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Space and development at the crossroads: Insights from cliometrics

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Abstract - This article celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of Région et Développement by revisiting the dialogue it has nurtured between development economics and spatial economics. We situate our contribution within this tradition by engaging with selected chapters from the Handbook of Cliometrics, highlighting how long-run historical perspectives can illuminate contemporary spatial and territorial dynamics. Building on the contribution of Diebolt and Hippe in Région et Développement, we extend their cliometric approach to examine the persistence of disparities, the role of institutions, and the impact of policy interventions. Our analysis emphasizes that territorial development must be understood within long-term economic trajectories shaped by demographic forces, shocks, and innovations. We argue that historically grounded perspectives are essential for designing effective policies aimed at reducing regional inequalities. By weaving together insights from cliometrics and regional development, our study illustrates the value of connecting historical causality with spatial analysis. In doing so, we reaffirm the journal's mission of combining analytical rigor with societal relevance.

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INTRODUCTION

Celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of *Région et Développement* is to honor an international journal which, since 1995, has pursued the fertile intersection between development economics and spatial economics with scientific rigor. These two fields are often treated in isolation, yet here – under the visionary guidance of its founders and editorial team – they are brought into direct dialogue, allowing for a richer understanding of the complex dynamics that shape territories.

Région et Développement has become a reference point for anyone engaged in the study of the geography of development. It has established itself as a platform for disseminating methods, tools, and analyses ranging from theoretical and methodological research to empirical investigations, as well as the evaluation of public policies at local, regional, and international levels.

In this spirit, our contribution seeks to extend the journal's long-standing dialogue between space and development through a selection of 15 chapters from the *Handbook of Cliometrics* that address, each in its own way, the spatial and territorial dimensions of economic development. Our aim is not simply to summarize these works, but to set them in resonance with the scientific orientation *Région et Développement* has championed since its inception: understanding territorial inequalities, analyzing regional interdependencies, shedding light on the diversity of economic trajectories, and examining the processes of integration, attractiveness, and competitiveness.

More broadly, our article extends the questions raised by Diebolt and Hippe (2017) in the journal, who examined regional human capital inequalities in Europe between 1850 and 2010. They employed indicators such as numeracy, literacy, and educational attainment to analyze long-term trends and regional disparities. Their findings highlighted the persistence of intranational inequalities, often surpassing international differences, while also observing a convergence in literacy rates and educational attainment over time. Building upon their cliometric methodology, our study for this anniversary issue delves deeper into the factors influencing these regional disparities. We explore the role of historical institutions, economic structures, and policy interventions in shaping economic development. By integrating a selection of contributions from the *Handbook of Cliometrics* (Diebolt and Haupert, 2024), we aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants and consequences of regional development dynamics. Our analysis thus emphasizes the importance of considering historical context and institutional frameworks when addressing contemporary regional disparities. We argue that tailored policy interventions, grounded in historical knowledge, are essential to fostering equitable economic development and, by extension, balanced regional economic growth.

In sum, cliometrics, grounded in long-run economic history and robust quantitative methods, offers a complementary perspective to spatial economics. By mobilizing historical causality, contextual analysis, and international comparisons, it situates regional dynamics within secular trajectories, revealing deep forces, such as institutions, demographic structures, exogenous shocks, and innovations that shape territories over time. By revisiting these cliometric contributions, our ambition is twofold: to show how they can inform reflection on contemporary and future spatial challenges, and to demonstrate that combining the tools of quantitative economic history with regional development issues can inspire new avenues for research and policymaking alike.

Région et Développement has built its distinctiveness on its ability to connect academic rigor with relevance to societal debates. Cliometrics, in restoring the full depth of time to our analyses, shares this ambition. It is at this meeting point – between past and future, between global analysis and local anchoring – that we invite the reader to join us, in the hope that this anniversary may help nourish our collective reflection on the art and science of territorial development.

1. WHY THE HANDBOOK OF CLIOMETRICS?

Cliometrics emerged at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, when a group of young North American scholars set out to renew economic history by combining economic theory, quantitative evidence, econometric methods, and historical expertise. This “new economic history” built on traditions already present in the interwar years – embodied most notably by Simon Kuznets – but gained momentum in a context shaped by the Great Depression, the Second World War, economic planning, the rise of national accounting, and the arrival of computers in research.

The cliometric approach rests on four pillars:
- the systematic use of measurable data;
- the elaboration of theoretical models;
- the application of statistical and econometric methods;
- the embedding of research within its historical context, through critical engagement with sources and institutions.

John Lyons, Louis Cain, and Samuel Williamson (2009) remind us that the “official” birth of cliometrics is usually traced back to the 1957 Williamstown conference, where Alfred Conrad and John Meyer presented their pioneering research on the profitability of slavery in the American South. Their work overturned decades of conventional interpretations and demonstrated the strength of an approach that combined economic theory with quantitative evidence. A few years later, at Purdue University in 1960, Stanley Reiter coined the term *cliometrics*, and the first “Clio Conferences” established a tradition of rigorous methodological debate.

Cliometricians distinguished themselves by their criticism of the “old” economic history, often judged too descriptive and insufficiently scientific. Douglass North and Robert Fogel spoke openly of a “revolution,” and were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1993 for opening a new path in the study of economic history. Their work exemplifies what makes cliometrics distinctive: the systematic integration of facts and theory, the construction of new datasets (such as the Parker–Gallman sample drawn from U.S. agricultural censuses), and the analysis of central questions such as the timing of “modern economic growth” or the determinants of productivity.

Cliometric debates were numerous and often heated. Walt Rostow, for instance, had argued that economic “take-off” was triggered by the spread of railroads. Robert Fogel and Albert Fishlow refuted this thesis, showing that while railroads mattered, they could not be considered the single decisive factor. The works of Conrad, Meyer, and later Fogel and Engerman provoked worldwide controversy, spurring decades of further research into the profitability, organization, and consequences of slavery. Roger Ransom, Richard Sutch, Gavin Wright, and Robert Margo examined the post-1865 stagnation of the American South, highlighting the institutional legacies of slavery and the Civil War. Meanwhile, Richard Steckel and others pioneered the use of anthropometric measures such as height and health as indicators of living standards, thereby reshaping the study of material well - being over the long run.

Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz attributed a central role to monetary contraction in explaining the Great Depression. At the same time, Douglass North developed an institutional approach, emphasizing that incentives and organizational structures are fundamental drivers of long-term economic change. As Donald [Deirdre] McCloskey has pointed out, the hallmark of the most significant contributions of the “new” economic historians was precisely the systematic integration of facts and theory.

Economic history itself evolved alongside cliometrics. It benefited from the expansion of higher education in the 1960s and 1970s, before later suffering from budgetary retrenchment. In continental Europe, cliometrics spread more gradually, carried by scholars trained in North America or the United Kingdom. France, Germany, Italy, Spain, as well as Japan and Australia, developed their own traditions, often under the impetus of young economists and historians trained abroad.

Today, cliometrics addresses new themes, among them inequality and regional development – subjects particularly central to journals such as *Région et Développement*. It continues to emphasize the deep historical roots of institutions and the importance of long-term trajectories. By now a firmly established discipline, it maintains a fruitful dialogue with adjacent fields – from political history to sociology, demography, and environmental history – while also drawing on tools from the natural sciences.

It is in this intellectual and institutional landscape that the *Handbook of Cliometrics* was conceived. Designed as a reference work, it brings together contributions from leading international scholars to provide a comprehensive overview of the field. Its chapters offer both historiographical syntheses and methodological innovations, covering a wide range of topics: growth and productivity, international trade, financial history, labor and inequality, anthropometrics, institutions, and innovation. Each contribution combines theoretical rigor, quantitative analysis, and historical contextualization – embodying the very spirit of cliometrics.

The *Handbook*, now in its third edition, has a twofold ambition: first, to provide established scholars and younger generations alike with a conceptual and empirical toolbox; second, to demonstrate the vitality of a discipline capable of engaging not only with economics and history, but also with the social sciences more broadly. A true scientific landmark, it stands as an indispensable reference for anyone seeking to understand the long-run dynamics that shape economies and societies.

2. TOWARDS A GREATER INTERACTION BETWEEN ECONOMIC HISTORY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Peter Temin (2024), in his chapter for the Handbook of Cliometrics, begins by situating cliometrics – the “New Economic History” – within the broader landscape of twentieth - century economics. Emerging in the 1960s, cliometrics was built on the ambition to merge the rigor of formal economic theory and statistical methods with the study of the past. This methodological revolution, pioneered by scholars such as Robert Fogel and Douglass North, changed how historians approached long-term economic change. Temin himself, a central figure in this movement, continues here to defend and expand its intellectual legacy.

At the heart of his argument lies the conviction that economic history and development economics are natural allies. Both disciplines are preoccupied with the same fundamental question: how do economies transform over time? Yet, as he laments, they often remain separated in practice. Economic history tends to focus on the long arc of high-wage industrialized countries, while development economics is usually concerned with the pressing challenges of low - wage economies in the Global South. Temin's central plea is for these two communities of scholars to engage more directly with each other, because the historical record contains insights of great value for today's developmental dilemmas.

