News Item

Facebook Fueled Anti-Refugee Attacks in Germany, New Research Suggests | The New York Times

By Amanda Taub and Max Fisher

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> Everyone here has seen Facebook rumors portraying refugees as a threat. They've encountered racist vitriol on local pages, a jarring contrast with Altena's public spaces, where people wave warmly to refugee families.
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> Many here suspected — and prosecutors would later argue, based on data seized from his phone — that Mr. Denkhaus had isolated himself in an online world of fear and anger that helped lead him to violence.
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> This may be more than speculation. Little Altena exemplifies a phenomenon long suspected by researchers who study Facebook: that the platform makes communities more prone to racial violence. And, now, the town is one of 3,000-plus data points in a landmark study that claims to prove it.
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> Karsten Müller and Carlo Schwarz, researchers at the University of Warwick, scrutinized every anti-refugee attack in Germany, 3,335 in all, over a two-year span. In each, they analyzed the local community by any variable that seemed relevant. Wealth. Demographics. Support for far-right politics. Newspaper sales. Number of refugees. History of hate crime. Number of protests.
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> One thing stuck out. Towns where Facebook use was higher than average, like Altena, reliably experienced more attacks on refugees. That held true in virtually any sort of community — big city or small town; affluent or struggling; liberal haven or far-right stronghold — suggesting that the link applies universally.

Source: [Facebook Fueled Anti-Refugee Attacks in Germany, New Research Suggests | The New York Times](#)