Synthetic French Publishing Industry



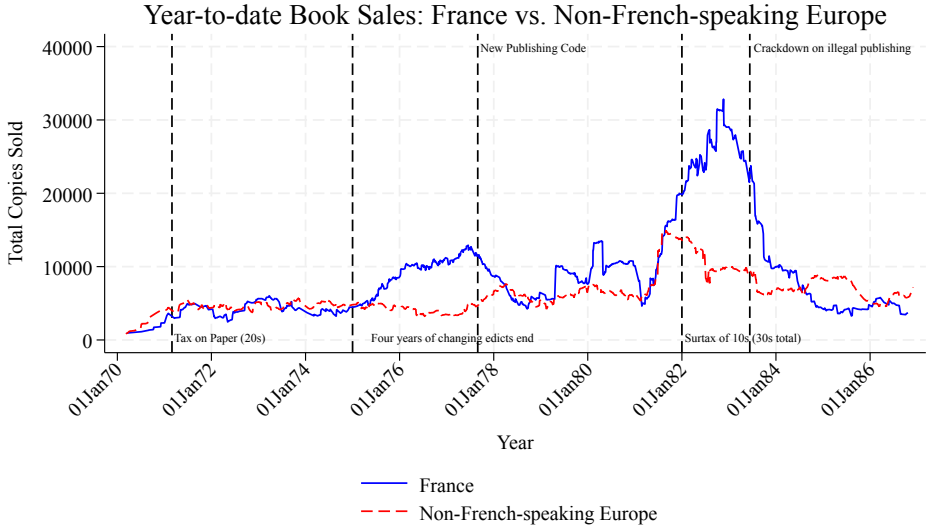

**ATT** 27.40**, p = 0.006**

§ 5

# Effects on Imports into France



Figure: Illegal book sales from the *Société typographique de Neuchâtel* into France and the rest of Europe



§ 5.1

# Empirical Approach

Effects on Imports into France



# Difference-in-Differences: Regression Framework

**We estimate the following model:**

$$
\begin{aligned}
Sales_{c,t} = \beta_0 &+ \beta_F France_c \\
&+ \beta_1 Post_t^{1775} + \beta_2 \left( Post_t^{1775} \cdot France_c \right) \\
&+ \beta_3 Post_t^{1777} + \beta_4 \left( Post_t^{1777} \cdot France_c \right) \\
&+ \beta_5 Post_t^{1782} + \beta_6 \left( Post_t^{1782} \cdot France_c \right) \\
&+ \beta_7 Post_t^{1783} + \beta_8 \left( Post_t^{1783} \cdot France_c \right) \\
&+ \gamma \, population_{c,t} + \varepsilon_{c,t}
\end{aligned}
$$

- $Post_t^{1775}$: compensatory tariff abolition, 23 April 1775
- $Post_t^{1777}$: new publishing code, 30 August 1777
- $Post_t^{1782}$: surtax of 10 sous, 1 January 1782
- $Post_t^{1783}$: crackdown on imports, 12 June 1783

Assumptions

# SDID: Synthetic France

## Challenge with the DiD approach

**Countries on differential counterfactual trends:**
Can we truly compare the Kingdom of France with the Russian Empire?

## Solution: Synthetic difference-in-differences

$$Y_{c,t} = \alpha_c + \lambda_t + \tau \cdot D_{c,t} + \varepsilon_{c,t} \tag{2}$$

following Arkhangelsky et al. (2021), where:

- $Y_{c,t}$: number of sales transactions (*title* $\times$ *client*) to country $c$ in year $t$
- $\alpha_c$: country fixed effects
- $\lambda_t$: year fixed effects
- $D_{c,t} = \mathbf{1}[\, c = \text{France} \,] \times \mathbf{1}[\, t \geq 1775 \,]$

