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**Current Position:**

Post-doctoral fellow, Institute on Behavior & Inequality (briq) Bonn

**Education:**

University of Oxford, Economics Dphil (PhD), awarded June 2017

University of Oxford, Economics Mphil (masters), 2013

BSc, Economics, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands, 2010

Ba, History, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands, 2010

**Teaching and Research Fields:**

Political Economy; Economic Development, Economic History

**Job Market Paper:**

**“Institutional Adaptation to Environmental Change”**

(September 2019, joint with Robert C. Allen and Mattia C. Bertazzini)

In this paper we show that states form to overcome the adverse effects of environmental change. In a panel dataset of settlement, state formation, and public good provision in southern Iraq between 5000BCE and today, we estimate the effect of a series of river shifts. We hypothesize that a river shift creates a collective action problem in communally organizing irrigation, and creates demand for a state. We show four main results. First, a river shift negatively affects settlement density, and therefore incentives canal irrigation. Second, a river shift leads to state formation, centralization of existing states, and the construction of administrative buildings. Third, these states raise taxes, and build canals to replace river irrigation. Finally, where canals are built, river shifts no longer negatively affect settlement. Our results support a social contract theory of state formation: citizens faced with a collective action problem exchange resources and autonomy for public good provision.

**Papers:**

**“The Origins of Violence in Rwanda”**

(February 2019)

(Conditionally) accepted at **the Review of Economic Studies**

This paper shows that the intensity of violence in Rwanda's recent past can be traced back to the initial establishment of its pre-colonial state. Villages that were brought under centralized rule one century earlier experienced a doubling of violence during the state-organized 1994 genocide. Instrumental variable estimates exploiting differences in proximity to Nyanza -- an early capital -- suggest these effects are causal. In other periods, when the state faced rebel attacks, with longer state presence, violence is lower. Using data from several sources, including a lab-in-the-field experiment across an abandoned historical boundary, I show that the effect of the historical state is primarily sustained by culturally transmitted norms of obedience. The persistent effect of the pre-colonial state interacts with government policy: where the state developed earlier, there is more violence when the Rwandan government mobilized for mass killing and less violence when the government pursued peace.

**“Bureaucracy as a Tool for Politicians”**

(September 2019)

This paper studies effective government under changing policy objectives. I compare former Prussian parts of Germany to non-Prussian parts in a geographical regression discontinuity framework, during the Weimar republic and the Nazi regime. During the Weimar republic, violence against Jews is lower in former Prussian areas, whereas during the Nazi period, deportations of Jews are implemented more

efficiently. Consistent with the notion that the Prussian state was highly effective, I show that Prussian areas are more effective at raising taxes and spend more on policy implementation under both the Weimar republic and the Nazi regime. After the Allies centralized public finance, former Prussian areas do not raise more taxes. I finally provide evidence for a 'cog in the wheel' interpretation of the German bureaucracy: Prussian areas have a more specialized bureaucracy which increases efficiency but also leads to 'diffusion of responsibility'. German bureaucracy was a tool for its politicians, and the effect of a strong state on development therefore varies with policy.

### **"The Long-Run Impact of the Dissolution of the English Monasteries"**

(September 2019, joint with James A. Robinson and Sebastian Vollmer)

We examine the long-run economic impact of the Dissolution of the English monasteries in 1535, which is plausibly linked to the commercialization of agriculture and the location of the Industrial Revolution. Using monastic income at the parish level as our explanatory variable, we show that parishes which the Dissolution impacted more had more textile mills and employed a greater share of population outside agriculture, had more gentry and agricultural patent holders, and were more likely to be enclosed. Our results extend Tawney's famous 'rise of the gentry' thesis by linking social change to the Industrial Revolution.

