HETEROGENEOUS AGENT MODELS

QUANTITATIVE ECONOMICS 2023

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MOTIVATION

- We introduce a class of models with heterogeneous agents.
- We focus on models with household heterogeneity and incomplete markets: Aiyagari-Bewley-Hugget-Imrohoroglu models.
  - Infinitely lived households face idiosyncratic shocks.
  - Markets are incomplete – households cannot trade all assets they would like to trade.
- We will find general equilibrium of these models.

AGENTS

- In all these models there is a continuum of agents/households indexed by $i \in [0,1]$.
- Agents are infinitely lived, have a standard period utility function $u(c)$, where c is consumption, discount future at $\beta \in (0,1)$.
- Labor endowment (productivity) is stochastic and follows a stationary Markov process (same process for all i), with a finite set of states Z and transition matrix P.
- Agents consume and trade a single asset a that pays (net) return r. Wage per unit of labor is w.
- Agents face a borrowing constraint, $a \geq -\phi$.

AGENTS

- State variables: beginning of period assets a and labor endowment z.
- Recursive formulation of a problem of an agent with assets a and labor endowment z is

$$V(a,z) = \max_{c,a'} \left\{ u(c) + \beta \sum_{z' \in Z} P\left(z,z'\right) V\left(a',z'\right) \right\}$$
$$\text{subject to } c + a' = zw + (1+r)\,a,$$
$$a' \geq -\phi.$$

- The solution consists of the value function $V(a,z)$ and the policy functions $a'(a,z)$, $c(a,z)$.
- Note: everything (e.g. V) depends on (r,w), we supress it in notation.

DISTRIBUTION

- Suppose that there a finite grid of asset levels $(a_1, \dots, a_N)$ and define the unconditional distribution $\lambda_t(a, z) := \mathbb{P}\,(a_t = a, z_t = z)$.
- Given the policy function $a'(a, z)$ and P we have

$$\lambda_{t+1}\left(a', z'\right) = \sum_{a,z} \lambda_t(a, z) \cdot P\left(z, z'\right) \cdot \mathcal{I}\left(a' = a'(a, z)\right),$$

  where $\mathcal{I}$ is the indicator function.
- What if assets are not restricted to a grid? Similar logic, but a more messy formula (+ measure theory).
- We will need to discretize the state space and action space anyway.

AGGREGATION

- Given a distribution λ_t and policy functions $a'(a,z)$ and $c(a,z)$ we can calculate aggregate variables.
- We have asset demand and consumption

$$A'_t = \int a'(a,z) \cdot d\lambda_t(a,z),$$
$$C_t = \int c(a,z) \cdot d\lambda_t(a,z).$$

- I switched notation again, for a finite grid we have $A'_t = \sum_{a,z} a'(a,z) \cdot \lambda_t(a,z)$ and $C_t = \sum_{a,z} c(a,z) \cdot \lambda_t(a,z)$.

THE REST OF THE ECONOMY

- How are r and w determined?
- What/who supplies goods?
- What/who supplies assets?
- We will start with the Hugget model:
  - Endowment economy: w exogenous, wz is the amount of goods received by an agent.
  - Nothing/nobody else in the economy. Supply of assets is zero.
- Market clearing conditions:
  - Goods market: $C_t = w \int z_i di$.
  - Asset market: $A_t' = 0$.

HUGGET MODEL

- Assets are loans from/to agents.
- Asset market clears if the total amount of loans (negative a) is equal to the total amount of savings (positive a).
- We will be looking for a stationary equilibrium: the distribution of agents and prices (here only r) are constant over time.
- This was already anticipated by how we wrote the Bellman equation – no time subscripts anywhere.

Definition (Stationary recursive competitive equilibrium (RCE))

A stationary recursive competitive equilibrium is a rate of return r, a value function $V(a,z)$, policy functions $a'(a,z)$ and $c(a,z)$, and a distribution $\lambda(a,z)$ such that

1. Given r, the value function $V(a,z)$ satisfies the Bellman equation, and associated policy functions $a'(a,z)$, $c(a,z)$, solve the agent's maximization problem;
2. The probability distribution $\lambda(a,z)$ is the stationary distribution of the Markov process (a_t, z_t) induced by P and $a'(a,z)$;
3. Markets clears:

$$\int a'(a,z) \cdot d\lambda(a,z) = 0, \quad \int c(a,z) \cdot d\lambda(a,z) = w \int z d\lambda(a,z).$$

COMMENTS

- We now need to find r such that aggregate asset demand resulting from optimal decisions of agents is zero.
- Alternatively, we can find r such that the goods market clears.
- Recall: the Walras law says that if there are N markets and $N-1$ clear, the N-th market also clears.