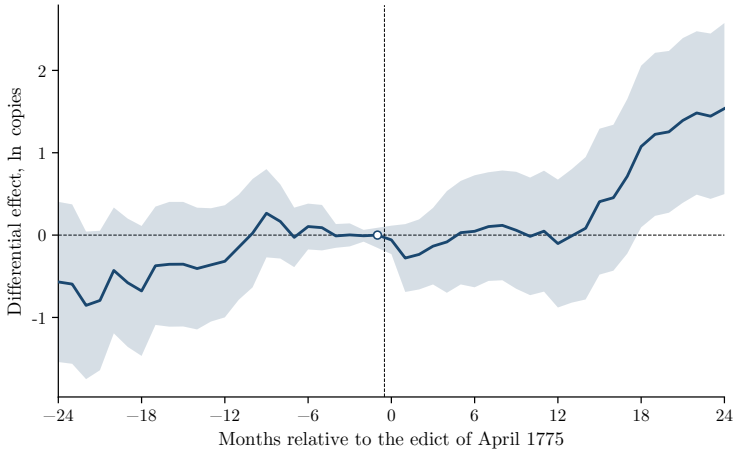
§ 5.2

# Results

Effects on Imports into France



Figure: Event Study, Paper Tax and Tariff abolished (1775), monthly data




Regression Equation Conclusion

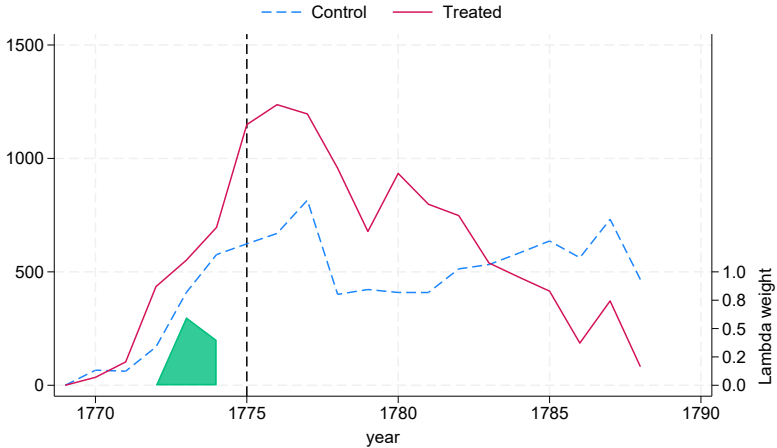
# Difference-in-Differences with Four Shocks

| | (1) $Sales_{c,t}$ | (2) $Sales_{c,t}$ | (3) $ln(Sales_{c,t})$ | (4) $ln(Sales_{c,t})$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $France_c = 1$ | -431.4* | -405.9* | -0.118** | -0.113* |
| | (214.6) | (228.3) | (0.0514) | (0.0541) |
| Tariff abolition + paper tax, 1775 | 6506.6*** | 6483.6*** | 1.028*** | 1.023*** |
| | (1059.0) | (1071.2) | (0.150) | (0.152) |
| Publishing code, 1777 | -3696.7*** | -3667.5*** | -0.632*** | -0.629*** |
| | (1222.5) | (1250.8) | (0.161) | (0.164) |
| Surtax, 1782 | 12288.4*** | 12341.3*** | 0.584*** | 0.589*** |
| | (968.8) | (984.3) | (0.115) | (0.117) |
| Crackdown, 1783 | -4637.5* | -4736.6* | -0.873*** | -0.881*** |
| | (2519.0) | (2457.5) | (0.281) | (0.280) |
| Population Control Included | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Observations | 2891 | 2729 | 2891 | 2729 |

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure: SDID Trends: *STN* Exports to France




**ATT 477.91 (1769-1782), p = 0.001**

§ 6

# Effects on the Production of Ideas



§ 6.1

# Empirical Approach

Effects on the Production of Ideas



# SDID: Synthetic "Illegal" Literature

## SDID at the legality level

Did the change in relative prices affect *STN* sales of **illegal/censored** books?

$$Y_{\ell,t} = \alpha_\ell + \lambda_t + \tau \cdot D_{\ell,t} + \varepsilon_{\ell,t} \tag{3}$$

where:

- $Y_{\ell,t}$: copies sold of legality class $\ell$ in year $t$
- $\alpha_\ell$: legality-class fixed effects
- $\lambda_t$: year fixed effects
- $D_{\ell,t} = \mathbf{1}[\,\ell = \text{illegal}\,] \times \mathbf{1}[\,t \geq 1775\,]$

The synthetic control is constructed from legal and tolerated literature sold by the *STN*: Donor pool = 15 legal genres.

# SDID: Genre Composition

## SDID on genre shares

Did the shock change **what** was sold, not just how much?

$$S_{c,t}^{g} = \alpha_c + \lambda_t + \tau^{g} \cdot D_{c,t} + \varepsilon_{c,t} \tag{4}$$

estimated **separately for each genre** $g$, where:

- $S_{c,t}^{g}$: share of genre $g$ in copies sold to country $c$ in year $t$
- $\alpha_c$: country fixed effects; $\lambda_t$: year fixed effects
- $D_{c,t} = \mathbf{1}[\,c = \text{France}\,] \times \mathbf{1}[\,t \geq 1775\,]$
- $\tau^{g}$: treatment effect on the share of genre $g$

Microeconomic Model

# SDID: Synthetic Genres

## SDID at the genre level

Construct a **synthetic counterfactual genre** from other genres in the *STN* data:

$$Y_{g,t} = \alpha_g + \lambda_t + \tau \cdot D_{g,t} + \varepsilon_{g,t} \tag{5}$$

where:

- $Y_{g,t}$: copies sold of genre $g$ in year $t$ (levels and logs)
- $\alpha_g$: genre fixed effects
- $\lambda_t$: year fixed effects
- $D_{g,t} = \mathbf{1}[\, g \in \mathcal{T}\,] \times \mathbf{1}[\, t \geq 1775\,]$
- $\mathcal{T}$: treated genre (illegal literature; radical Enlightenment; erotica)