### **"Falling Behind: The Financial Crisis of the Abbasid Caliphate and the Collapse of Civilization in Southern Mesopotamia"**

(June 2018, joint with Robert C. Allen)

In the late 9th century rural settlement, agriculture, and urbanization all collapsed in Southern Mesopotamia. We first document this collapse using newly digitized archeological data. We then present a model of hydraulic society that highlights the collapse of state capacity as a proximate cause of the collapse of the economy, and a shortened horizon of the ruler as a potential driver of the timing of the collapse. Using cross sections of tax collection data for 28 districts in southern Mesopotamia in 812, 846, and 918 we verify the relationships among key variables. The proximate cause of the crisis was the collapse in state capacity which meant that the state no longer maintained the irrigation system. A particularly destructive succession struggle, shortening the investment horizon of rulers, determined the timing of the crisis.

#### **Publications:**

##### **"Colonialism and Development in Africa"**

(June 2018, joint with James A. Robinson)

in Carol Lancaster and Nicolas Van de Walle eds. Handbook on the Politics of Development, Oxford University Press.

In this paper we evaluate the impact of colonialism on development in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the world context, colonialism had very heterogeneous effects, operating through many mechanisms, sometimes encouraging development sometimes retarding it. In the African case, however, this heterogeneity is muted, making an assessment of the average effect more interesting. We emphasize that to draw conclusions it is necessary not just to know what actually happened to development during the colonial period, but also to take a view on what might have happened without colonialism and also to take into account the legacy of colonialism. We argue that in the light of plausible counterfactuals, colonialism probably had a uniformly negative effect on development in Africa. To develop this claim we distinguish between three sorts of colonies: (1) those which coincided with a pre-colonial centralized state, (2) those of white settlement, (3) the rest. Each have distinct performance within the colonial period, different counterfactuals and varied legacies.

#### **Work in Progress:**

##### **"Industrialization and Inequality"**

(Joint with Cara Ebert, James A. Robinson and Sebastian Vollmer)

##### **"The Enclosure Movement in England"**

(Joint with James A. Robinson and Sebastian Vollmer)

##### **"Dependency"**

(Joint with Melissa Dell and James A. Robinson)

**Teaching Experience:**

Harvard University History of Economic Growth, Cultural Evolution,  
World Economic History, Applied Quantitative Methods

Tilburg University Development Economics, Economic Growth and Regional Development

**Other Experience:**

Past Affiliations:

**2017-2018:**

Tilburg University, Fellow  
Kensho Technologies, Machine Learning Engineer

**2016-2017:**

Harvard University, Department of Economics, Fellow

Refereeing:

*Quarterly Journal of Economics, American Economic Review, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Economic Journal, Journal of Development Economics, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Oxford Economic Papers, Explorations in Economic History; National Science Foundation (USA)*

Seminars:

**2019:** Stellenbosch University, Tilburg University, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, briq Institute, LMU Munich (scheduled)

**2018:** Tilburg University, World Economic History Congress, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Oxford University

**2017:** MIT Economics, Pittsburgh, Institute on Behavior & Inequality (briq) Bonn, Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, Warwick, NYU Abu Dhabi, Tilburg University, American Enterprise Institute

**2016:** CSAE annual conference, Harvard University, NYU Abu Dhabi, University of Bonn, OxDEV, University of Oxford

**2015:** University of Groningen, University of Oxford, Harvard University, North East Universities Development Consortium conference (NEUDC)

**2014:** University of Oxford, Utrecht University, CSAE annual conference, European Economic Association Annual Conference, Harvard University, Brown University

**2013:** North East Universities Development Consortium conference (NEUDC), Harvard University, Household in Conflict Network annual conference

Fieldwork:

**2014:** Conducted survey and experiments in Rwanda, 440 participants

**Honors, Scholarships and Grants:**

2015-2016 Sir John Hicks Fund Grant

2014-2015 International Growth Centre Grant

2011-2015 Economic and Social Research Council 2+2 Scholarship

2014-2015 Peace Research Association Foundation Grant

2014-2015 Economic History Society Grant for Graduate Students

## References:

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