

Youn Baek

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EDUCATION

New York University Stern School of Business Ph.D. in Economics	2019 - 2025 (<i>Expected</i>)
Korea University M.A. in Economics	2018
Korea University B.B.A. in Business Administration	2016
Arizona State University Semester abroad	2016

INTERESTS

development economics, economic history, political economy

RESEARCH

Working Papers

Cultural exchange and the birth of international development

This paper investigates the impact of intergroup contact on attitudes towards global poverty and development in the context of the Student Volunteer Movement, the largest missionary movement in the United States. Using hand-collected archival records of missionaries and runner-up applicants, matched with publication data, this study shows missionary experience deepened social scientific knowledge on developing countries. I then show that missionaries were a major source of information about these areas during WWII, on the eve of the birth of international development. The next part of the paper uses a shift-share instrumental variable based on denominational exposure to early missionary recruiters in 1886-87 to document that congressmen representing denominations with greater missionary exposure were more likely to support landmark foreign aid legislation that established the modern concept of development assistance. This exposure resulted in denominational support for foreign aid in congressional testimony, promoted moral universalism in congressional speeches, and contributed to an increase in Peace Corps volunteers. These results suggest that charitable acts involving intergroup contact can serve as a complement to others' charitable acts, whereas standard models of charity show that charitable activities among different individuals are substitutes.

Path dependence through agglomeration spillovers: Evidence from the beet sugar industry (submitted) [Draft]

This paper presents evidence of path dependence in economic geography by investigating the agglomeration spillovers from US beet sugar factories, which attracted large-scale manufacturing facilities near farmlands. To estimate the effects of plant openings, I identify runner-up locations for beet sugar plants from a historical trade journal and find that these plant openings had large and long-lasting effects on population and manufacturing activities over one hundred years. The agglomeration spillovers benefited industries not only directly linked through input-output linkages but also extended to broader, less related industries outside the production chain of agricultural processing.

Work in progress

Place-based costs and productivity in R&D (with Sathya Ramesh)

This paper estimates the elasticities of productivity and costs of R&D with respect to urban concentration using data on 0.3 million scientists across American cities. We introduce a novel shift-share instrumental variable based on university-origin and destination-city pairs. Our findings show that the agglomeration elasticity of patents is generally higher than that of wages. However, while place-based costs remain constant across cities of varying sizes, the agglomeration elasticity of patents declines significantly in cities above the median size. These results suggest that place-based policies aimed at fostering economic activity in non-superstar cities could enhance the aggregate productivity of R&D.

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2023	Kurnow PhD Fellowship, New York University
2019	Doctoral Fellowship, Ilju Academic Foundation
2019	Doctoral Fellowship, Kwanjeong Educational Foundation (declined)
2019	Doctoral Fellowship, NYU Stern
2016	Undergraduate Thesis Grant, Korea University
2015	Undergraduate Fellowship, Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies

PRESENTATIONS

2023: North American Meeting of the Urban Economics Association 2021: Yale Economic History Graduate Student Conference

REFERENCES

Petra Moser (Chair)

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