

Legal Heritage and Urban Slums

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September 30, 2022

Summary

- Effects of civil vs. common law on slum formation
 - Regression discontinuity in Cameroon + cross-country analysis
- Find that common law leads to less slum formation
 - Mechanisms include property rights regimes and housing regulations

Analysis

- Cameroon is a great setting with rich data
 - Both legal traditions coexisting in the same country
 - But less external validity?
- Cross-country analysis less compelling
 - Legal origin not random
 - Effects of colonialism beyond legal systems?
- Can mechanisms be explored within Cameroon?

Framing

- Main point of policy interest is why slums form
 - And what can be done to improve living conditions
 - Legal origin itself has limited direct relevance
- Alternatively, long-run consequences of historical shocks
 - Overhang from colonialism
 - What historical conditions helped?