To illustrate this point, Temin draws on recent empirical work by scholars such as Joachim Voth and Robert Allen, who exemplify the cliometric method at its best. Their studies show how careful reconstruction of wages, prices, demographic structures, and energy costs can shed light on the deepest drivers of economic transformation.

Joachim Voth's contributions stand out. He demonstrates that Western Europe was already a high- wage economy by the fourteenth century. This finding overturns simplistic narratives that portray the Industrial Revolution as a sudden or accidental event of the eighteenth century. Voth traces this development back to the Black Death, which decimated Europe's population and transformed labor markets. Scarcity of labor pushed wages upward, while a distinctive European Marriage Pattern further reinforced demographic and economic shifts. Families married later, fertility declined, and the balance between population and resources changed dramatically.

These demographic changes, Voth argues, had long - lasting consequences. A high-wage economy not only shaped consumption patterns but also created incentives for labor-saving technological innovation. By the eighteenth century, this structure underpinned the Industrial Revolution, making Europe – not China, India, or other regions – the birthplace of industrial capitalism.

In parallel, Robert Allen's work sheds light on the material conditions that made industrialization viable. Allen emphasizes the dual role of factor prices: industrial technologies became profitable in England because wages were high, and thanks to abundant coal, energy costs were low. This unique combination meant that mechanization was not just possible, but economically rational. In contrast, in low-wage regions of the world, these same machines were not competitive; they were simply too expensive relative to local factor prices.

Together, Voth and Allen underscore a profound lesson: demography and factor endowments shape economic destinies. Growth is not simply the product of abstract policies or technological diffusion, but of deep structural conditions that determine which technologies are viable and which developmental paths are open.

For Temin, this insight is precisely why economic history must inform development economics. Contemporary developing economies face challenges that, while different in scale and context, echo the dilemmas of Europe's past. Just as fourteenth – century demography set the stage for eighteenth – century industrialization, today's demographic pressures, labor markets, and energy constraints will shape which paths of development are feasible in Africa, Asia, or Latin America.

Temin also reflects on the intellectual trajectory of cliometrics itself. He recalls how the movement began as a challenge to narrative - based history, insisting on the use of data, counterfactuals, and formal modeling. Over time, cliometrics matured, diversified, and spread across subfields. It provided the tools that now enable scholars like Allen and Voth to make such precise reconstructions of wages, fertility, or energy costs centuries in the past. In this sense, cliometrics has fulfilled its promise: it transformed historical inquiry into a quantitative science without losing its humanistic concern for long-term change.

Yet, Temin warns against complacency. He observes that cliometricians and development economists too often work in isolation, even when addressing parallel questions. Historians reconstruct the causes of the Industrial Revolution, while development economists ask why some countries industrialize today and others stagnate. These are not separate puzzles but facets of the same question. An integrated approach – one that blends the insights of past and present – would provide a more comprehensive understanding of economic growth.

To drive this point home, Temin proposes what he calls a “non-random survey” of research that demonstrates the power of cliometric reasoning. By carefully choosing case studies like those of Allen and Voth, he shows how historical analysis can be applied to pressing contemporary issues. If the Industrial Revolution required high wages and cheap energy, what does that imply for countries today where wages remain low and energy costs high? If demographic change shaped Europe’s destiny, how might Africa’s rapid population growth or Asia’s aging societies influence their economic futures?

Temin’s conclusion is clear: history is not just about the past, it is a guide to the future**.** Development policy that ignores historical experience risks being naïve, while history that ignores developmental questions risks irrelevance.

Thus, the chapter ends with both a methodological and a substantive plea. Methodologically, Temin asks for stronger dialogue between economists and historians, for cross - fertilization between models and archives, between data and theory. Substantively, he insists that the lessons of economic history – about wages, energy, demography, and institutions – remain vital to understanding the developmental challenges of our own century.

In this way, Temin reaffirms cliometrics not merely as a tool for interpreting the past but as a living discipline, one that continues to speak to the central economic questions of our time.

3. ECONOMIC GROWTH

The chapter on growth opens with the claim that understanding long-run economic development requires more than cross-sectional snapshots or short-run fluctuations: it demands a framework which captures transitions across regimes over centuries. Diebolt and Perrin (2024) begin by revisiting the seminal works on unified growth theory (UGT) and related literature, which frames human history in economic terms as moving through distinct regimes – Malthusian stagnation, the transition phase, and sustained modern growth.

From there, the authors map out how classical and neoclassical growth theories, demographic transition theories, and modern unified growth theory provide competing or complementary accounts of how societies have escaped from stagnation to growth. They emphasize that these theories do not just differ in empirical fit, but in mechanisms: how technology, population, human capital, fertility, mortality, and institutions interact over long spans.

An important strand of their argument is how traditional growth theory – Solow, Ramsey, exogenous growth models – captures part of the story (capital accumulation, technological progress) but often fails to explain *why* productivity improvements or savings behavior change in tandem with demographic changes. They argue that demographic transitions are central: mortality decline, fertility decline, changes in household behavior (e.g. marriage, child mortality expectations) are not passive outcomes but active drivers of growth.

Diebolt and Perrin also stress the importance of integrating gender and the household into the growth story. They argue that gendered division of labor, female education, female autonomy, and fertility decisions are necessary to understand when and how growth accelerates. Growth models without a gender perspective may omit important channels – education demand, fertility tradeoffs, female labor supply – that materially affect the timing and pace of growth.

The chapter reviews unified growth theory as a useful and nowadays often-used framework. UGT attempts to combine demographic transition, human capital accumulation, technology diffusion, and fertility behavior into one coherent explanation of long-run growth. In doing so, it is better able to explain why growth accelerates only after certain conditions are met – not merely accumulation of capital, but shifts in demographic behavior, institutional change, educational expansion, etc.

Throughout, the authors draw attention to empirical predictions of these theories, and how cliometric methods have been used to test them. For example, tests of whether fertility declined first, or whether mortality decline preceded fertility decline; whether increases in education and human capital came earlier in some regions than others; whether the returns to education rose; whether women's empowerment or changes in female labor participation show up in historical data, etc. These tests help discriminate among growth models.

Another key theme is the heterogeneity of growth paths. Not all societies follow the same timing or sequence: some experienced early demographic transition and human capital expansion, others lagged; cultural, institutional, geographic, and social norms matter. Differences in timing of marriage, childbearing, schooling, female education and labor supply can lead to different patterns of growth, divergence, and convergence. Diebolt and Perrin emphasize that cliometric tools allow us to trace these differences – not just averages, but variation across regions and over time.

The authors also highlight the tension between theory and data: many growth theories make predictions about fertility, mortality, human capital, and population, but historical data is uneven – often missing, or reliable only for certain regions, classes, or sexes. Cliometric work must therefore pay careful attention to data quality, biases, measurement issues, comparability across time and place. Diebolt and Perrin stress the importance of robust empirical work, counterfactuals, using natural experiments where possible, and not over - interpreting weak evidence.

Cliometrics of Growth further engages with the normative and policy implications of these insights. If growth is deeply shaped by demographic behavior, gender, institutions, and long-run change, then policy designed for catch-up or development must consider these channels – not simply investing in physical capital or technology, but investing in health, education, women's empowerment; shaping institutions that affect fertility decisions, mortality risks, and human capital. Policies must be tailored to local historical and demographic contexts.

In conclusion, the chapter argues for a more synthetic view of long-run economic growth, one that merges traditional growth theory, demographic transition, gendered analysis, and unified growth theory, and that tests these with cliometric methods. The goal is not mere description, but explanatory power: to understand why and how societies moved from stagnation to growth, why some did earlier than others, and what forces prevented or slowed the transition in many places.

Although based on the abstract and the literature, Diebolt and Perrin's chapter is a call to scholars to deepen the temporal reach of their empirical work, to refine measurement especially in demographic, gender, and institutional variables, and to bring spatial variation more centrally into unified growth frameworks. It complements well the spatial, regional, and historical perspectives championed by *Région et Développement*, showing that growth over the long run cannot be separated from population, families, gender, institutions, and geography.

4. POLITICAL ECONOMY

The chapter on political economy surveys how political institutions, power structures, coercion, and state capacity have shaped economic history – a theme especially resonant for cliometrics, since it asks not only what institutions exist, but *how* and *why* they emerged, persisted, or broke down, and with what economic consequences.

Koyama (2024) begins by situating the political economy approach in the longer sweep of economic history: tracing how scholars have moved beyond purely economic or demographic explanations to include political agency, the structure of regimes (monarchies, democracies, autocracies), taxation, warfare, coercion, and religion as fundamental variables. The chapter highlights how political economy is not just a marginal add-on, but deeply intertwined with questions of growth, inequality, development, and divergence.

One of the first themes is the *origins of the state* and how early state formation (e.g. fiscal capacity, administrative reach) matters. Koyama reviews work on how geography, warfare, trade networks, coercion, and institutional settings combine to produce strong or weak states. These origins imprint themselves: states that built legitimate administrative structures and extraction capabilities tended to fare better economically in the long run.

Regime type is another central focus: how the form of government – whether more authoritarian or more democratic – correlates with both policies and outcomes. Koyama examines how democratization (or absence thereof) has consequences for public goods provision, property rights, taxation, conflict, and ultimately economic performance. He also delves into how the threat of revolution or political instability pushes states to adapt (or fail to adapt), altering political incentives in ways that matter for long-run growth.