Microeconomic Model

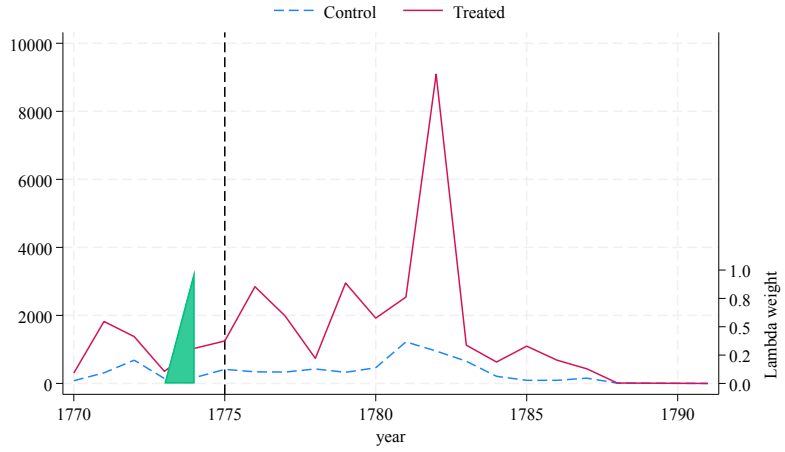
§ 6.2

# Results

Effects on the Production of Ideas

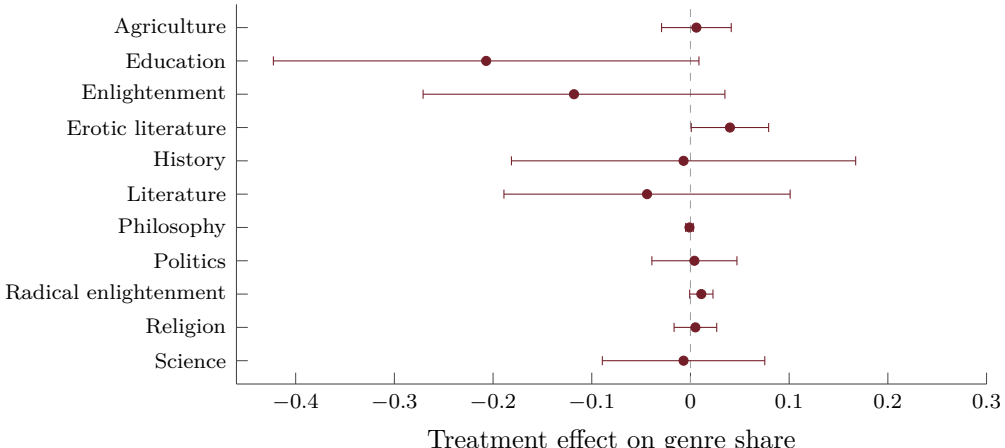


Figure: SDID Trends: Illegal vs. Synthetic Control (Copies, Full Sample)




**ATT 578.81, p = 0.000**

# SDID by shares, 1769-1780




Microeconomic Model

Figure: SDID Trends: Synthetic Radical Enlightenment

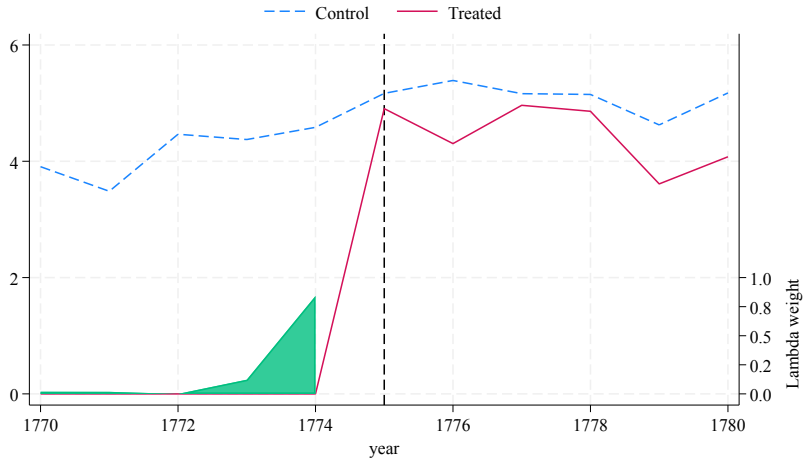
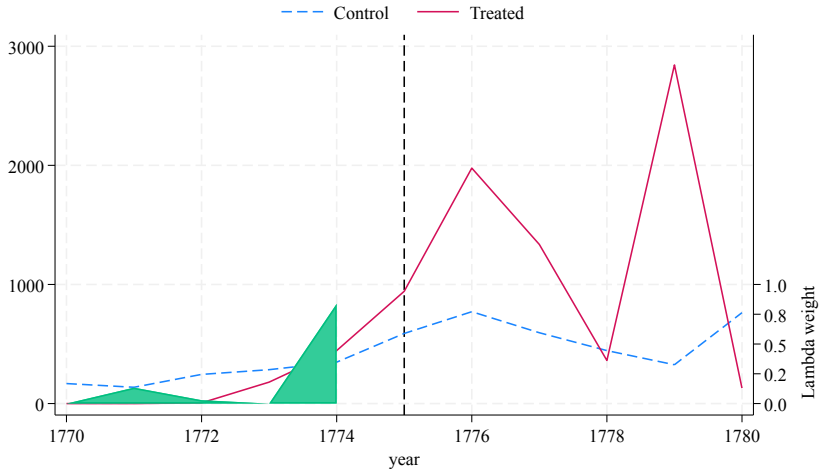


