

Pablo Álvarez-Aragón

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Contact Information

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Personal Information

Citizenship: Spanish

Born in 1997

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Primary: Development Economics

Secondary: Economic History, Political Economy

DOCTORAL STUDIES

2021-2025 – University of Namur (CRED)

Ph.D Development Economics

Advisor: Catherine Guirkingier

2023-2024 – Paris School of Economics

Visiting Scholar

Supervisor: Denis Cogneau

PRE-DOCTORAL STUDIES

2019-2021 – MSc in Economics, UCLouvain. *Summa Cum Laude*

2015-2019 – BA in Economics, University of Valladolid.

2016-2019 – BA in Economics, University of Lille.

EXPERIENCE

2021-2022 – Research Assistant to Marcus Biermann, Bielefeld University

2018-2019 – Research Assistant to Oscar Carpintero, University of Valladolid

TEACHING

2022 – Graduate Econometrics, Teaching Assistant to Prof. Wouter Gelade, National Bank of Belgium

WORK IN PROGRESS

Legacy of Colonial Education: Unveiling Persistence Mechanisms in the DRC

(With P. Villar and C. Guirkingner)

The mechanisms that contribute to the enduring effects of colonial investments in education on human capital today are not well understood. This paper addresses this gap by examining the case of colonial Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We first document the enduring effects of colonial education and then analyze both demand-side channels and supply-side mechanisms. Using detailed contemporary and historical microdata, our results show that exposure to colonial Catholic and Protestant missionary education led to different demand-side mechanisms (intergenerational transmission and educational mobility triggered by missions). However, the quantitative importance of these channels seems limited in this context. On the supply side, we examine the dynamics of school location after independence. Our results suggest that the persistence of educational outcomes is primarily due to the concentration of contemporary schools around historical missions. This agglomeration effect appears to be driven by competition among religious schools of different denominations (and possibly by structural change in the vicinity of Catholic missions). As a result, girls living farther from historical missions have to travel greater distances to reach schools, which affects their enrollment more than that of boys.

Submitted

Measuring Norms and Enumerator Effects: Survey Method Matters

(With H. Champeaux)

The reliability of quantitative data is a prerequisite for the study and design of sound public policy. However, the process of data collection and the way in which individuals are interviewed affects the data collected and can lead to bias. While this process directly impacts the quality of the data, little empirical evidence investigates the key role of the survey methods themselves. In this paper, we compare two survey methods: the standard face-to-face interview and an alternative method we call in-group individual survey. In the latter, respondents are grouped but answer questions individually on an electronic device and the questions are read by a common enumerator. Taking advantage of an RCT in Benin, we randomize the survey method across respondents while holding the questionnaire constant. We show that the survey method leads to different results depending on the degree of enumerator influence. Identifying this influence by quantifying how much of the variation in the outcome variable is attributable to enumerators, we document that variables that are unlikely to be influenced by enumerators do not differ significantly across survey methods. However, variables that are likely to be affected differ systematically. These variables are mainly related to norms, opinions, and beliefs. In particular, we find that respondents who answer in groups report less gender-equal behavior and values. To rule out other mechanisms, we show that social desirability bias is more likely to affect responses in classical face-to-face interviews, where individuals' responses are less confidential.

AEA RCT Registry: AEARCTR-0011696

Female Entrepreneurship and Husband's Support

(With C. Guirkingner, A. Jolivet and A. Lulle)

Pineapple is a male-dominated sector in Benin. Although women play an important role in agriculture overall and often manage their own fields, few of them cultivate pineapple on their fields. They face several specific, gender-related constraints preventing their involvement in this productive activity, including liquidity constraints, problems with the planification of activities over the course of the 18 months production cycle, bookkeeping or competing demands on their time. Exploratory field work reveals that husbands support is a crucial determinant of women's success in this activity. This raises the following questions: Is this support offering a (second-best) substitute for access to financial market or training or is it rather a complement (or a necessary condition) for a woman's investment in this productive activity? What are the costs of seeking one's husband's help for one's own business? Why are some husbands reluctant in offering this support? May this support be stimulated by an exogenous intervention? We investigate these questions taking advantage from an intervention set up by the Belgian Development Agency (Enabel) in order to encourage women involvement in pineapple production. It includes a business training and a generous subsidy for women to start or to expand a pineapple production. With a view to stimulate husbands support, in some groups, husbands have been invited to take part in the training and design, with their wife, an action plan for her pineapple production.