Labor coercion appears as a recurring motif. Koyama explores how coercive labor regimes – in serfdom, slavery, forced labor, indentured servitude – functioned not merely as moral tragedies but as key variables in economic outcomes. They shaped labor supply, factor prices, migration, inequality, and the structure of agricultural and industrial sectors. The chapter outlines how cliometric studies have tried to measure the costs and persistence of such coercion, and how transitions away from coercive regimes (or their reform) have impactful economic consequences.

Warfare is another major political-economic factor. The chapter traces the dual role of war: destructive in the short-term, but often catalytic for institutional reforms. Koyama discusses how frequent wars among European states led to demands for efficient taxation, standardized administration and record-keeping, and increasingly centralized authority. Through empirical historical case studies – such as the consequences of European state conflicts, or colonial warfare – he shows how repeated conflict shaped government structures and economic outcomes. In many cases, war forced rulers to build bureaucracies or raise revenue, making them accountable in certain senses. States which succeeded in doing so tended to have better outcomes. Religion also features in interesting ways, particularly not just as belief or doctrine but as organizational structure: how religious institutions affected political legitimacy, the provision of education, social trust, the spread of ideas, and conflict. The chapter reviews cliometric studies that examine how religious fragmentation (or unity), competition among religions, or reforms in church-state relations had material economic implications – for example, in taxation, human capital accumulation, or state capacity.

State capacity – meaning the ability of states to extract resources, enforce laws, provide public goods, maintain order – is treated as a central node connecting many other variables. The narrative shows how state capacity is shaped by warfare, geography, coercion, institutional choices, fiscal systems, religion, and external pressures. Higher capacity tends to correlate with better economic performance in growth, stability, infrastructure, and investment. But Koyama is careful: state capacity also has trade-offs (acceptance by the population, legitimacy, risk of predation or over-extraction).

After establishing these thematic building blocks, the chapter proceeds to a set of detailed historical illustrations. One is the Glorious Revolution (England) and its economic consequences: how political regime change can lead to changes in property rights, fiscal systems, and legal enforcement, which in turn influence long-run economic growth. The chapter uses these episodes to show how political shocks or transitions are not just disruptions but can be foundational to institutional change.

The French Revolution is another case study. Koyama analyses how its radical change in regime altered institutions of property, taxation, church-state relations, and more, leaving legacies that altered trajectories of state capacity and economic growth in France and beyond. The empirical evidence he surveys reveals both intended and unintended consequences: some positive in pushing modernization, others negative in creating instability or inequality.

Colonialism also enters the stage. European empires are examined for how they exported or imposed particular institutions, how they shaped coercion, extraction, subsidies, infrastructure, legal frameworks, and how those legacies often survive long after political independence, influencing both positive and negative economic trajectories. The political economy lens shows that economic-development patterns under colonial rule could not be understood without considering the politics of empire: what kind of authority was exercised, how coercion was used, how taxation and administration were organized.

The rise of democracies is another focus: when, how, and why democratic institutions emerge, and what economic effects follow. The chapter reviews research on the correlation (and sometimes causal linkages) between democracy and economic outcomes: investment in public goods, legal structures, property rights, human capital, economic stability. It also highlights the political tensions involved: democratization often involves conflict, distributive demands, resistance from elites, or trade-offs in taxation versus growth.

Throughout, Koyama discusses the methodological tools political economists and cliometricians use: leveraging counterfactuals, natural experiments, panel data, institutional indices, quantitative measures of state capacity (tax revenue, bureaucracy, judicial enforcement), measuring coercion or political violence using archival sources, and combining narrative history with rigorous econometrics. These methods allow one to test hypotheses about how politics shaped economic outcomes, rather than simply assume them.

One important theme is endogeneity and feedback: political institutions both shape and are shaped by economic conditions. Economic growth may enable stronger state capacity; technological or demographic change may increase demands for better governance; conflict may weaken or strengthen institutions depending on the outcome. Koyama emphasizes that political economy is dynamic, not static: institutions evolve in response to pressures (economic, social, military) and those changes loop back into economic growth – positive, negative, or mixed.

Another interesting insight is the geography of political economy effects: how location, the physical ease (or difficulty) of control, frontier regions versus heartlands, border regions, trade routes, urban hubs, etc., affect how political power is exercised, how coercion is more or less costly, how state capacity is built. For instance, controlling remote areas required more cost; disciplining elites or enforcing laws across terrain demanded institutional mechanisms. These geographic constraints both enable and limit political-economic outcomes.

Koyama also brings attention to religious conflict or religious identity as political economy variables. These are not treated merely as cultural add-ons; rather, how religions structure legitimacy, how they compete or cooperate with states, and how they influence trust or allegiance, all have measurable economic consequences. In some studies, religious fragmentation is tied to weaker state capacity, or to slower growth; in others, religious reform bolsters education or legal norms.

Coercion and labor institutions are shown to have persistence: once systems of forced labor, serfdom, or bonded labor are established, their effects continue long after formal abolition through legacies in land distribution, inequality, cultural norms, demographic behavior, and labor market institutions. The chapter collects cliometric results showing these persistent inequalities and distortions.

The chapter does not shy away from complexity or contradiction. Some regimes built strong states through coercion and violence but failed to sustain legitimacy or long-term economic growth. Some democracies lagged because elite capture persisted, or because economic conditions or geography limited their capacity. Some religious institutions that facilitated trust and social order could also stifle innovation or be resistant to reform. Thus political economy research does not deliver monolithic verdicts but shows that regime type, institutions, coercion, and state capacity have mixed effects depending on initial conditions, geography, shocks, and policy choices.

In his concluding reflections, Koyama highlights open questions and frontiers. How exactly do coercion and voluntary institutions trade off over time? How do transitions between regime types (say, from monarchy to democracy) interact with economic shocks? What are the mechanisms by which state capacity is built in difficult terrains or in colonial contexts? How does religion interplay with state legitimacy under competition? And how might future cliometric work better integrate spatial variation, both within states and across border regions, to understand political economy more fully.

Finally, the chapter emphasizes humility: political economy is always contingent, messy, and path dependent. No single variable explains everything. Rather, the strength of this research strand lies in its capacity to combine narrative, archives, and quantitative methods; to test counterfactuals; to respect complexity; and to bring out lessons for how institutions and politics have shaped the world – but also for what that means for development policy today.

5. QUANTITATIVE ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMIC HISTORY

The Handbook of Cliometrics chapter authored by Julio Martinez-Galarraga, Javier Silvestre, and Daniel A. Tirado-Fabregat (2024), explores the ways in which the analytical framework of New Economic Geography (NEG) can be combined with the empirical reconstructions of economic history to produce a richer understanding of long-term development. The authors begin by stressing that geography has always been present, if sometimes implicitly, in historical accounts of economic change. Where goods are produced, how they are transported, where people choose to live, and how capital circulates across regions are questions that have shaped economies for centuries. Yet traditional economic history often treated these questions descriptively, without a formal framework. The arrival of New Economic Geography, pioneered by Robert Fogel and expanded in the 1990s by Krugman, Fujita, and Venables, among others, provided a set of theoretical tools that explain the spatial concentration of activity through mechanisms of increasing returns, transportation costs, and market potential. The authors argue that this framework, when integrated with cliometric reconstructions of regional production and income, opens a powerful avenue for understanding both the historical past and the contemporary challenges of development.

The narrative begins with a discussion of how economic geography sheds light on production specialization and factor mobility. In historical perspective, different regions have exhibited striking patterns of specialization: textile districts in Lancashire, steel clusters in the Ruhr, or port-based economies along the Atlantic. Such spatial differentiation was not random. It was shaped by the interplay of transport costs, proximity to markets, resource endowments, and institutional arrangements. Equally important is the mobility of capital and labor. Wage differentials between rural and urban areas, or between peripheral and central regions, spurred migrations that altered the distribution of population and reshaped the balance of production. These processes, which can be observed in the data that cliometricians have reconstructed for centuries past, gain theoretical coherence when interpreted through the lens of economic geography, which models how workers and firms respond to spatial incentives and how their collective decisions lead to agglomeration or dispersion.

From this foundation, the discussion is extended to dynamic elements, showing how the spatial economy evolves in response to technological transformations, institutional reforms, and exogenous shocks. Technological innovations such as the construction of canals, the expansion of the railway network, or the adoption of steam engines reduced transportation costs and altered the relative advantage of regions. Areas that were once peripheral could suddenly gain market access and attract industries, while previously dominant locations sometimes declined. Institutional change likewise had profound effects. The establishment of property rights, the creation of national markets through tariff reforms, and the development of infrastructure policies often determined whether regions could participate fully in the opportunities of new technologies. Shocks, weather, wars, revolutions, and border changes, also reshaped geography. The authors discuss how events such as the Napoleonic wars, the redrawing of frontiers in Eastern Europe, or the Spanish Civil War redistributed economic activity, sometimes permanently. In each case, economic geography provides a framework for understanding how these disruptions altered costs, incentives, and accessibility, thereby producing new spatial patterns of growth and decline.