Figure: SDID Trends: Erotic Literature (Copies, Pre-1780)



§ 7

# Discussion and Conclusion



# The Printing House as the Infrastructure of the European Knowledge Economy

**Quantitative evidence that the printing house could provide the material basis for the Republic of Letters by guaranteeing:**

- **Freedom of Entry:**
  The *STN* had no capacity constraint and could expand production in response to price shocks. No evidence for extensive margin. Evidence Extensive Margin

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- **Political Fragmentation** made this possible.

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- ***"Philosophical Pornography"*** (Darnton, 1996, p. 85-115)
- Explicitly described **orgies** interspersed with philosophical and **metaphysical discussions**
- Sexual aspects and the freethinking approach to philosophical questions are both expressions of the same libertinage, the same rejection of catholic orthodoxy and morality. The two aspects, pornography and philosophy, **could not be disentangled from each other**. (Darnton, 1996, p. 89-91)

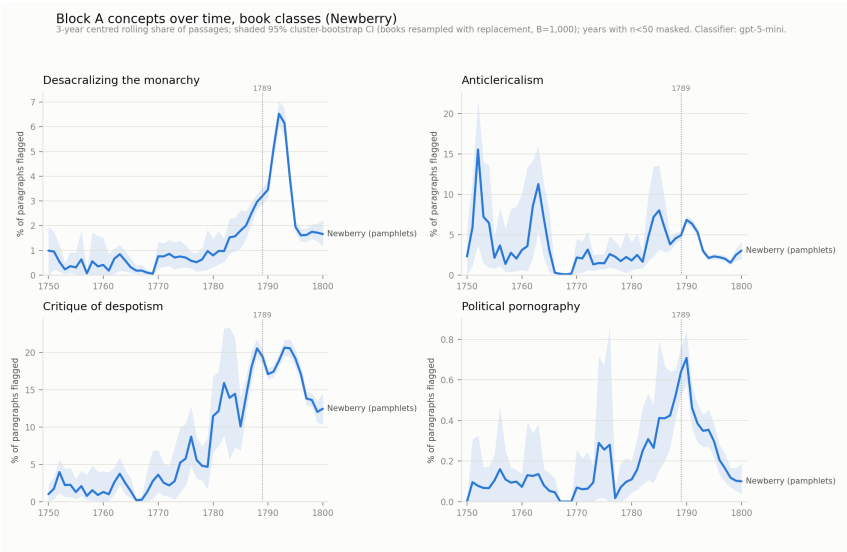
# *Thérèse Philosophe*

***"Vous désirez un tableau où les scènes dont je vous ai entretenu, ou celles dont nous avons été acteurs, ne perdent rien de leur lascivité; que les raisonnements métaphysiques conservent leur énergies?"****

*(De Boyer D'Argens, 1910, p. 2)*

**:"Do you want a painting in which the scenes I've told you aboutor those in which we played a partretain all their lasciviousness, and in which the metaphysical arguments retain their power?"*

# Themes of the Radical Enlightenment and Revolution



# Conclusion: The Enlightenment Publishing House in the European Knowledge Economy

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- We can extend the framework to the **market for political ideas**.

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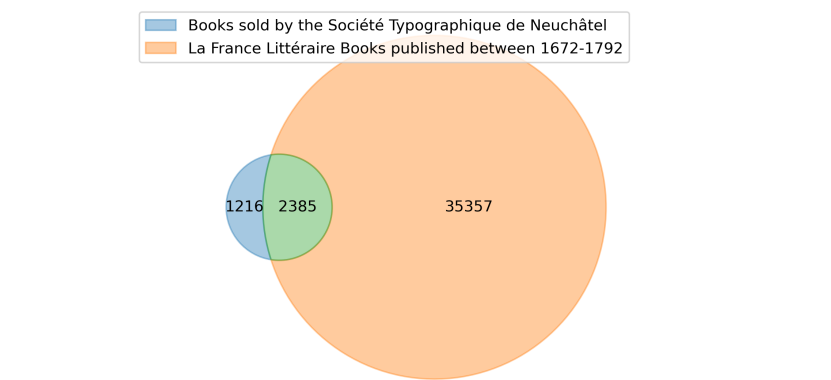
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# Market Share of the *Société Typographique de Neuchâtel*

Figure: Overlap *STN* and *La France Littéraire*




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# Assumptions

## Assumptions

- Parallel trends
  - Price for paper constant in the absence of the tax on paper
  - Other countries on parallel trends to France in publishing trends
- SUTVA

