

# Pablo Álvarez-Aragón

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## Contact Information

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## Personal Information

Citizenship: Spanish

Born in 1997

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## RESEARCH INTERESTS

**Primary:** Development Economics

**Secondary:** Economic History, Political Economy

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## 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

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## 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.**

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## EXPERIENCE

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

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

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## TEACHING

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

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## 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 persistence of colonial investments in human capital are not well understood. This paper examines the enduring impact of colonial investments in human capital, focusing on the influence of colonial origins on the provision of education, the demand for education near colonial-era schools, and the factors contributing to gender differences in educational persistence. Using detailed microdata from colonial Congo and the DRC, we identify persistent effects of colonial education at the micro level, controlling for confounding factors. We also compare the relative success of colonial schools in Catholic and Protestant missions during the colonial period and examine how education was transmitted across generations immediately after independence. Finally, we analyze the dynamics of school location since independence. Our results show that the persistence of educational outcomes is primarily due to the concentration of contemporary schools near historic missions. This agglomeration effect is partly driven by competition among religious schools of different denominations. As a result, girls living further from historic missions have to travel greater distances to reach schools, which affects their attendance more than that of boys. In addition, exposure to colonial Catholic and Protestant missions led to distinct demand-side mechanisms. However, the quantitative importance of these channels, including intergenerational transmission and educational mobility near missions, appears to be limited.

### **In-Group Individual Surveys vs Face-to-Face Interviews: Evidence from Benin** (With H. Champeaux)

Collecting reliable quantitative data is crucial for studying and designing public policies. However, the way in which individuals are surveyed is not neutral and faces several problems that can bias the final results. While these concerns directly affect the reliability of the data collected, little empirical evidence investigates the key role of the survey method itself. In this paper, we test an alternative survey method to the standard face-to-face interview, called in-group individual interview. In this method, respondents are grouped together and directly answer questions posed by a common enumerator on their own tablet. Taking the advantage of a RCT in Benin, we randomize the survey method across participants. We show that the survey method leads to different results depending on the nature of the variables and the degree to which external factors might influence them. We document that variables that are unlikely to be influenced by external factors do not differ significantly, while variables that are likely to be influenced by external factors systematically differ. Moreover, our results reveal a robust pattern: respondents answering in groups elicit less gender-equal values. Ruling out other mechanisms, we particularly emphasize the role of social desirability bias at play in the standard face-to-face interview method.

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.

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### **TECHNICAL STRENGTHS AND LANGUAGES**

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

**Software & Tools:** Stata, SurveyCTO, QGIS,  $\text{\LaTeX}$ , KoboToolBox, MS Office

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## 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

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## SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

**2024** – Annual Conference of the Spanish Economic Association, University of Salamanca (Scheduled); Atelier Simiand, Paris School of Economics (Scheduled); Institutions, Culture, and Long-Term Development: Lessons from sub-Saharan Africa Conference, CRED (Scheduled); 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

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## 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

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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.