The third major theme of the chapter concerns the persistent income disparities across regions. Why do some territories remain rich while others lag behind, often for centuries? The authors suggest that spatial mechanisms are central to this puzzle. Regions endowed with better market access, with the ability to exploit agglomeration economies, or with early technological advantages often reinforced their initial lead. Peripheral regions, by contrast, could be trapped in low-productivity equilibria. These dynamics, identified by economic geography, help to explain why income gaps between regions within countries like Italy, Spain, or Brazil emerged and sometimes widened during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Economic historians have long documented these divergences, but by embedding them in formal models of spatial interaction, scholars can now move beyond description to causal explanation.

The fourth part of the chapter reviews the growing literature that explicitly combines historical reconstruction with economic geography to study territorial inequality. In recent decades, researchers have assembled regional GDP series, wage data, and demographic statistics for countries across Europe and Latin America. These reconstructions, often painstakingly built from archival sources, permit comparisons over two centuries or more. When interpreted through the lens of New Economic Geography, these data reveal patterns of divergence and convergence, of clustering and dispersion, that would otherwise remain obscure. For example, Spain's regional inequality rose during the second half of the nineteenth century as industrial activity concentrated in Catalonia and the Basque Country, fueled by agglomeration economies and access to international markets. Later, in the mid-twentieth century, some degree of convergence occurred as transport costs declined further and government policies redistributed investment. Similar studies in Italy, Portugal, and Mexico show how spatial forces shaped long-run development paths, producing persistent cores and lagging peripheries. The authors argue that this marriage of cliometric data and geographical theory has opened a new frontier in economic history, one that takes space seriously as a fundamental determinant of growth.

Having surveyed these applications, the authors turn to the challenges that remain. The first is the tension between model tractability and historical realism. New Economic Geography models are elegant but often rely on simplifying assumptions: identical firms, symmetric regions, or stylized transport costs. While useful for theory, these assumptions sometimes fit poorly with messy historical realities. Historians, by contrast, are attuned to complexity, heterogeneity, and contingency. Bridging the two traditions requires careful adaptation of models, with enough structure to be analytically useful but enough flexibility to capture historical nuance. The second challenge is data limitation. For many regions, especially outside Europe, historical regional statistics are incomplete or unreliable, making calibration of geographical models difficult. Advances in digitization and archival reconstruction are helping to fill these gaps, but much work remains. A third challenge lies in identification. Observed correlations between market access and regional income may reflect reverse causality, omitted variables, or long-lasting institutional differences. To address this, scholars are increasingly using natural experiments, such as the staggered arrival of railways, or the accidental redrawing of borders, as quasi-experimental settings to isolate causal effects.

Despite these difficulties, the authors are optimistic about the future. They note that the dialogue between economic geography and economic history is already producing innovative work that deepens our understanding of how economies evolve in space and time. By applying NEG frameworks to historical episodes, researchers can test the robustness of these models across centuries and diverse contexts. Conversely, by adopting the questions of geography, historians can avoid treating space as a mere backdrop and instead analyze it as an active force in shaping outcomes. The authors conclude that integrating geography into cliometric analysis has not only enriched our knowledge of the past but also provides valuable insights for contemporary policy. Modern debates about regional inequality, infrastructure investment, or globalization echo the historical dynamics uncovered in this literature. Understanding how geography shaped the industrialization of nineteenth-century Europe, or the persistence of regional disparities in Latin America, can inform strategies for managing the spatial consequences of economic change today.

The chapter thus stands as both a synthesis and a manifesto. It synthesizes a growing body of research that marries quantitative geography with cliometric history, showing how the two disciplines complement one another. And it issues a manifesto for future work, urging scholars to continue bridging theory and empirics, history and geography, to build a more comprehensive understanding of long-run development. By doing so, the field can better answer some of the most enduring questions in economics: why prosperity clusters in certain places, why inequality persists across space, and how shocks, institutions, and technology reshape the economic map.

In the end, the narrative reveals that economic geography and economic history are not parallel paths but convergent ones. The story of development cannot be told without attention to space, and the mechanisms of geography are best understood through the long horizon of history. This convergence promises not only to illuminate the past but also to guide our understanding of the present and the future.

6. SPATIAL MODELING AND ECONOMIC HISTORY

The chapter on spatial modeling, authored by Florian Ploeckl (2024), offers a sweeping and insightful journey through the conceptual and methodological evolution of spatial analysis in economic inquiry. At its core, spatial modeling emerges as a systematic approach designed to understand how economic activity is distributed across space – from the intimate scale of villages and towns to the broad panorama of global networks – and how these configurations both reflect and shape economic processes across time and context.

The narrative begins with a lucid overview of empirical methods for identifying spatial correlation in historical and contemporary datasets. Tests of spatial randomness allow researchers to assess whether economic phenomena – such as productivity, settlement density, or industrial concentration – appear to cluster or disperse in space in ways that cannot be attributed to chance. Among the foundational tools in this toolkit are join-count statistics, which discern patterns among categorical spatial data, and Moran's I, a widely applied measure for quantifying the degree of spatial autocorrelation in continuous variables. These tests serve as the empirical gateway, revealing when and where space matters in economic outcomes.

Building upon this empirical foundation, Ploeckl turns to the evolution of spatial modeling theory, situating it within a long intellectual lineage. The exposition traces the progression from the early, foundational ideas of land use and agricultural rent articulated by von Thünen, through the formal modeling of spatial competition in Hotelling's framework, and culminating in the modern formalism of the New Economic Geography. This theoretical lineage underscores the abstract power of spatial thinking while also affirming the relevance of economic history in grounding and validating models: spatial patterns unfolding over centuries in agriculture, trade, and urban formation provide natural laboratories for testing the plausibility of theoretical spatial mechanisms.

From theory, the chapter segues to an exploration of specific modeling components integral to quantitative spatial economics. These components may encompass spatial weight matrices that codify proximity relationships – whether geographic, economic, or social – and their integration into regression frameworks, allowing for spillovers and dependencies that cross traditional boundary lines. The emphasis is on elucidating how models can be constructed to reflect realistic spatial mechanisms that have operated historically: distance-decay in trade, market access driving agglomeration, or contagion of innovation and migration across territories. In the hands of cliometricians, these tools enable the reconstruction of spatial dynamics over time and the identification of causal forces behind regional divergence and convergence.

In an especially forward-looking closing segment, the chapter ventures beyond conventional approaches to highlight cutting-edge alternatives. Ploeckl introduces spatial point processes, which model the arrangement of discrete events – such as the founding of settlements or the birthplaces of factories – as stochastic processes in continuous space. This framework allows one to ask not just where activity is concentrated, but how the very process of placement unfolds probabilistically. Similarly, network models are presented as powerful tools for capturing interconnections – such as trade routes, transport networks, or institutional linkages – whose topology influences economic outcomes in ways that can transcend mere geographic proximity. These alternative modeling approaches expand the toolkit available to economic historians, offering new ways to interpret patterns of spatial clustering, diffusion, and institutional linkages across time.

Throughout the chapter, Ploeckl implicitly champions a central ethos: that spatial modeling and economic history have much to gain from one another. Models, for all their abstraction, achieve their greatest explanatory power when tested against historical patterns – when land rent gradients, the rise of cities, or the spread of technologies across regions provide empirical analogues for theoretical constructs. Conversely, historical accounts gain analytical precision when they adopt formal models to structure inferences about space, migration, diffusion, and interaction.

Taken as a whole, the chapter unfolds as both an elegant theoretical tour and a practical methodological primer. It guides the reader from the early detection of spatial autocorrelation, through the evolution of economic geography, into the toolkit of regression-based spatial analysis, and finally onward toward innovative frontiers like point processes and network economics. In doing so, it equips the cliometric community with a powerful conceptual framework for understanding economic history's spatial dimensions, while also urging scholars to push the boundaries of modeling to better capture the richness of spatial interactions.

In drawing to a close, the narrative affirms that spatial modeling is not merely a technical sidebar in economic inquiry but a vital lens through which the geography of economic processes gains coherence, structure, and policy relevance. Whether one is interpreting the clustering of industrial towns in nineteenth-century Europe or tracing the diffusion of financial services across nineteenth-century port networks, spatial modeling offers the analytical rigor needed to illuminate the otherwise elusive patterns embedded in geography and time.

7. RAILROADS

The chapter by Jeremy Atack (2024) opens by acknowledging the powerful allure that railroads have held in historical imaginations: as transformative technology, as engines of growth, as symbols of modernity. But from the start, Atack emphasizes that while railroads were indeed important, they were not all-powerful. Their impact must be understood in context, with careful empirical measurement and a dose of nuance.

Atack traces the public discourse around railroads: in the nineteenth century, commentators and politicians often made grand claims of what railroads would do – open hitherto isolated lands, reduce costs of transport, unify regions, facilitate trade, raise land values, shift patterns of settlement. Many of these claims were excessive. It was Robert Fogel's famous work – *Railroads and American Economic Growth* – that first raised skepticism about the scale of some of those claims. Fogel's counterfactual approach asked: what would the American economy in 1890 have looked like without railroads, relying instead on canals, rivers, wagons, etc.? His conclusion was surprising: the absence of railroads would have caused delays but not an enormous collapse – only a modest reduction in welfare.

From that launching point, Atack presents more recent cliometric research which revisits and refines those early findings, often giving the railroad a somewhat larger role than Fogel originally did – but still short of the romantic hyperbole of earlier popular and scholarly accounts.

