African Economic History Newsletter
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Your bi-monthly update from the African Economic History Network

The AEHN newsletter brings you up to date with current and forthcoming events in African Economic History. It gives you a chance to publicise your new research and opportunities to the right audience.

In this issue:
1. Network News and Announcements
2. New Abstracts in African Economic History
   - 5 New Journal Articles
   - 8 New Working Papers
3. Upcoming Events in African Economic History
   - 4 Upcoming Conferences
4. Opportunities in African Economic History
   - 1 Vacancy

Do you want to become a member of the network and receive this monthly email? Send a message to the African Economic History Network at aehnetwork@gmail.com with ‘member’ in the subject line.

Anything we missed? Want to publicise your own research, events or organizing a panel for an upcoming conference? Send a message to aehnetwork@gmail.com and we will include your news in our bi-monthly round up.

Best regards,
The African Economic History Network
News and Announcements

Working Papers Series

If you have a paper you would like to submit for our consideration please send us an email. For questions regarding the WPS please contact Erik Green at Erik.Green@ekh.lu.se.

The latest working papers include:


Frontiers in Economic History Blog


Starting in 1970, the government of South Africa directly provided free family planning services to residents of townships and white-owned farms. Lifetime fertility fell by one child per woman among African residents of these areas compared to African residents of other regions of the country.


It has been argued that reduced land sizes in pre-industrial rural societies caused a decline in fertility through lower demand for family labour. This paper uses newly transcribed data to investigate this relationship in a closing land frontier context: the Graaff-Reinet district in the eastern Cape Colony, 1800-28. In contrast to previous research, we find that the number of children present in the farming households increases as land availability shrinks.
AEHN teaches Master’s course in African Economic History at African School of Economics in Benin

AEHN board members Jutta Bolt (Groningen and Lund), Felix Meier zu Selhausen (Sussex) and Ewout Frankema (Wageningen) taught a 5 weeks Master’s course in “African Economic History” at the African School of Economics (ASE) in Benin during February and March 2019. There are plans to develop this together with ASE into an annual outreach teaching activity by the AEHN.
NEW ABSTRACTS IN AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

Articles


This article contributes to the growing literature on the impact of colonial legacies on long-run development. We focus on Kenya, where it is previously argued that land tenure and taxation policies created an impoverished class of wage workers leading to lower living standards, high inequality, and stunted economic development. We take issue with this interpretation. Using archival sources, we map the rise of profitable settler agriculture. Next, we correlate settler profitability with taxation and the development of African agriculture. Contrary to previous studies, we find that labour came from areas that became increasingly more commercialized. Thus, a decline in African livelihoods was not a necessary pre-condition for the establishment of successful European settler agriculture. Instead a restructuring of the settler agricultural sector coinciding with tightened labour control policies can explain the increased profitability. An increased cultivation of high-value crops raised the value of labour. Reductions of African mobility lowered both the wage and transaction costs of finding and retraining workers enabling the settlers to raise their profit share. Our finding calls for a revision of the colonial legacy of European settler agriculture for long-term economic and social development in Kenya.


Colonial railways eased settlement and altered the economic activity of the surrounding areas. Thus, they provide a good testing ground for the impact of settlement expansion. By taking advantage of unique territorial population data and digitized historical colonization maps in the Constantine region, this paper assesses the effect of railways on the indigenous population in Algeria during the colonial years. The indigenous population growth and density are first analysed in a cross-section multivariate regression framework that permits controlling for various forms of settlement. As a robustness check to the results, the paper implements differences-in-differences combined with a propensity score matching methodology that allow analysing the impact in relatively isolated areas where the infrastructure arrived later. The main conclusion of the paper is that, if settlement did have a positive effect on the indigenous population growth – as many historians tend to argue – it was channelled through railways only after 1900, when cereal cultivation improved, and the trade policy changed. The lack of significance before the 1900s is most likely explained by geographic-specific factors that limited the potential effects of railways.