## Evidence

- Paper prices plausibly stable (Darnton)
- Other shocks do not coincide with timing of the tax shock
  - Major wars: Seven Years' War (1756–1763), France joining the American War of Independence (1778)
- Are all European nations a good unit of comparison? → Solution: Synthetic DiD approach later on

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# Event Study: Regression Framework

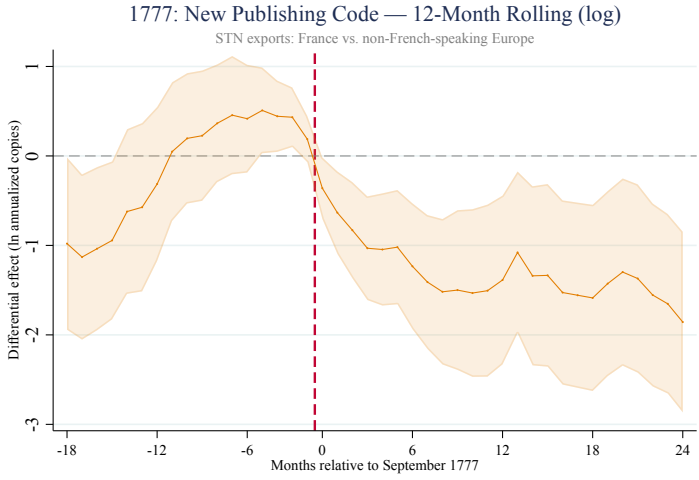
**We estimate each policy shock individually:**

$$\ln Y_{r,t} = \alpha_r + \sum_{k \neq -1} \beta_k \left( \mathbf{1}[\, t - t^* = k \,] \times France_r \right) + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{r,t} \tag{6}$$

- $Y_{r,t}$: trailing 12-month sum of copies sold in region $r$ at month $t$
- $\alpha_r$: region fixed effects (French départements, non-French sovereign territories)
- $\gamma_t$: month fixed effects
- $t^*$: month of the policy shock
- $\beta_k$: differential France vs. non-France effect at horizon $k$, relative to $k = -1$
- Standard errors clustered by region

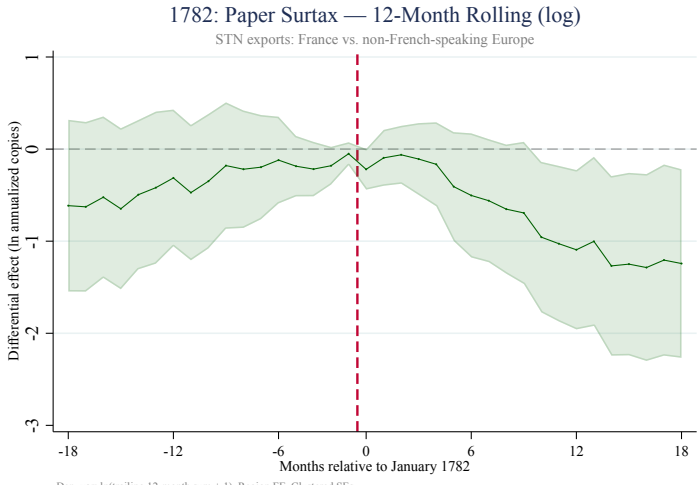
Back 1777 1782 1783

Figure: Event Study, New Publishing Code (1777), monthly data



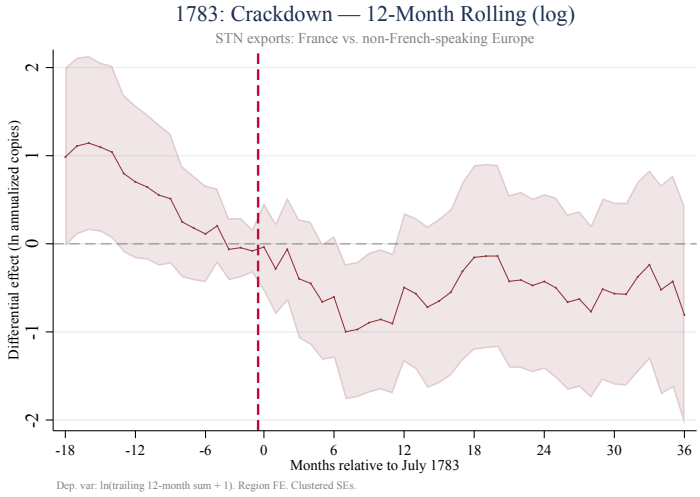

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Figure: Event Study, Surtax (1782), monthly data




Back

Figure: Event Study, Vergennes Crackdown (1783), monthly data




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# Donor Unit Weights

| Unit | Weight |
|---|---|
| Belgium | 0.017 |
| England | 0.123 |
| HRE | 0.307 |
| Italy | 0.223 |
| Netherlands | 0.000 |
| Switzerland | 0.329 |