A major thread of the chapter is the measurement of transport costs and the quantification of what railroads made possible. Atack shows how scholars estimate the "social savings" of railroads – that is, the gains in economic welfare arising from lower transport costs, faster movement of goods and people, better market access, and more efficient distribution networks. These estimates typically involve comparing realized transport and trade patterns with counterfactual worlds without rail – an approach that demands data on freight rates, route networks, prices, geography, and alternative transport modes.

At the same time, Atack underscores that adjusting for quality matters. Transport improvements often came with improvements in speed, reliability, frequency, and safety – not just lower cost per ton-mile. When these quality dimensions are taken into account, the contributions of railroads tend to look more substantial than in simpler, earlier estimates that treated cost savings alone.

Another theme is that railroads had spillover and external effects beyond simply moving goods. They stimulated agglomeration. Regions that obtained railroad connections often saw increases in population, urbanization, specialization of production, and growth in markets beyond what simple transport cost reductions would predict. In many cases, railroads shifted the geography of economic opportunity: towns not on rail lines often declined relative to those with rail access. This introduced path dependence: early rail placement shaped long-run economic geography.

But, Atack also reminds us, railroads were not universally beneficial in every case or place. There were limits, and the cost of building and maintaining railroads was expensive. Sometimes government regulation or ownership created inefficiencies, and the benefits were unevenly distributed. Areas distant from lines, without complementary infrastructure, or with low population density sometimes failed to reap much benefit. Institutional, geographic, economic, and social constraints often mediated how much benefit railroads produced.

Atack devotes attention to comparative studies – across countries, time, and localities within countries. Some of these show that railroads mattered more in contexts where alternative transport was difficult or expensive (e.g. regions without good waterways or roads), or where rail opened up access to distant markets. In contrast, in places where other transport modes were already decently developed, railroads added less marginal value. These comparative results help flesh out when railroads were transformative and when they were less so.

The chapter also discusses how railroads contributed to market integration. By lowering transport costs and reducing distance penalties, they made regional price differences smaller, allowed goods to flow more freely, and reduced arbitrage gaps.

This had the effect of nationalizing markets, linking producers and consumers over greater territory. However, the integration process was uneven: sometimes railroads reduced distance decay sharply; in other cases, geography, tariffs, institutional barriers, or poor connections limited what could be done.

Atack examines empirical estimates of how much railroads contributed to overall economic growth. Drawing on multiple studies, he shows that while the contribution is not negligible – railroads lowered prices, increased market size, fostered specialization, etc. – they were not singularly decisive in many settings. Their effect must be combined with that of complementary institutions, capital accumulation, human capital, and demand growth. In other words, railroads were catalysts, not the sole engine of growth.

Atack also notes that the timing and placement of railroads mattered hugely. Which routes, and when they were built, under what financing arrangements, and under what regulatory and institutional regimes, had enduring implications. Early decisions about connectivity set in motion networks that influenced the subsequent flow of investment, population, and trade. Choices around public vs. private ownership, regulation, land grants, and subsidies also affected the efficiency and returns of railroad investments.

Atack addresses methodological evolution. He notes how earlier estimates (like Fogel's) suffered from limitations in data, simpler modeling, and less attention to non-cost dimensions of transport service. Over time, cliometricians have improved data on freight rates, timetables, network maps, speed, frequency, and service quality; used more sophisticated counterfactuals; applied geographic information systems; used panel data, difference-in-differences, network analysis, etc. These refinements allow more credible estimates of the impact of railroads across diverse settings.

In particular, some recent studies revisit Fogel's social savings estimates, often finding somewhat larger contributions to growth – especially when embracing externalities and agglomeration – but still rejecting any view that railroads alone explain growth. The chapter shows that estimates of social savings differ depending on assumptions about alternative transport (road, river, canals), elasticity of substitution, speed of movement, and geography.

Atack also examines non-economic effects: how railroads influenced settlement patterns, migration, institutional change, even social or political geography. For example, railroads altered land values and contributed to urban growth; sometimes the railroad prompted changes in local governance or enabled better integration of frontier regions. Other effects include changing labor markets (demand for labor, skill mixes) and facilitating the diffusion of ideas and innovations. But with all these changes came disruptions: displacement, unequal benefits, and sometimes environmental and social costs.

As the narrative proceeds, the chapter emphasizes that the effects of railroads are long-term, with many benefits (or costs) persisting decades after the initial investment. Rail lines themselves can become obsolete; but the spatial patterns they generated often do not fully reverse. Even after modes shift, towns that had grown with rail access often remain larger or more economically active than similar towns that missed out. In this way, railroads help explain persistent regional inequality and path dependence.

Atack also discusses how railroads interact with other historical forces, such as industrialization, technological change, demographic growth, policy systems (taxation, regulation), and institutional development. Railroads were not exogenous miracles. Rather, their effects were mediated, reinforced, or constrained by these co-factors. For example, many regions only benefited when railroads were accompanied by complementary investments in roads, port facilities, market institutions, land settlement policies, or when population growth made usage of rail feasible.

The chapter does not shy away from critical perspectives. One is that earlier enthusiasm may have overstated the "miracle railroad" idea – that once rails are laid, everything economic downstream follows automatically. Atack makes clear that expectations must be realistic, that returns on railroad investment vary greatly, and that some rail projects may yield modest returns or even losses, particularly in low-density, low-demand areas. Another caution is about counterfactuals: estimating what would have happened without the railroad is always subject to assumptions and sensitivity. Data quality, measurement error, choice of alternative transport mode, and geographic details matter a lot. These uncertainties do not invalidate results, but they limit the confidence with which we can generalize them.

Toward the end, Atack suggests future directions. He argues for more fine-grained spatial data to see within-region variation, for better measures of quality (not just speed or cost, but reliability, capacity, frequency), for more studies in non-Anglo industrializing contexts and outside the United States, for greater attention to the social and environmental costs and externalities (positive and negative), and for improved integration of GIS and network analytics. He also notes that understanding how the legacy of the railroad interacts with later transportation modes (roads, highways, air travel) is an important frontier.

Ultimately, the chapter's conclusion is balanced: railroads were a transformative force in economic history – not decisive in isolation, but foundational in enabling growth, integration, specialization, and long-run spatial structure. Their contribution is large, but conditional upon geography, institutions, demand, alternative transport modes, and supporting investments. It is a story not of inevitability, but of possibility.

8. PATH DEPENDENCE

Douglas J. Puffert's (2024) chapter, *Path Dependence*, opens by defining the term with characteristic precision: path dependence refers to a phenomenon where economic outcomes are shaped not simply by current choices or exogenous forces, but by the particular sequence of past events and decisions that preceded them. This conceptual framework demands that analysts account for the interplay between forward-looking, optimizing behaviors and the powerful legacy of historical choices, circumstances, and precedents.

As Puffert explains, path dependence arises from multiple structural mechanisms. These include technical interrelatedness, whereby components or systems are tightly coupled so that once assembled, they reinforce a particular configuration. Irreversible investments also play a role – once substantial capital is sunk into a system, altering course becomes costly. Coordination costs make deviation difficult when actors must align their actions, and various forms of increasing returns create self-reinforcing advantages that amplify small early differences into dominant outcomes.

Puffert anchors abstract ideas in tangible historical illustrations. He cites examples like the persistence of railway track gauges – why, for instance, the standard gauge of 4 ft 8½ in became dominant worldwide, not necessarily because it was optimal, but because early adoption, network effects, and compatibility entrenched it over time. Similarly, the QWERTY keyboard layout endured through history – not necessarily because it was superior, but because its early establishment created reinforcing incentives that made switching prohibitively costly.

These cases underscore a critical point: path-dependent outcomes may be inefficient by some criteria, and yet persist because the system is locked into a trajectory shaped by history's contingent events. However, Puffert tempers this insight by noting that inefficiency is not a necessary outcome of path dependence – it depends on context, counterfactuals, and the criteria used for evaluation.

Beyond defining and illustrating the concept, Puffert delves into the theoretical implications. A path-dependent system is often non-ergodic, meaning that its long-term equilibrium depends on its historical path – you cannot simply predict where it will end up based on current conditions alone. Instead, past fluctuations and choices exert a permanent influence.

This framing carries profound methodological consequences for economic explanation. Analysts must move beyond static models that treat current states as sufficient for prediction. Instead, they must reconstruct historical narratives, understand how early events gained traction, and explore multiple plausible continuations had different initial choices been made. Counterfactual thinking becomes more than hypothetical. It is essential to assess whether a locked-in outcome was inevitable, or avoidable under alternative early conditions.

The discussion also weaves in insights from other scholars. For instance, Paul A. David and W. Brian Arthur have highlighted how network effects and small early advantages can snowball into dominant market positions – or how institutions can become carriers of history, resistant to change even when change might be beneficial. Puffert acknowledges this lineage while grounding his analysis in concrete industrial-technological contexts.

In the context of institutional and technological evolution, path dependence helps explain the stubborn persistence of certain systems – even when newer alternatives would appear superior. Institutions may become sticky precisely because change carries coordination costs, entrenched interests, or the burden of sunk investments. Path dependence thus offers a lens for understanding why systemic inertia is so pervasive in economies.