Jeanne Cilliers, Johan Fourie and Christie Swanepoel. ‘Unobtrusively into the ranks of colonial society’: Intergenerational wealth mobility in the Cape Colony over the eighteenth century.

Intergenerational mobility studies are now expanding in three directions – including different regions and time periods, using different outcomes to measure mobility, and investigating the mechanisms that affect mobility. We investigate, for the first time, wealth mobility in the Cape Colony. We compare a number of outcomes, and consider several mechanisms to explain our results. Our data allow us to match at much higher rates than before, and also include daughters. We find very high mobility at the Cape and, in contrast to the existing historiography, higher rates for those at the bottom of the wealth distribution.

Jeanne Cilliers, Johan Fourie and Christie Swanepoel. “‘Unobtrusively into the ranks of colonial society’: Intergenerational wealth mobility in the Cape Colony over the eighteenth century”, Economic History of Developing Regions, published online: 19 March 2019.


We construct a unique, extensive dataset that codifies 372 major land reform enactments in 165 countries during the period 1900–2010 and classifies them as those with several different motives. Exploiting the geographic and time variation in land reforms and political transitions across the globe over more than a century, we find that democratic transitions are linked with a greater likelihood of land reforms of the pro-poor type as well as those with different inequality-reducing motives. These results are robust to adding important controls, changing variable definitions, using alternative data, addressing endogeneity to the extent possible, and moving from enactments to implementations. We also estimate a positive impact of autocratic transitions on pro-poor and some inequality-reducing land reforms, but these results emerge mainly with instrumental-variables estimation. We also show that a leftward shift in the political ideology of the chief executive is associated with a higher likelihood of pro-poor land reforms as well as a few types of inequality-reducing ones.


This study focused on investigating the causal relationship between financial development and real sector in sub-Saharan Africa during the period 1986–2015. This study used panel data containing 38 countries, while two-step generalised method of moment was used as the estimation techniques. In the full sample consisting of 38 countries, the study found bidirectional causality between financial development and real sector. In low-income countries, a bidirectional causality was found between financial development and real sector in the short run. The study found no causal relationship between financial development and real sector in the lower-middle-income countries except when domestic credit to the private sector was used as an indicator of financial development. The difference in the direction of causality of low-income countries and lower-middle-income countries was attributed to the heterogeneous characteristics of the income groups. The results also show that different income groups produce different causality relationships between financial development and real sector which is an indication that the causal relationship varies among different countries.

This paper sheds new light on the impact and experience of western biomedicine in colonial Africa. We use patient registers from Western Uganda’s earliest mission hospital to explore whether and how Christian conversion and mission education affected African health behaviour. A dataset of 18,600 admissions permits analysis of patients’ age, sex, residence, religion, diagnoses, duration of hospitalisation, and treatment outcomes. We document Toro Hospital’s substantial geographic reach, trace evolving treatment practices, and highlight significant variation in hospital-based disease incidence between the early colonial and early postcolonial periods. We observe no relationship between numeracy and health outcomes, nor religion-specific effects concerning hygiene-related infections. Christian conversion was associated with superior cure rates and shorter length of stay, and with lower incidence of skin diseases and sexually-transmitted infections (STIs). However, our findings indicate that STI-incidence was linked to morality campaigns and that clinicians’ diagnoses were influenced by assumptions around religious groups’ sexual behaviour.


The resource curse literature underscores the fact that extractive economies face challenges in diversifying their economies. What is less explored are the public finance challenges encountered in these economies when the extractive industries are completely privatized. Using a recently compiled dataset on public revenues, expenditures and debt, this paper explores the nexus between the privatized extractive sector operations and public finance policies of the Cape Colony between 1810 and 1910. The paper finds that despite the natural resource endowment, the Cape Colony became heavily indebted and had huge budget deficits by the time it joined the Union of South Africa in 1910. After the discovery of diamonds, competition for resource-rents caused a slowdown and in some instances reversed the progress made in consolidating state institutions. The drive towards a national program of development inherent in self-governing colonies was overpowered when the competition for resource-rents culminated in rent-seeking led by the interests in the monopolized extractive sector. Rather than being the main source of government revenues and a basis for inclusive economic progress, as expected in a self-governing settler colony, diamonds became a trap through the operations of what I call a ‘Minerals-Railway complex’. The insights from the study have important implications for our understanding of both settler colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the management of natural resources in developing economies.
Igor Martins. An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade: The Effects of an Import Ban on Cape Colony Slaveholders.