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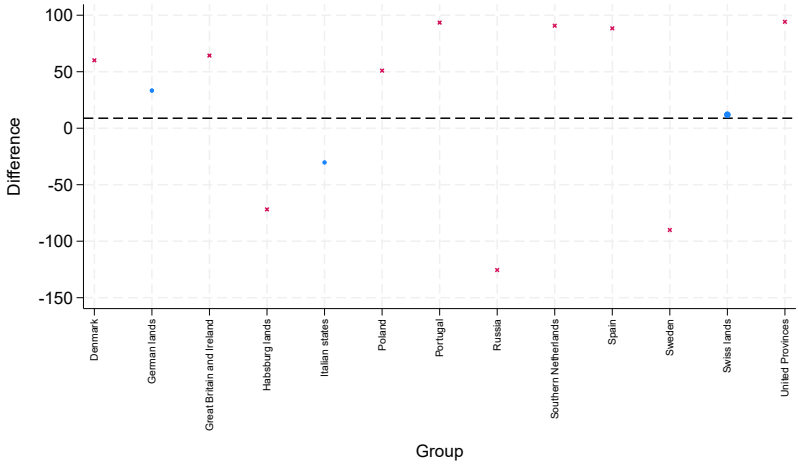
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Figure: SDID Donor Weights




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# A Microeconomic Model of Illegal Book Consumption

We assume the following utility function for book consumers:

$$u(B_l, B_i) = u_l(B_{l,m} + B_{l,stn}) + u_i(B_i) \tag{7}$$

where:

- $B_l, m$: legal books consumed from Paris Guild;
- $B_{l,stn}$: legal (or pirated) books from semi-legal publishers;
- $B_i$: books with illegal content, only available from semi-legal publishers;
- $u_l(B)$: utility derived from consuming legal content;
- $u_i(B)$: utility derived from consuming illegal content;
- As potentially, $u_l(B) \neq u_i(B)$ , we can conceptualise the (positive or negative) utility premium for illegal content for a given book $B$ as $u_i(B) - u_l(B) = \zeta(B)$. It is possible that $\frac{\partial \zeta(B)}{\partial B} \neq 0$, as we do not impose a functional form on $u_i(B)$ and $u_l(B)$.

# A Microeconomic Model of Illegal Book Consumption

Consumers maximise their utility subject to a budget constraint:

$$m_b = (p_m + \tau)B_{l,m} + p_{stn}B_{l,stn} + (p_{stn} + \rho)B_i \tag{8}$$

where:

- $m_b$: total endowment allocated to purchase of books;
- $p_m$: price of the books from the Paris Guild monopoly;
- $p_{stn}$: price of semi-legal publishers' books;
- $\rho$: search costs associated with finding illegal books.
- $\tau$: tax on paper.

# A Microeconomic Model of Illegal Book Consumption

Three effects that could have increased the consumption of illegal books:

- **Price Effect:** As domestically produced books are now more expensive, they will consume less of them.
- **Substitution Effect:** As domestically produced books are now more expensive, consumers switch to imported books. Depending on their individual $\zeta(B)$, they switch to pirated or to illegal books.
- **Information Effect:** Because prices are now higher, search costs are relatively lower. They can also decrease in absolute terms as more booksellers might now stock illegal books as $STN$ exports expand on the extensive margin to include new sellers and towns.

# A Microeconomic Model of Illegal Book Consumption

Solving the utility maximization problem yields the following results:

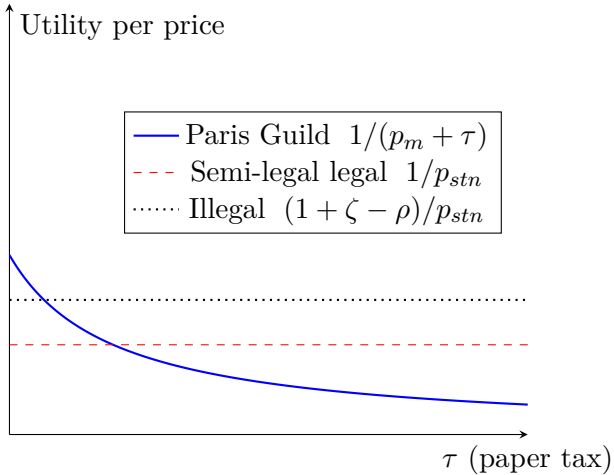
- The Paris Guild is dominated by the semi-legal publishers' *legal* (or pirated) fare when:

  $\tau > p_{stn} - p_m$
- The Paris Guild is dominated by the semi-legal publishers' *illegal* fare when:

  $\tau > \frac{p_{stn}}{1+\zeta(B)-\rho} - p_m$
- Thus once $\tau$ crosses this threshold:
  - If $\zeta(B) > \rho$ consumer shifts to illegal books;
  - If $\zeta(B) < \rho$ consumer shifts to legal (or pirated) books by semi-legal publishers;
  - If $\zeta(B) = \rho$ consumer is indifferent between the two semi-legal types.