Puffert's narrative also implicitly emphasizes the comparative advantage of cliometric methods in studying path dependence. By combining rigorous economic modeling with careful historical reconstruction, scholars can trace how particular configurations emerged, explore the role of early contingencies, and assess structural mechanisms behind lock-in. Rather than treating narratives as mere stories, this approach quantifies their causal significance.

As he draws toward a closing, the chapter reflects on the policy and analytical implications. Understanding path dependence is essential for addressing persistent inefficiencies or barriers to innovation. Policymakers must recognize when interventions are needed to escape entrenched suboptimal paths, and when inertia itself might buttress stability. Moreover, economists and historians must remain aware that history shapes possibility – not only explains it.

In sum, Puffert's *Path Dependence* chapter unfolds as a masterful blend of theoretical clarity, historical grounding, and methodological guidance. It confirms that economic phenomena cannot be fully understood without tracing their inherited trajectories. He argues powerfully that the past doesn't just inform the present; it conditions what is possible – and that cliometric analysis is uniquely positioned to unravel these enduring legacies.

9. REGIONAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE

Sibylle Lehmann-Hasemeyer and Fabian Wahl (2024), offer a sweeping historical panorama of how European regions and cities have evolved economically from antiquity up to the eve of World War I in 1914. They begin by emphasizing the importance of understanding territorial successes and failures over long spans of time, arguing that such knowledge can critically inform the design of more effective place-based policies today. The authors initiate their analysis with a detailed review of available data and literature, carefully guiding readers through the datasets, sources, and empirical methods that underpin historical regional and urban economic research. They highlight the methodological challenges that arise when dealing with fragmentary or unevenly collected historical data and reflect on best practices for interpreting trends that stretch across centuries – a task that requires both careful econometric techniques and deep historical contextualization.

Tracing development from ancient to modern times, they explore how demographic, institutional, and geographical factors shaped the emergence and persistence of urban centers and regions. In this light, the role of the church takes on paramount importance: ecclesiastical institutions often stimulated early urban growth, whether through pilgrimage sites, cathedral towns, or monastic economies, acting as early magnets of economic activity. As Europe moved through the medieval and early modern periods, the impact of wars, crises, epidemics, and political transformations emerges as a central theme. Lehmann-Hasemeyer and Wahl show how conflicts – such as regional wars or widespread calamities like the Black Death – caused cycles of urban retreat and renewal. Such perturbations could disrupt entire settlement networks, yet also create openings for shifts in economic geography, paving the way for new centers of growth under the right structural or institutional conditions.

A significant portion of the chapter is devoted to the analysis of institutions: demonstrating how patterns of governance, municipal privileges, guild systems, judicial autonomy, and market regulation shaped the comparative trajectories of towns and regions. These institutional legacies often outlived short-term shocks, imprinting long-lasting development paths.

Next, the authors turn to the role of trade networks – examining how connectivity between regions, access to navigable waterways, land routes, and proximity to markets influenced the economic fortunes of cities. They elucidate how certain locations flourished due to their strategic positions in trade corridors, while others languished despite locational advantages when institutional frameworks were unfavorable.

Industrialization then enters the narrative as both a culmination and a disruptive force. The chapter explores how the onset of industrial activity in particular regional clusters during the nineteenth century transformed urban hierarchies and regional economic structures. It highlights contrasting dynamics: regions that embraced industrialization, often underpinned by transportation infrastructure, labor supply, and local entrepreneurial culture, surged forward. Conversely, regions slower to industrialize sometimes found themselves marginalized. The authors show these dynamics were firmly rooted in their historical trajectories, shaped by institutional memory, human capital, and pre-existing economic structures.

As the chapter draws to a close, Lehmann-Hasemeyer and Wahl reflect on how modern cliometric researchers can continue to enhance our understanding of urban and regional dynamics. They call for richer datasets, more refined spatial econometric methods, and transdisciplinary collaboration to overcome persistent empirical challenges. Their outlook emphasizes the importance of extending studies beyond 1914, understanding long-term patterns of convergence and divergence, and assessing how historical dynamics resonate into the present. They stress that future research in historical urban and regional economics should aspire to provide insights that are not only academically illuminating but also practically relevant for crafting place-sensitive development policies in a rapidly changing world.

In sum, the chapter forms a compelling narrative: European regional and urban development has always been a complex interplay of institutional frameworks, trade flows, shocks, and technological change. Its evolution – from ecclesiastical origins through wars and market expansions to industrial transformation – reveals how deeply contingent, path-dependent, and place-specific development truly is. This richly layered historical understanding, as presented by Lehmann-Hasemeyer and Wahl, illuminates why policy interventions must be attentive to history, geography, and institutions if they are to be effective.

10. ECONOMIC-DEMOGRAPHIC INTERACTIONS

The chapter *Economic-Demographic Interactions in European long-run Growth* begins by revisiting *Malthusian theory* as the longstanding baseline for understanding preindustrial demographic economics in Europe. James Foreman-Peck (2024) shows that many of the ideas first proposed by Malthus – that productivity gains tend to lead to population increases, which then push wages down – find strong empirical support in European history. However, the chapter goes beyond blindly accepting Malthus – it probes how and when deviations from the Malthusian equilibrium occurred, what institutional or behavioral adaptations played a role, and how population interacted with economic, social, and institutional variables over long spans.

A central contribution of the text is to lay out how the *Western European Marriage Pattern* – characterized by relatively late ages at first marriage for women and high incidence of celibacy – acted as a preventive check on population growth. This delayed marriage and restriction of fertility are shown to have had important consequences: they lessened the downward pressure on wages that would otherwise accompany population increases; they bought societies more breathing space to accumulate human capital, invest in technical change, and gradually transition toward sustained growth.

Foreman-Peck traces empirical evidence that *mortality decline preceded fertility decline* in much of Europe. Over many centuries, reductions in mortality due to improvements in sanitation, nutrition, and disease control, raised life expectancy and increased returns to investments in human capital. However, in many regions, fertility remained high for a long time, so population grew, keeping wages relatively low despite gains in productivity. It is only later – mostly in the 19th century – that fertility began to decline significantly in response to social changes, such as the rising opportunity cost of children and changing family norms.

The chapter details the *transition from a Malthusian regime* (where per capita GDP or wages do not grow significantly, because gains in productivity are eaten up by population growth) toward modern sustained growth. Foreman-Peck shows how this transition unfolds unevenly across Europe: in some places the preventive checks (marriage patterns, fertility restriction) were adopted earlier; in others, natural increase (births minus deaths) remained large far longer. France is often cited as an early mover: French marital fertility began its decline in the late eighteenth century, earlier than in many other continental areas. But Foreman-Peck is careful to point out that early fertility decline did not always correspond immediately with the highest living standards – a reminder that demographic adjustment is only one among many interacting variables.

A further strand in the analysis concerns the *positive and preventive checks* that governed the Malthusian equilibrium. Negative shocks – famines, epidemics, wars – acted as positive checks, temporarily reducing population and and putting upward pressure on wages until the population rebounded. Preventive checks, by contrast, are voluntary mechanisms – marriage patterns, delay in marriage, celibacy – that moderate fertility. Foreman-Peck uses historical population, marriage, mortality, and wage data to illustrate how these checks operated in different European regions and how the balance between them shifted over time.

Another key component is migration. Foreman-Peck surveys how emigration, particularly in the 19th century, interacted with wages, population pressures, and growth. In sending countries, emigration acted as a safety valve: when population pressures compressed land or suppressed wages, emigration allowed some of that pressure to be relieved. In receiving countries, immigration had the opposite effect: adding to labor supply, it tended to reduce wages (or slow wage increases) unless offset by productivity growth or capital accumulation. The modeling of migration is shown to often be closely analogous to modeling natural population growth in its economic effects.

Foreman-Peck also discusses how *changes in mortality and fertility* were not just passive responses to economic growth but were shaped by institutional and social changes: improvements in public health, shifts in family norms, urbanization, rising returns to education – and technological progress. Human capital begins to matter more as mortality falls: when people expect to live longer, investment in childhood health and education becomes more attractive. So, mortality decline could set in motion a virtuous circle: better health, longer lives, more education, and productivity gains, which further affect both economic and demographic behavior.

The chapter makes clear that *timing and geography matter greatly*. Western Europe tended to have earlier and more sustained mortality decline, earlier fertility response, stronger marriage-pattern preventive checks. In contrast, eastern, southern, and peripheral regions lagged. These differences in timing help explain long-run divergence in living standards, wage growth, and economic development within Europe. Where preventive checks were weaker or adopted late, population grew over a longer time period under Malthusian constraints, delaying improvements in per-capita outcomes.

Foreman-Peck also engages with *cliometric modeling practice*: how formal models of demographic-economic interaction have been structured with endogenous fertility responses, human capital accumulation, emigration, and mortality shocks. He shows how these models help to clarify the mechanisms by which Europe moved from stagnation to sustained growth, while also warning about over-reliance on aggregated data – because aggregation can smooth over regional variation, mislead about timing, or mask important heterogeneity.

Empirically, the chapter emphasizes that *real wages* did not on average grow significantly until after 1800 in many European economies, after fertility and mortality adjustments had begun, and once productivity improvements could outpace population growth. In other words, improvements in living standards lagged behind improvements in productivity, and that lag was shaped by demographic responses.

