

Research Workshop in Historical Development and Political Economy

Comparative Historical Development

A Very Brief Introduction

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2018 Fall

Comparative Historical Development

- ▶ Is concerned with the determinants of long-run economic growth
 - Why some countries got rich but not the others
- ▶ Essentially addressing the Smithian question “The Wealth of Nations” but in an empirical way
 - Institutions (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, 2001 and many others, beginning with Douglas C. North, 1981, 1990; North and Weingast, 1987)
 - * Countries with better “institutions”, more secure property rights, and less distortionary policies will invest more in physical and human capital, and will use these factors more efficiently to achieve a greater level of income (AJR, 2001)

The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation

Daron Acemoglu
Simon Johnson
James A. Robinson

AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW
VOL. 91, NO. 5, DECEMBER 2001
(pp. 1369-1401)

- ▶ Culture (Alesina, Giulinao, and Nunn, 2012; Nunn, 2008; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011)
 - slave trade took place in an environment of ubiquitous insecurity and nurtured a culture of mistrust, which persisted even after end of trade (Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011)
 - cross-cultural differences in beliefs and values regarding the appropriate role of women in society influenced by traditional agricultural practices (Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn, 2013)





Volume 128, Issue 2
May 2013

On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough

Alberto Alesina , Paola Giuliano, Nathan Nunn

The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 128, Issue 2, 1 May 2013, Pages 469–530, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjt005>

Published: 14 May 2013

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Volume 123, Issue 1
February 2008

The Long-term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades

Nathan Nunn

The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 123, Issue 1, 1 February 2008, Pages 139–176, <https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2008.123.1.139>

Published: 01 February 2008

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The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa

Nathan Nunn
Leonard Wantchekon

AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW
VOL. 101, NO. 7, DECEMBER 2011
(pp. 3221–52)

- ▶ Human capital (Becker and Woessmann, 2009; Putterman and Weil, 2010, in response to AJR, 2002)
 - Protestant economies prospered because instruction in reading the Bible generated the human capital crucial for economic prosperity (Becker and Woessmann, 2009)
 - indicators of early development reflect the history of a population's *ancestors* rather than the history of the *place* they live today better predict current GDP (Putterman and Weil, 2010)



Volume 124, Issue 2
May 2009



Volume 125, Issue 4
November 2010



Volume 117, Issue 4
November 2002

Was Weber Wrong? A Human Capital Theory of Protestant Economic History

Sascha O. Becker, Ludger Woessmann

The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 124, Issue 2, 1 May 2009, Pages 531–596, <https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2009.124.2.531>

Published: 01 May 2009

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Post-1500 Population Flows and The Long-Run Determinants of Economic Growth and Inequality

Louis Putterman, David N. Weil

The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 125, Issue 4, 1 November 2010, Pages 1627–1682, <https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2010.125.4.1627>

Published: 01 November 2010

Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson

The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 117, Issue 4, 1 November 2002, Pages 1231–1294, <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355302320935025>

Published: 01 November 2002

► Geographic origins of Ethnolinguistic diversity

- geographic variability (variation in regional land quality and elevation) determines contemporary linguistic diversity (Michalopoulos, 2012)

The Origins of Ethnolinguistic Diversity

Stelios Michalopoulos

AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW
VOL. 102, NO. 4, JUNE 2012
(pp. 1508-39)

- ▶ Genetic distance *between* societies (Spolaore and Wacziarg, 2009, 2012; for a natural experiment see Bai and Kung, 2011)
 - genetic distance: degree of genealogical relatedness of two populations
 - reduces diffusion from the technological frontier (Spolaore and Wacziarg, 2009; 2012)

- ▶ Genetic diversity *within* a society
 - genetic diversity: probability that two individuals, selected at random from the relevant population, are genetically different from one another
 - reduces cohesiveness and increased mistrust and conflict; it also enhances knowledge creation and fosters technological progress (Ashraf and Galor, 2013)



Volume 124, Issue 2
May 2009

The Diffusion of Development

Enrico Spolaore, Romain Wacziarg

The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 124, Issue 2, 1 May 2009, Pages 469–529, <https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2009.124.2.469>
Published: 01 May 2009

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The 'Out of Africa' Hypothesis, Human Genetic Diversity, and Comparative Economic Development

Quamrul Ashraf
Oded Galor

AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW
VOL. 103, NO. 1, FEBRUARY 2013
(pp. 1–46)

Comparative Historical Development

- ▶ Invokes historical context as the X variable, which is always some measure of origins (settlement mortality, slave trade, history of farming, geography, etc.)
- ▶ But not economic history because the outcome variable is invariably some contemporary measure (long-run growth outcomes)
 - GDP (AJR, 2001)
 - Industrial output (AJR, 2002)
 - Years of schooling (Chen, Kung, and Ma, 2018)
 - Trust (Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011)
 - Technology diffusion (Spolaore and Wacziarg, 2009)
 - Gender norms and labor force participation (Alesina, Giulinao, and Nunn, 2012)

Comparative Historical Development

- ▶ More concerned with persistence of the effect of (exogenously determined) institutions and culture
 - Anti-Semitism persisted 600 years later in the same localities where the Jews were blamed for poisoning the wells during the Black Death in Europe in 1348-50, even without direct economic benefits and where Jews were largely absent for centuries (Voigtlander and Voth, 2012)



Volume 127, Issue 3
August 2012

Persecution Perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany*

Nico Voigtländer, Hans-Joachim Voth

The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 127, Issue 3, 1 August 2012, Pages 1339–1392, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjs019>

Published: 26 July 2012