Few could have foreseen the consequences when the British Parliament, in 1807, passed the Slave Trade Act that sought to abolish slave imports into the British Empire. From population decreases in the British Caribbean to increased prices in the Cape Colony, historical evidence suggests that the effects of the Act were felt far and wide even though commercialization of slaves was still possible within colonial territories. Using newly digitized historical datasets covering more than 40 years in two different districts of the British Cape Colony, this paper measures changes in slave ownership and acquisition patterns from a longitudinal perspective. This approach allows me to tease out the effects of the Act on farmers with different types of agricultural outputs, most notably crop and livestock farming, agricultural types with very different labor demands. The results show that livestock farmers, surprisingly, were more inelastic to the import ban in comparison to crop farmers. These results suggest that slaveholders could extract rents from the enslaved in a multitude of ways beyond agriculture production and calls for a broader theory of slavery as capital investment.


Simplice Asongu and Oasis Kodila-Tedika. Intelligence and Slave Exports from Africa

This article examines the role of cognitive ability or intelligence on slave exports from Africa. We test a hypothesis that countries which were endowed with higher levels of cognitive ability were more likely to experience lower levels of slave exports from Africa probably due to comparatively better capacities to organise, corporate, oversee and confront slave traders. The investigated hypothesis is valid from alternative specifications involving varying conditioning information sets. The findings are also robust to the control of outliers.


Johan Fourie and Nonso Obikili. Decolonizing with data: The cliometric turn in African economic history.

Our understanding of Africa’s economic past -- the causes and consequences of precolonial polities, the slave trade, state formation, the Scramble for Africa, European settlement, and independence -- has improved markedly over the last two decades. Much of this is the result of the cliometric turn in African economic history, what some have called a ‘renaissance’. Whilst acknowledging that cliometrics is not new to African history, this chapter examines the major recent contributions, noting their methodological advances and dividing them into four broad themes: persistence of deep traits, slavery, colonialism and independence. We conclude with a brief bibliometric exercise, noting the lack of Africans working at the frontier of African cliometrics.


Nigeria adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986 after the crash in world oil price in the early 1980s. Financial reforms are part of the reforms implemented during the SAP. Since, industrialisation is seen as an engine of growth, we conduct an empirical assessment of the effects of financial sector reforms on industrialisation in Nigeria using an annual time series data over 1981 - 2015. Using an autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model, our findings show that financial reforms have a positive and significant impact on industrialisation.


Can wealth shocks have intergenerational health consequences? We use the partial compensation slaveholders received after the 1834 slave emancipation in the British Cape Colony to measure the intergenerational effects of a wealth loss on longevity. Because the share of partial compensation received was uncorrelated to wealth, we can interpret the results as having a causal influence. We find that a greater loss of slave wealth shortened the lifespans of the generation of slaveholders that experienced the shock and those of their children, but not those of their grandchildren. We speculate on the mechanisms for this intergenerational persistence.


Estimates of GDP per capita are provided on an annual basis for eight SubSaharan African economies for the period since 1885. Although the growth experienced in most of SSA since the mid-1990s has had historical precedents, there have also been episodes of negative growth or “shrinking”, so that long run progress has been limited. Despite some heterogeneity across countries, this must be seen as a disappointing performance for the region as a whole, given the possibilities of catch-up growth. Avoiding episodes of shrinking needs to be given a higher priority in understanding the transition to sustained economic growth.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

Research Workshop, Department of Economic History, Lund University, 18 – 19 September 2019.

Africa and Latin America. A shared economic history?