Foreman-Peck also examines how *child-costs, opportunity costs, and changing returns to child-rearing* played roles in the fertility decline. As societies industrialize and urbanize, as education becomes more important and wage opportunities for women increase, the cost (both in money and time) of raising children rises (the opportunity cost). This, in turn, raises fertility costs, inducing some preventive check. The timing of when such costs become constraints vary by region, depending on how fast urbanization, schooling, female labor market participation, and social norms change.

Lastly, Foreman-Peck looks ahead: the chapter reflects on what lessons the long-run European experience holds for understanding demographic-economic interactions in other parts of the world. It suggests that the European patterns – late marriage, fertility decline following mortality decline, human capital investment, and migration – may offer templates, but not blueprints. Institutional context, initial conditions (geography, social norms, health, fertility, mortality regimes), and policy matter greatly. Broadly, the chapter's insight is that demographic transitions are deeply embedded in historical, economic, social, and institutional change.

In conclusion, *Economic-Demographic Interactions in European long-run Growth* provides a richly textured, quantitatively informed portrait of how Europe moved from a largely Malthusian regime – with population growth canceling out productivity gains – to a modern growth regime where gains in living standards became sustainable. The models, empirical evidence, and comparative geography that Foreman-Peck brings together make this chapter central for anyone interested in how population, wages, mortality, fertility, marriage behavior, migration, and human capital interact over long time spans to shape economic trajectories.

11. LIVING STANDARDS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter, authored by Leticia Arroyo Abad and Kathryn Gary (2024), opens by asserting that real wages offer an indispensable and illuminating lens through which to understand how people lived in past centuries. The authors begin with a meticulous review of the methodologies that underpin real wage estimation, recounting the intellectual and empirical history of how economists have worked to reconstruct the purchasing power of wages over time. This methodological foundation encompasses the challenges of sourcing wage data, adjusting for changing baskets of goods, and calibrating units across time and space so that comparisons are reliable.

From this conceptual groundwork, the narrative turns to the substantive historical contributions that real wages have facilitated. The authors argue that real wage trajectories have provided crucial insights into some of economic history's most profound puzzles: the onset of modern economic growth, the divergence in living standards across regions known as the Great Divergence, and the specific dynamics of colonial societies in the Americas. By tracking wage changes over centuries, researchers have been able to map not only average living conditions but also the distributional and geographical patterns of inequality in pre-industrial and early industrial societies.

Building upon examples from Europe and beyond, the chapter delineates how fluctuations in real wages corresponded to broader macroeconomic and institutional transformations. Wage stagnation or decline during periods of agrarian constraint or institutional rigidity contrasts sharply with wage surges accompanying industrial breakthroughs, urbanization, and expansions in labor demand. In colonial contexts, real wages point to the structure of extractive regimes, labor coercion, and the uneven distribution of growth in settler colonies versus extractive colonies.

Yet the authors are careful to stress that while real wages are powerful, they are imperfect. They explore the limitations and challenges inherent in estimating and interpreting them. One difficulty lies in data scarcity: wage records are often fragmented, geographically limited, or available only for certain professions – commonly artisans, laborers, or military recruits – rendering them imperfect proxies for broader populations. There is also the challenge of constructing accurate price indexes over long periods, given changes in consumption patterns, product availability, and quality adjustments. Even when wage and price data exist, constructing comparable baskets across time and regions demands careful judgment and transparency in methodology.

Moreover, real wage indicators may understate or misrepresent well-being when wages are supplemented by in-kind payments – such as housing, food, or clothing – or when non-labor income sources are significant for family welfare. The authors caution that while real wages are a valuable tool, they must be interpreted in the context of broader indicators – such as mortality, nutrition, consumption, and labor conditions – to yield a fuller picture of historical living standards.

Despite these caveats, the chapter demonstrates how real wage evidence has shaped our understanding of long-run economic trends. It brings to light why Europe grew richer faster than many other parts of the world – not only because of productivity but also because wage gains enabled better nutrition, longer life spans, and investments in human capital, which reinforced growth in a virtuous cycle. In the Americas, real wage series highlight the stark differences between societies where labor was abundant but depressed by coercion, and those where free labor markets could generate gradual improvements in worker well-being.

As the narrative unfolds, the authors remind us that living standards are an inherently multi-dimensional concept. Real wages capture only one facet. To understand historical well - being comprehensively, scholars must integrate multiple strands: demographic measures like height and life expectancy, indicators of inequality such as wage dispersion or land inequality, and qualitative evidence from narratives, diaries, or social investigations that bring texture to statistical reconstructions.

In closing, Arroyo Abad and Gary affirm that real wages remain a "window to the past" precisely because they embody the everyday lived experience of ordinary people – what they could afford, how they adjusted consumption, and the extent to which productivity gains translated into improvements in material welfare. But this window must be framed carefully, guided by methodological rigor and historical awareness, so as to avoid misleading readings of poverty or progress. Real wages offer clarity – but only when paired with nuance.

Altogether, the chapter unfolds as a masterful blend of econometric method, historical synthesis, and critical reflection. It underscores that reconstructing living standards across centuries is both an empirical challenge and a narrative imperative if economic historians seek to illuminate the human consequences of growth, divergence, and institutional change. The result is a compelling invitation for cliometricians to view real wages not just as data points, but as bridges across time that connect economic transformations with the lives they transformed.

12. WEALTH AND INCOME INEQUALITY IN THE LONG RUN OF HISTORY

The chapter by Guido Alfani (2024) explores wealth and income inequality over the long run, focusing on Western Europe and North America, and reveals that inequality has generally increased over centuries, interrupted only by episodic leveling events such as pandemics or wars. Alfani challenges the classical Kuznets hypothesis by showing that inequality growth often predates industrialization, and that structural growth alone does not automatically reduce disparities. Complementing this longue durée perspective, Maurice Catin (2024) provides in *Région et Développement* an analysis of *regional inequalities through a regional Kuznets curve*, highlighting four stages of development: (i) a pre-industrial phase with low income and limited urbanization; (ii) a take-off phase where economic growth and urbanization drive spatial concentration and rising regional disparities; (iii) a phase of partial redistribution and productive redeployment that mitigates initial polarization; and (iv) a stabilization or reduction of disparities, supported by the diffusion of knowledge externalities and public policies. Empirical studies confirm the relevance of this curve while also showing that phenomena such as metropolization, development traps, or country-specific institutional frameworks can modify its trajectory. Together, these perspectives suggest that both long-term structural forces and episodic shocks must be considered to understand contemporary inequality dynamics and regional divergence.

In the *Handbook of Cliometrics*, Alfani begins by recasting our understanding of long-run historical inequality, noting that recent research now offers striking longitudinal reconstructions stretching from the late Middle Ages to the present – and in some cases allows glimpses even earlier. These reconstructions reveal a persistent trend: inequality in both income and wealth has generally increased over centuries, punctuated not by smooth transitions but by rare episodes of dramatic compression tied to catastrophic events such as the Black Death of the 14th century or the world wars of the 20th century.

Alfani challenges the long-standing appeal of the Kuznets Curve – the notion that inequality rises during early development and then falls as economies mature. Drawing on a wealth of historical data, he argues that inequality growth predates industrialization and economic expansion. In many cases, inequality rose even when growth was stagnant, thus undermining Kuznets's hypothesis that structural growth alone would eventually reduce inequality.

Instead, Alfani emphasizes the role of episodic leveling forces – events that abruptly reshape inequality trajectories. The Black Death's demographic collapse reduced wealth and income inequality in the centuries that followed. Similarly, the concentrated destruction of physical and financial capital in the two world wars, accompanied by inflation and high taxation, led to profound reductions in wealth concentration across many societies. For example, in wartime Europe, the wiping out of rich dynasties' wealth vastly outpaced losses suffered by the broader population, disrupting the entrenched accumulation of capital and narrowing inequality.

When such cataclysms recede, inequality tends to rise again – often gradually and subject to prevailing institutions and socio-economic frameworks. Alfani traces how, after the mid-twentieth-century leveling, inequality began climbing anew in many Western countries – a trend that has reasserted itself since the 1970s.

Beyond shocks, Alfani explores other enduring drivers of inequality, pointing to demographic dynamics. Differences in population growth and capital accumulation shape wealth-to-income ratios over the long run. A standard relationship arises from the savings rate and growth rate – if growth slows while savings remain strong, capital accumulates and inequality intensifies. He also highlights the roles of taxation, institutional choices, and agency over centuries, noting how fiscal regimes, land inheritance rules, market access, and political orders have shaped the distribution of assets across time.

To frame the modern context, Alfani underscores how this longue durée perspective reshapes our interpretation of contemporary inequality. What may appear as alarming or exceptional today is part of a broader pattern of inequality's persistence, with only episodic reprieves from its upward trajectory. Recognizing the deep-rooted, structural nature of inequality challenges simplistic development narratives and calls for policies attentive to both long-run momentum and transformative episodes.

Throughout this narrative, Alfani's chapter functions as both synthesis and reinterpretation. It synthesizes vast historical evidence, presenting chronological arcs that stretch from medieval inequality to modern-day concentration. It also reinterprets the meaning of economic inequality, revealing it as a feature of institutional legacies, demographic shifts, and path-dependent trajectories – not merely a byproduct of industrial growth or modernization.

