

Pablo Álvarez-Aragón
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Contact Information

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8 rempart de la Vierge, B5000 Namur

Personal Information

Citizenship: Spanish
Born in 1997

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Primary: Development Economics
Secondary: Economic History, Political Economy

REFERENCES

Catherine Guirking
Full Professor of Economics
University of Namur
catherine.guirking@unamur.be

Jean-Philippe Platteau
Emeritus Professor of Economics
University of Namur
jean-philippe.platteau@unamur.be

DOCTORAL STUDIES

2021-2025 – University of Namur (CRED)

Ph.D Development Economics

Advisor: Catherine Guirking

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

2020-2021 – 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

JOB MARKET PAPER

Ancestral Beliefs and Fertility in sub-Saharan Africa

In sub-Saharan Africa, the demographic transition has started later, from a higher level of fertility, and has taken place at a slower pace. However, there is no consensus as to why. This paper examines the influence of a traditional belief system that, embedded in a social structure organized around descent and kinship, emphasizes the importance of continuing the family line and equates fertility with virtue and spiritual approval. Its key feature is the belief that ancestors continue to influence society. Combining first-hand data with original ethnographic information and both historical and contemporary surveys, I show a positive relationship between beliefs in ancestors and fertility across ethnic groups, across individuals from the same country, and across migrants who live in the same city and were born in the same area but whose beliefs in ancestral influence differ. Guided by a simple model, I then examine mechanisms. I find that the positive influence of ancestral beliefs on fertility is driven by patrilineal ethnic groups, where father and children belong to the same lineage, and is more pronounced in clan-based societies, where the motive to continue the family line plays a central role. Consistent with free-rider behavior, male fertility decreases with the number of men in the family who can continue the lineage, but only in patrilineal societies with ancestor worship. Similarly, there is a negative relationship between women's fertility and the number of sisters in matrilineal societies with strong ancestral beliefs, suggesting that women have considerable bargaining power in reproductive decisions.

WORKING PAPERS

Legacy of Colonial Education: Unveiling Persistence Mechanisms in the DRC

(With P. Villar and C. Guirkingner)

Regional inequalities in education are a persistent and worrying phenomenon in Africa, with roots dating back to the colonial period. However, the mechanisms that explain this persistent inequality remain poorly understood. This paper addresses this gap by examining the case of colonial Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Using contemporary and historical surveys, archives, and administrative data on contemporary schools, we offer new insights into the persistence of regional educational inequalities since the colonial period. We highlight a factor neglected in the existing literature: the spatial clustering of post-independence schools around historical missions, driven by competition between religious schools of different denominations. Since distance to school has a stronger effect on girls' than boys' enrollment, our results help explain the stronger long-term impact of colonial schools on women than on men. Regarding other mechanisms, we isolate the role of parents' education on children's educational outcomes and examine whether missions were the locus of structural change. The quantitative importance of these channels seems limited in this context.

Submitted

Measuring Norms and Enumerator Effects: Survey Method Matters

(With H. Champeaux)

While the process of data collection can lead to bias, little empirical evidence investigates the role of the survey method. In this paper, we compare two survey methods: the standard face-to-face interview and an alternative method we call Human-Assisted Self-Administered survey (HASA). In the latter, respondents are guided by an enumerator reading questions, but they answer privately on an electronic device. 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 directly on an electronic device report less gender-equal behavior and values. Investigating the 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

Submitted

WORK IN PROGRESS

Female Entrepreneurship and Husband's Support

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

AEA RCT Registry: AEARCTR-0008898

Robustness and Replicability in Development Economics

(PI: Jorg Ankel-Peters, co-PI: Anna Dreber and Magnus Johannesson)

The Economics of Religion Conversion in Sub-Saharan Africa

(With J-P. Platteau and C. Guirking)

TECHNICAL STRENGTHS AND LANGUAGES

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

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

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2024: Robustness and Replicability in Economics (R2E) – German Science Foundation (DFG) Priority Programme Meta-Rep

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

2024–2025 – ASREC Conference, University of Macedonia (Scheduled); CRED Workshop, UNamur (Scheduled); IRES Lunch Seminar, UCLouvain (Scheduled); Development Economics Workshop, Navarra Center for International Development (Scheduled)

2023–2024 – International Conference in Development Economics (ICDE), Aix Marseille School of Economics, University of Santiago de Compostela, AFEPOP2024, EHESS; Bolzano Historical Economics Workshop*, EUDN Bocconi*, Casual Friday Development Seminar, Paris School of Economics; 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; Development Economics Workshop, Universitat de Barcelona School of Economics; ENS Lyon Applied Seminar*

2022–2023 – 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

2021–2022 – 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 (x2)
 - 2023** – Data collection and supervision, Benin
 - 2022** – RA supervision to digitize historical documents
 - 2021** – Data collection and supervision, Benin
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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.