Ellen Hillbom and Cristián Ducoing, organizers

African and Latin American economic history have seen a boost during the last twenty years. Articles and books have increased our knowledge on both regions, especially through quantitative studies. The works by (Bolt, Inklaar, Jong, & Zanden, 2018; Fourie, 2016; Hillbom, 2014, 2015) have shed light on diverse aspects related to African economic development. In addition, in the last fifteen years economic history in Latin America has received growing attention and several books have been published on the region, for example (M Badia-Miró, Pinilla, & Willebald, 2015; Bértola & Ocampo, 2012; Bulmer-Thomas, 2003). However, despite this noticeable development, the comparative works between both regions are almost absent. Notwithstanding the classic article by (Bates, Coatsworth, & Williamson, 2007), it is difficult to find comparative analysis in historical perspective.

Nevertheless, there are several aspects that could be useful to study in Africa and Latin America. The role of natural resources appears automatically. If we take into account the last commodity supercycle and how multinationals and foreign firms have shaped the development in both regions, an interesting research agenda could be pursued.

As the most unequal countries in the world are located in Africa and Latin America, inequality is another topic of interest. It can be seen as a clear invitation to researchers to explore which mechanisms are driving income distribution.

In order to explore these questions and lines of research, the Department of Economic History at Lund University is organizing a workshop on comparative analysis of Africa and Latin America. We invite African and Latin American economic historians to build a network on this topic. We have defined as starting point these two lines of research:

1. Natural Resources and economic development.
2. Inequality in the long run. Factor endowments and institutions.

In a two days’ workshop, the researchers will discuss the possibilities of comparative analysis in a long run approach and how ongoing works could be combined to better understand the economic history of both regions and their role in the global economy.

We have three keynote speakers for this workshop – Professor Ewout Frankema (Wageningen University), Assistant Professor Dacil Juif (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid) and Professor Luis Bértola (Universidad de la Republica Uruguay).

If you want to participate, please send an abstract of your paper/research project (approximately 300 words) and a CV (maximum two pages) to cristian.ducoing@ekh.lu.se by Wednesday 15 May 2019.
14th meeting of the African Economy History Network
Barcelona, 18-19 October

The African Economic History Network (AEHN), in association with the Economic History Department at the University of Barcelona, announces a Call for Papers for the 14th Annual Meeting of the African Economic History Network. The conference theme is "Global Dimensions of African Economic History". The conference will be held 18-19 October 2019 in Barcelona, Spain. Papers on all aspects of African economic history are welcome, but preference will be given to those that pertain to the conference theme. Abstracts of 500 words should be submitted to aehn2019@ub.edu no later than 15 May 2019. Some bursaries are available for graduate students and faculty from Africa. If applicable, please indicate this need in your submission.
European Social Science History Conference, 
Leiden, 18-21 March 2020

The ESSHC aims at bringing together scholars interested in explaining historical phenomena using the methods of the social sciences. The conference is characterized by a lively exchange in many small groups, rather than by formal plenary sessions.

The Conference welcomes papers and sessions on any topic and any historical period. It is organized in a large number of networks:

In 2014 the ESSHC introduced the “Professor Jan Lucassen Award” for best paper at the ESSHC by a (PhD) student. We encourage students to enter this competition with their paper.

The Conference fee will be Euro 200 for participants who pay in advance before 1 January 2020 (early bird), Euro 250 for participants who pay in advance but after 1 January 2020 (normal fee) and Euro 300 for participants who pay at the conference. One- day attendance will be Euro 100, Euro 125 and Euro 150 resp. Students pay Euro 90, 110 or 125.

The deadline for pre-registration of a paper or session proposal on our website was 15 April 2019 but other attendees are welcome.

The Thirteenth European Social Science History Conference is organized by the International Institute of Social History in cooperation with Leiden University.
A special event just before next year’s annual conference of Oxford University’s Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE) will focus on China–Africa economic and development relationships.

Keynote speaker: Prof. Deborah Bräutigam (John Hopkins University’s SAIS-CARI)

Alongside a keynote address and plenary panels, there will be parallel sessions where academics will present their empirical research. For these sessions, we will be looking for contributions on – though not limited to – such topics as: aid, trade, foreign direct investment, industrialisation, public debt, Belt and Road Initiative, environmental sustainability, political economy, governance and institutions.