COMMENTS

- The usual procedure is:
  1. Guess r.
  2. Solve the Bellman equation for $V(a, z)$ and $a'(a, z)$.
  3. Find the stationary distribution $\lambda(a, z)$.
  4. Calculate aggregate asset demand A'.
  5. If $A' > 0$, decrease r, if $A' < 0$, increase r.
- This combines several things:
  - solving the Bellman equation
  - finding the stationary distribution
  - (new) finding the equilibrium price r.

COMPUTATION

- When we solve the model on a computer we discretize the state space and have a finite grid of points for assets: $(a_1, \ldots, a_N)$ and for productivity $(z_1, \ldots, z_M)$.
- We usually want to allow maximizers of the RHS of the Bellman equation to not necessarily belong to the grid.
- We cannot use the formula

$$\lambda\left(a', z'\right) = \sum_{a,z} \lambda(a, z) \cdot P\left(z, z'\right) \cdot \mathcal{I}\left(a' = a'(a, z)\right),$$

  because $a'(a, z)$ might not belong to the grid.
- How to find the stationary distribution $\lambda(a, z)$ in this case?

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YOUNG (2010)

- Let

$$q(a,z,a_n) = \mathcal{I}\left(a'(a,z) \in [a_{n-1}, a_n]\right) \frac{a'(a,z) - a_{n-1}}{a_n - a_{n-1}} + \mathcal{I}\left(a'(a,z) \in [a_n, a_{n+1}]\right) \frac{a_{n+1} - a'(a,z)}{a_{n+1} - a_n}$$

be the distribution of agents with assets a_n and a_{n+1}.

- Then

$$\lambda\left(a', z'\right) = \sum_{a,z} \lambda(a,z) \cdot P\left(z, z'\right) \cdot q\left(a, z, a'\right).$$

YOUNG (2010)

- This the same as saying that agent with assets a and productivity z will choose a_n with probability $q(a, z, a_n,)$.
- Given there is a continuum of agents, this is the same as saying that the fraction $q(a, z, a_n,)$ of agents with assets a and productivity z will choose a_n.
- This approach (due to Young (2010)) is useful because it makes aggregates unbiased.

AGGREGATION AND EQUILIBRIUM

- Once we have the distribution $\lambda(a, z)$ we can calculate aggregates.
- For example:

$$A' = \sum_{a,z} a'(a, z) \cdot \lambda(a, z).$$

- We can repeat the same procedure for various r to find the equilibrium r, such that $A' = 0$.
- Better: write a function that takes r as an input and returns A' as an output. Then use a root finding algorithm to find the equilibrium r.

DISCUSSION

- Suppose we want to use a bracketing method to find the equilibrium r.
- What are the appropriate bounds? Probably $r < -1$ does not make sense (nobody would save). The upper bound is more tricky.
- We can show that $r < \beta^{-1} - 1$ in equilibrium for the Hugget model (just see what happens if $r > \beta^{-1} - 1$).

DISCUSSION

- Here you need to solve the Bellman equation for each r: possibly many times.
- This can be costly - try to optimize the code.
  - Use HPI or OPI.
  - Use EGM.
  - Get the transition matrix for (a, z) and use it to find the stationary distribution (do not simulate anything!)
  - Check out Simon Mongey's slides – general notation but similar models.

AIYAGARI MODEL

- In Aiyagari model there is a representative firm that hires labor and rents capital from households.
- The firm has a constant returns to scale production function $F(K, L)$, where K is capital and L is labor.
- The firm is competitive, so it takes r and w as given.
- The firm's problem is

$$\max_{K,L} F(K, L) - (r + \delta) K - wL.$$

AIYAGARI MODEL

- Labor market clearing: $L = \int z \cdot d\lambda(a, z)$.
- Asset market clearing: $K = \int a \cdot d\lambda(a, z)$.
- Goods market clearing: $F(K, L) = C + \delta K$.

AIYAGARI MODEL

- Notice that here we have

$$r = F_K(K, L) - \delta, \quad w = F_L(K, L).$$

- Because of the constant returns to scale

$$r = F_K\left(\frac{K}{L}, 1\right) - \delta, \quad w = F_L\left(\frac{K}{L}, 1\right).$$

- We can solve for K/L as a function of r. This also allows us to solve for w as a function of r.
- We know L (it is exogenous) so we have $K(r)$

AIYAGARI MODEL

- This suggests a following strategy:
  - Guess r. Repeat all the steps from the Hugget model to find A'.
  - Calculate K.
  - Check if $A' = K$. If yes, we found the equilibrium r. If not, adjust r and repeat.
- Better to directly find the root of $A'(r) - K(r)$.