

RAMI ZALFOU

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Education	Lund University , Lund, Sweden <i>Ph.D. student</i> , Department of Economic History	Since 2021
	Birkbeck College , University of London, UK <i>M.Sc. in Economics</i>	2018
	Damascus University , Damascus, Syria <i>B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering</i>	2014

Working papers & Publications

The Historical State and Path Dependence: Evidence from Ottoman Syria's Stateless Frontier.
Job market paper

This paper investigates the long-term effects of statelessness in Ottoman Syria by analysing the region divided by the “desert line” - a boundary that separated Ottoman-controlled areas from those subject to tribal raids. Using a spatial regression discontinuity design, I estimate the impact of historical statelessness on contemporary economic outcomes. The results show that historically stateless areas have lower incomes, less human and physical capital, and a higher share of workers in the primary sector. I find that these effects persist primarily due to lower population density, which explains a significant portion of the economic gaps. This persistence reflects path-dependent consequences: emigration and low population density, initiated by statelessness, continue to hinder economic development in these areas today.

Premium or Penalty? Occupations and Earnings of Ottoman Immigrants and their Offspring in the United States, 1900–1940. (with Martin Dribe)
Accepted at the European Review of Economic History

Abstract: We study the economic integration of immigrants from Ottoman Syria and Turkey and their offspring in the United States using full count census data from 1900 to 1940. Immigrants initially achieved occupational premiums due to their selection into high-reward industries, but 1940 earnings data reveals significant and growing disadvantages over time, partly due to lower educational attainment. In contrast, the second generation achieved substantial upward mobility, closing both the education and earnings gaps with native Whites. This contrasts with the experience of Northern European immigrants who matched natives more closely in terms of occupations and earnings.

Ethnic and Religious Differences in Female Labor Force Participation: Evidence from Syrian Census Data.
Under review at the Journal of Demographic Economics

This paper investigates the extent and causes of differences in Female Labor Force Participation (FLFP) across ethnic and religious groups in Syria. Using census data and the Gelbach decomposition method, the paper reveals substantial gaps in FLFP across groups, with differences reaching up to 18 percentage points. To understand the factors underlying these gaps, the analysis exploits the heterogeneity in economic development, demographic profiles, and educational attainment across towns and villages. The study finds that the main correlates of gaps in FLFP are the age distribution of the population, income, education, and the public sector employment share. The contribution of social norms is examined through the use of gender parity indices for educational enrolment and attainment to proxy for social restrictions on women but are not found to contribute significantly to ethnic and religious gaps in FLFP.

Leaving the Parental Home Among Middle Eastern Immigrants and their Offspring in Sweden, 1998 to 2022 (with Anna Tegunimataka)
Work-in-progress

Skills

Languages: Arabic (native), English (fluent), Turkish and French (intermediate).
Software: R, Stata, Python, ArcGIS, Power BI, EPPI-reviewer, Office Suite.

Teaching Experience	<p><i>Department of Economic History, Lund University</i></p> <p>Lecturer, Skill Training I - Statistics and Data, Spring 2023 and 2024.</p> <p>Lecturer, Econometrics Lab, Spring 2023 and 2024.</p> <p>Teaching Assistant, Econometrics I, Autumn 2023 and 2024. Prof. Jonas Helgertz.</p> <p>Teaching Assistant, Economic History: Family and Work - Scandinavia in an International Perspective, Autumn 2023. Prof. Maria Stanfors.</p> <p>Lecturer, Methods in Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies, Autumn 2023.</p>
Professional Experience	<p>Higher Statistical Officer, Department for Transport. United Kingdom. Oct 2020 – Sep 2021</p> <p>Research Coordinator, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). United Kingdom. Oct 2019 - Sep 2020</p> <p>English Language Tutor, Small Projects Istanbul and Addar Community Centre. Turkey. Aug 2016 – Feb 2017</p> <p>Intern / Monitoring and Evaluation Team, Tamkeen Project. Istanbul, Turkey. July 2016 – Dec 2016</p> <p>Maintenance Engineer, Hakim Brothers Trading & Contracting Company. Damascus, Syria. June 2013 – Nov 2014</p>
Conferences & Seminars	<p><i>2024</i></p> <p>Econometric society European winter meeting, University of the Balearic Islands.</p> <p>Graduate seminar at the Department of Economic History at LSE.</p> <p>The Third Annual Swedish Middle East and North Africa Network Conference.</p> <p>Early-Stage Researcher Meeting at the Centre for Economic Demography, Lund.</p> <p>Economic History Workshop of Developing Regions. Carlos III Madrid.</p> <p><i>2023</i></p> <p>12th Annual Workshop on “Growth, History and Development”, SDU Denmark.</p> <p>21st Nordic Conference in Development Economics, Gothenburg University.</p> <p>Seminar at the Department of Economic History, Lund University.</p> <p><i>2022</i></p> <p>European Historical Economics Society Conference, Groningen.</p> <p>IUSSP Seminar on Migration in the Past (Online).</p> <p>Seminar at the Centre for Advanced Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University.</p> <p>Swedish Development Research Network conference, Gothenburg.</p>
Affiliations	<p>Department of Economic History, Lund University.</p> <p>Centre for Economic Demography, Lund University.</p> <p>Centre for Advanced Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University.</p>
References	<p>Martin Dribe (martin.dribe@ekh.lu.se) Professor, Department of Economic History, Lund University</p> <p>Anna Tegunimataka (anna.tegunimataka@ekh.lu.se) Associate Professor, Department of Economic History, Lund University</p> <p>Jonas Helgertz (jonas.helgertz@ekh.lu.se) Professor, Department of Economic History, Lund University</p> <p>Karin Aggestam (karin.agggestam@svet.lu.se) Director, Centre for Advanced Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University</p>