AEA RCT Registry: AEARCTR-0008898

Ancestral Beliefs and Fertility in sub-Saharan Africa

Fertility rates in sub-Saharan Africa are higher than in any other major region of the world. However, little is known about the influence of certain aspects of African culture and social organization on fertility. I test the hypothesis that ancestor worship, one of the most prominent and central belief systems in many African societies, and which places a high value on the succession of the generations, contributes to the maintenance of high fertility in sub-Saharan Africa. I find that ancestral beliefs are associated with higher fertility rates. This result holds when using data that attempt to proxy for institutions in pre-industrial, colonial, and contemporary societies. Moreover, the relationship holds across ethnic groups, across individuals from the same country, and across migrants who live in the same city and were born in the same place but whose ethnic group is different. Finally, I explore the social and demographic implications of these findings. I show that ancestor worship conditions both the success (or failure) of family planning policies and the influence of other important social structures, such as kinship systems.

TECHNICAL STRENGTHS AND LANGUAGES

Languages: Spanish (Native), English (Fluent), French (Intermediate)

Software & Tools: Stata, SurveyCTO, QGIS, \LaTeX , KoboToolBox, MS Office

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2023–2025: Doctoral fellowship – Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS)

2022–2023: Doctoral fellowship – Special Research Fund (FSR)

2021–2022: Doctoral fellowship – European Research Council, H2020/ERC – StG 759294

2018–2019: Collaboration Fellowship – MINECO, Spanish Government

2017–2018: Erasmus+ Mobility Scholarship – European Union

SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

2024 – Casual Friday Development Seminar, Paris School of Economics (scheduled); Annual Conference of the Spanish Economic Association, University of Salamanca; Atelier Simiand, Paris School of Economics; UCLouvain, UNamur and U. Saint Louis Doctoral Workshop; Institutions, Culture, and Long-Term Development: Lessons from sub-Saharan Africa Conference, CRED; Center for Research in the Economics of Development (CRED) Workshop, UNamur (Scheduled); Development Economics Workshop, Universitat de Barcelona School of Economics; ENS Lyon Applied Seminar*

2023 – International Conference on Development Economics (ICDE), Paris School of Economics*; Bordeaux School of Economics Internal Seminar*; University of Valladolid Internal Seminar; ASREC Conference, Harvard University; UCLouvain, UNamur and U. Saint Louis Doctoral Workshop; PARSC Conference, African School of Economics; Center for Research in the Economics of Development (CRED) Workshop, UNamur

2022 – University of Castilla-La-Mancha; Workshop in Gender and Family Economics, CY Cergy Paris University*; CRED Workshop, UNamur; UCLouvain, UNamur and U. Saint Louis Doctoral Workshop

* Presented by a co-author

FIELDWORK AND DATA ENTRY

2024 – Data collection and supervision, Benin (Scheduled)

2023 – Data collection and supervision, Benin

2022 – RA supervision to digitize historical documents

2021 – Data collection and supervision, Benin

OTHER ACTIVITIES

2023 – Organizer Doctoral Workshop in Economics – UNamur, UCLouvain and USaint-Louis

2022 – Book Review: "Unsustainable Inequalities: Social Justice and the Environment", by Lucas Chancel, Revista Papeles de Relaciones Ecosociales y Cambio Global, 2022.

2021 – Dissemination: Álvarez Aragón, P. (2021). Sobre los premios "Nobel" de Economía. Revista De Economía Crítica, (32), 29.

2019 – Book Review: "Globalists. The end of the empire and the birth of neoliberalism", by Quinn Slobodian, Revista de Economía Crítica, 2019, ISSN 2013 – 5254.

2019-today – Editor of the Blog "[Puntos de Encuentro](#)", jointly with scholars and students from the University of Valladolid.