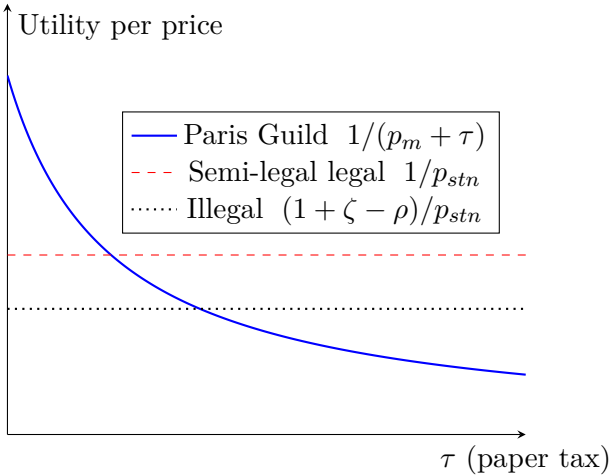
# A Microeconomic Model of Illegal Book Consumption

Figure: Consumers Switch to Illegal Books ($\zeta > \rho$)



# A Microeconomic Model of Illegal Book Consumption

Figure: Consumers Switch to Pirated "Semi-legal" Books ($\zeta < \rho$)



# A Microeconomic Model of Illegal Book Consumption

Two different possible consumers:

- **A) Consumers for whom the additional utility of illegal books $\zeta$ is *lower* than the search costs** associated with illegal books $\rho$ (figure 19), will switch to illegally imported legal (or pirated) books as soon as the tax is higher than the price difference between the Guild and the STN.
- **B) Consumers for whom the additional utility of illegal books $\zeta$ is *higher* than the search costs** associated with illegal books $\rho$ (figure 18), will switch to illegal books as soon as $\tau > \frac{p_{stn}}{1+\zeta-\rho} - p_m$
- As we expect there to be **consumers for both case A) and case B)**, as well as consumers for whom $\rho$ is prohibitively high or $\zeta$ very low or negative, we expect both a:
  - **Substitution Effect:** The tax boosts the *STN* sales of illegal books (case B);
  - **Price Effect:** The tax boosts the *STN* sales of legal (or pirated) books (case A);
  - The tax *increase* will lead to both a substitution and a price effect by "switching" people with a higher individual $\rho$ from case B to case A.

# What about Freedom of Entry at the Extensive Margin?

## Freedom of entry requires elastic supply

The *STN* archive records **10,622 incoming trades** from **269 distinct suppliers** in **89 towns**.

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|---|---|---|---|
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### Interpretation

A **five-fold** demand shock was absorbed by a network that grew **27%**. The infrastructure of the *Fertile Crescent* carried standing slack: it did not need to be built, only used harder.

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# No New Entrants Documented - Network Was Already in Place

| Year | 1769–71 | 1772–74 | 1775–77 | 1778–80 | 1781–83 | 1784–86 | 1787–88 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suppliers | 4–12 | 30–50 | 42–61 | 30–43 | 27–62 | 36–50 | 19–43 |

- Growth to 1774 is **firm formation**, not treatment response.
- After 1774 the count oscillates with **no break at 1775 or 1782**.
- A France-vs-Europe DiD is not available: 1,280 of 1,427 France-bound titles were also sold elsewhere. The *STN* bought a book and sold it wherever there was demand.

Supplier identity is an attribute of the **edition**, not the destination. Our France/Europe design identifies effects on *quantities shipped*, not on *how books were made*.

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# Measuring Evasion of the *Privilège*: False Imprints

## FBTEE resolves the true place of printing

Catalogue entries follow the convention

$$\underbrace{\text{Claimed place}}_{\text{on the title page}} \left[ \underbrace{\text{Actual place}}_{\text{cataloguer's resolution}} \right] : \text{Publisher, Year}$$

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| | |
|---|---|
| `Paris [Neuchâtel]: [STN], 1776` | False imprint — claims Paris |
| `London [Neuchâtel]: [STN], 1773` | False imprint — claims London |
| `n.p. [Neuchâtel]: [STN], 1770` | No place claimed |
| `Lyon [Lyons]: A. Le Roy, 1781` | Same place, spelling variant |
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A false imprint is interpreted as a direct attempt to evade the *privilège*.

# Evidence: Did the *STN* manage to undermine the *Privilège* System

274 of 3,294 titles (8.3%) carry a demonstrably false imprint

Most common **fake** claimed places: **London** (74), **Paris** (31), La Haye (21), Amsterdam (19), Bruxelles (14)

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Three caveats

1. **Lower bound.** 1,564 titles have imprints the cataloguers never resolved; some are surely false.
2. **Not a random sample.** Better-studied books were more likely to be resolved, so the flagged set skews notorious.
3. **Just Descriptive** One edition served all markets, no France-vs-Europe variation (No DiD).