The call for papers will open in July 2019 and close in October 2019. Further details will be available on the CSAE website in due course (https://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/). Final decisions will be made by December 2019. Priority will be given to full papers. Funding may be available for scholars from African countries and China.

Convener panel: Meredith Crowley, Stefan Dercon, Lizzie Dipple, Markus Eberhardt, Pascal Jaupart, Benno Ndulu, Lina Song, and Adrian Wood.

For further information, please contact csae.conference@economics.ox.ac.uk.
OPPORTUNITIES IN AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

Lund University, Doctoral students in Economic History with a focus on the developing Global South (Africa)

Assigned duties
Those appointed to doctoral studentship shall primarily devote themselves to their studies, aimed to result in a doctoral degree. Work carried out during the studentship consists of participation in research projects as well as successful participation in postgraduate (third-cycle) courses. Those appointed to doctoral studentships may also work, to a limited extent, with educational tasks and administration at the Department of Economic history. However, duties of this kind may not comprise of more than 20 per cent of a full time post.

Eligibility / Admission requirements
A person meets the general admission requirements for third-cycle courses and study programmes if he or she has:

- Been awarded a second-cycle degree; or
- Satisfied the requirements for courses comprising of at least 240 credits of which at least 60 credits were awarded in the second-cycle; or
- Acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in some other way in Sweden or abroad.

Other requirements
A proficient level of English is required in both written and oral communication.

Basis of assessment
Admittance of a doctoral student is based on an assessment of the candidate’s ability to benefit from third-cycle studies.

The applicant’s ability to benefit from third-cycle studies and research will be assessed with reference to the selection criteria stated in the relevant general syllabus for third-cycle studies, available at http://staff.lusem.lu.se/phd-studies/phd-programmes.

Applicant’s general competence:

- Quality and content of previous written work, such as a Master’s thesis.
- Ability to participate actively in the Department’s research environment.
- Ability to perform independent work.
- Relevant educational background and grades/grade average.
- Relevant work experience.

Scientific quality of the applicant’s project description:

- Ability to describe, question and discuss the current state of research.
- Sufficient clarity and logical coherence in the formulation of the aim and the research questions.
- Stringency of reasoning and analysis.
- Adequate selection of theory and methods.
Projects
Two research projects are recruiting one PhD candidate each. Both projects deal with long-term processes of economic change in Africa. The projects are:

African Elites: Wealth Accumulation and Persistence
The primary focus is the analysis of the development of African elites in the informal (agrarian) sector. It is building on a previous project where we estimated income levels and groups size for income classes. Now we move forward explaining drivers of long-term trends of wealth accumulation, specifically the nexus between elites, colonial policies and commercialization. We also pursue the issue of how the elites fared after independence and the extent to which they have continued to shape African economies.

Is Africa growing out of poverty? A comparative historical inquiry
Are current high economic growth rates in several African countries a sign that parts of Africa is growing out of poverty? Economic historians have shown that the current economic boom is not unique. Africa has experienced several longer periods of economic growth in the 20th century. These booms were followed by longer periods of economic stagnation. Why were previous booms not sustained? There are important historical lessons to learn from past failures. We hypothesis that the failed booms were due to weak intra- and inter-sectoral linkages between the export and the domestic sectors. We move on and compare the historical studies with current cases to identify similarities and differences in terms of linkages. The comparison will enable us to contribute to the debate on Africa’s economic future.

Terms of employment
Fixed-term employment, maximum four years (fulltime studies)

Application procedure
Please use Lund University job application portal when applying:
The applicant is encouraged to name a maximum of two teachers or researchers who can give recommendation letters, but we do not consider recommendation letters with the application.

Lund University welcomes applicants with diverse backgrounds and experiences. We regard gender equality and diversity as a strength and asset.

Contact
Director of doctoral studies, Professor Astrid Kander 046-2227483, astrid.kander@ekh.lu.se