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# The *Newberry French Revolution Collection*

- 38,377 documents related to the French Revolution and its prehistory
- Collected by the University of Chicago
- We extract features of radical languages from this corpus using natural language processing (NLP), applying a large language model (LLM) (Gilardi et al., 2023; Törnberg, 2024; Asirvatham et al., 2026; Choi et al., 2026). We apply a DSL-approach (Egami et al., 2023, 2024) to estimate systematic error and use this to debias our results.

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# The *Newberry French Revolution Collection*

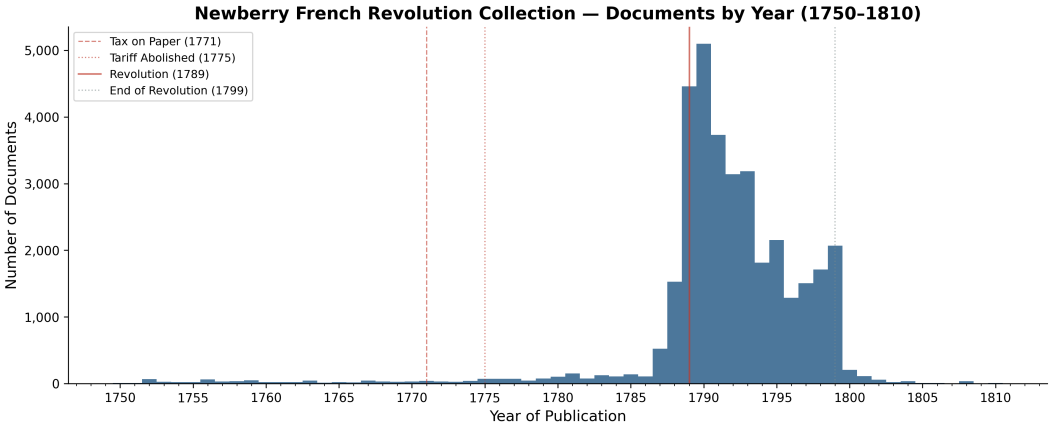



Figure: Documents in the *Newberry French Revolution Collection*

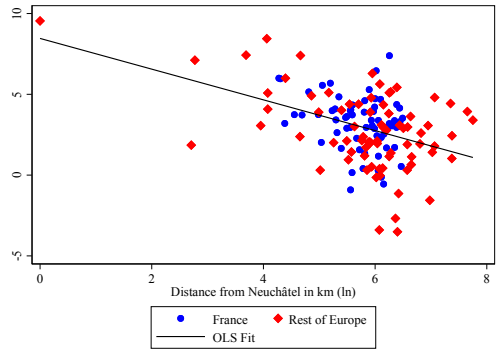
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# Distance from Neuchâtel as IV?

**Two Problems:**

- Neuchâtel is only one center of the ***"Fertile Crescent"***

Distance to Neuchâtel and Book Sales (ln)



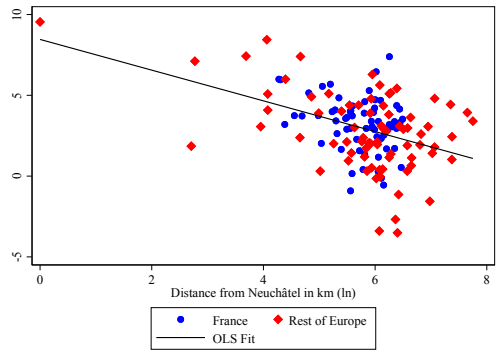

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# Distance from Neuchâtel as IV?

**Two Problems:**

- Neuchâtel is only one center of the ***"Fertile Crescent"***
- Distance to Neuchâtel effectively equivalent to distance to the **Swiss border**: correlated with a plethora of cultural, geographic and economic variables

Distance to Neuchâtel and Book Sales (ln)




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# Cross-sectional Results: Subversive Literature and Revolutionary Intensity

Table: Subversive Content Share and Revolutionary Intensity

| | (1) Jacobin | (2) Early Jac | (3) ln(Deaths) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Share: subversive composite | 0.123 | 0.246** | 0.189 |
| | (0.079) | (0.108) | (0.370) |
| Log town population | 0.147*** | 0.252*** | 1.627*** |
| | (0.052) | (0.064) | (0.232) |
| Distance to provincial guild | 0.001 | -0.001 | 0.003 |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.006) |
| Distance to Paris | -0.000 | -0.000 | 0.004*** |
| | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.001) |
| R-squared | 0.179 | 0.366 | 0.558 |
| Observations | 63 | 63 | 63 |

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# The Birth of Jacobinism out of the Spirit of Grub Street

*"It was **in the depths of the intellectual underworld** that these men became revolutionaries and that the **Jacobinical determination** to wipe out the aristocracy of the mind was born." (Darnton, 1982, p. 21)*

*"Perhaps the propagandists of the garrets functioned as the **ideological carriers who injected** the crude, Jacobinical version of **Rousseauism** into the Parisian sans-culotterie." (Darnton, 1982, p. 39)*

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