In closing, Alfani's chapter invites readers to move beyond conventional periodizations of inequality and embrace a more nuanced framework – one that sees inequality as a historically entrenched phenomenon, eased only under extraordinary circumstances, but relentlessly revived in their absence. This perspective lays the foundation for both more grounded historical analysis and more informed contemporary policy-making.

13. HISTORICAL DATASETS

Historical Datasets, authored by Leonardo Ridolfi (2024), opens with an unwavering assertion: datasets are foundational to empirical research, serving not simply as repositories of numbers, but as the testing grounds where hypotheses meet reality. Ridolfi immediately situates his discussion within the realm of historical datasets – those that reach into the past, reconstructing the economic world of earlier centuries and enabling scholars to connect ideas about economic behavior and institutional change with concrete evidence.

From the outset, Ridolfi emphasizes that constructing a historical dataset is not a mere act of digitization. Instead, the process entails deliberate stages of identification, where scholars scan archives for potential data; extraction, in which they carefully pull out usable information; and synthesis, when disparate fragments are brought together into coherent series or panels. Each step carries methodological challenges: documents may be fragmentary, inconsistently formatted, or biased in selection. Picking which sources to include and reconciling disparate formats require both technical skill and judgment.

A central theme is the quantity–quality trade-off. Historical data often confront researchers with a stark choice: prioritize breadth – such as extending the time horizon or geographic coverage – or pursue depth – seeking more precise, detailed, and accurate measurements. Ridolfi illuminates this tension, showing how long series of weekly prices or wages may come at the expense of fine granularity in sample representativeness. The temptation to maximize both throws researchers into a methodological quandary, one that calls for transparent decision-making about what is sacrificed and what is gained when compiling a dataset.

Beyond general issues, Ridolfi focuses on how these dynamics apply to wage datasets, which have played a starring role in many debates in economic history. He traces how wage series evolved from simple records of nominal earnings to refined constructs of real wage indices that adjust for price changes and consumption baskets. This transformation did not occur automatically; it reflects progressive technical advancements, improved source coverage, and an increasingly sophisticated understanding of what wages tell us about living standards.

In particular, Ridolfi observes that early wage datasets often depended on a limited set of industries, such as textiles, laborers, or soldiers, thus raising concerns about representativeness. Over time, researchers broadened the occupational base and refined price indices to capture shifts in consumption patterns. These improvements deepen the dataset’s historical interpretability: a wage index in 1500 may not be strictly comparable to one in 1800 – but through thoughtful construction, it can speak meaningfully across time.

A compelling dimension of Ridolfi’s narrative is how technical progress has shaped data quality. The advent of statistical bureaus, systematic record-keeping, and digital archiving has enabled scholars to overcome earlier limitations. Yet, historical researchers must remain vigilant: not all improvements in methodology correspond to deeper insight; sometimes they merely give the illusion of precision. A more fine-grained price index may appear superior – but only when it actually reflects consumption changes, not methodological artifacts.

Ridolfi invites reflection on how data construction interacts with scholarly goals. Are we interested in capturing change over time, in which case comparability matters most? Or are we seeking cross-sectional accuracy at a given date? The answer influences the design of the dataset. For instance, measuring real wages at two distinct points may justify using different price baskets appropriate to each time, whereas tracing a trend requires a consistent deflator across the series.

Throughout the chapter, he embeds his methodological discussion into broader reflections on economic history debates. Wage datasets, for instance, have shaped conversations about living standards, industrialization, inequality, and human capital development. When these datasets are carefully assembled, they become powerful tools; when poorly constructed, they risk misleading interpretations. Ridolfi thus positions dataset construction not as passive labor but as a moment of scholarly theory-making: what we choose to include, how we measure variables, what gaps we tolerate. All of these reflect theoretical and empirical priorities.

He also revisits the selectivity and bias problems endemic to historical data. Certain occupations or regions were more likely to be recorded; literate or formal-sector workers appear more often than the rural poor. Documents may omit women entirely. Data survivorship bias means that some records survived by chance, while others were lost. These distortions accumulate and shape the narratives that datasets support. Ridolfi exhorts researchers to probe the sources: Who recorded these wages? Under what administrative regime? For what purpose? The answers matter to interpretation.

Another layer of his analysis concerns how researchers contextualize datasets. Historical data cannot speak for themselves – they require careful annotation and explanation. A data point is more valuable when the researcher explains the institutional, demographic, or economic context in which it was generated. This builds bridges between numbers and narrative, making datasets living scholarly artifacts, not cold archives.

As the chapter draws toward its close, Ridolfi reflects on the future of historical datasets. He sees promise in digitization, crowd-sourcing transcription, linked records, and new computational techniques that can process large amounts of data. But he insists that these tools must be wielded reflectively – mechanical processing cannot substitute for critical historical judgment.

In sum, "Historical Datasets" stands as both a methodological manifesto and a reflective meditation. We are reminded that behind every data series lies a series of choices – and that the validity of historical inference rests on the transparency, rigor, and context of these choices. For the cliometrician, mastering data construction is not merely technical, it is also philosophical, theoretical, and profoundly historical.

14. DECOLONIZING WITH DATA

Johan Fourie and Nonso Obikili (2024), open this chapter with a bold declaration: our understanding of Africa's economic past – from the nature of pre-colonial polities, the immense human tragedy of the slave trade, the dynamics of state formation, the Scramble for Africa, European settlement patterns, up to hard-won independence – is being radically enriched today. This transformation, they argue, stems from what many have dubbed a cliometric renaissance – a vigorous resurgence of quantitative economic history in Africa that overturns outdated, often Eurocentric narratives. By leveraging systematic data analysis, historians and economists are reframing the continent's long-run trajectories with newfound clarity and critical insight.

Fourie and Obikili carefully acknowledge that cliometrics has not sprung up in a vacuum. The technique has historical roots – practitioners across Africa have long utilized quantitative tools. Yet what is new is the sheer scale and methodological ambition of recent efforts. They note that scholars are now constructing large-scale datasets, applying sophisticated econometric techniques, and engaging in comparative work that crosses regions and eras in Africa as never before.

To structure this sweeping transformation, the authors divide the chapter into four broad thematic strands, each illuminating a critical area of African economic history through the lens of cliometrics: persistence of deep traits, slavery, colonialism, and independence. Each theme highlights how quantitative analysis brings nuance to longstanding debates.

In exploring the persistence of deep traits, the authors discuss how enduring geographical, environmental, and institutional factors continue to shape African development. They argue that cliometric research brings empirical weight to theories about these deep-rooted determinants, revealing how historical foundations echo across centuries.

The theme of slavery showcases the power of data in uncovering the long-term consequences of this brutal institution. Quantitative studies reconstruct the demographic, economic, and social legacies of the slave trades – highlighting the enduring effects on trust, human capital formation, and structural inequality. Cliometric evidence opens a window into how societies were altered long after chains were broken.

Turning to colonialism, the chapter demonstrates how data-driven analysis unveils the economic structure and consequences of colonial rule. Researchers have mapped revenue extraction, infrastructure patterns, and labor regimes, uncovering how colonial institutions – often designed for extraction – left durable imprints on post-independence trajectories. These findings underscore how power, policy, and uneven integration shaped economic foundations.

In the final theme, independence, Fourie and Obikili reflect on how metrics and measurement have enabled scholars to track the economic paths African countries embarked upon after decolonization. Using wage series, income data, trade records, and human capital indicators, cliometricians are now quantifying the successes and failures of independence-era policies and institutions, and disentangling choices from conditions.

An important self-reflective coda to the chapter is a bibliometric exercise. Here, the authors reveal a sobering insight: despite the methodological advances and burgeoning interest, African scholars remain underrepresented at the frontier of cliometric research focusing on their own continent. This imbalance signals deeper structural challenges. Access to data, training, funding, and scholarly networks must be addressed.

Throughout the narrative, Fourie and Obikili emphasize the political and epistemological importance of "decolonizing with data." It's not simply about more numbers – but about reshaping historical narratives from perspectives rooted in the continent's experiences, led by its scholars, and attentive to complexity rather than simplification. This shift challenges entrenched academic hierarchies and invites more inclusive, collaborative historical scholarship.

Ultimately, the chapter stands as a manifesto for African cliometrics, celebrating its progress, spotlighting its blind spots, and charting a path toward more representative, rigorous, and transformative historical economics. By weaving data, decolonization, and dialogue, Fourie and Obikili show that cliometrics can do more than reconstruct the past – it can recast it.

15. INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Markus Lampe and Paul Sharp (2024), begin this chapter with the recognition that international trade has been a central driver – and mirror – of economic development across the centuries. Yet, the relationship between trade, openness, and growth is far from straightforward; both economic theory and empirical studies reveal rich and often contradictory experiences across contexts and epochs.

Lampe and Sharp open by considering why trade merits rigorous cliometric attention. Theory offers no silver bullet: classical models of comparative advantage, newer frameworks of monopolistic competition, and gravity-based approaches each suggest different pathways by which trade may affect growth – or be shaped by it. What emerges consistently is the diversity of historical experiences rather than universal laws.

With that foundation, the chapter turns to the question of measurement – how do we quantify trade and market integration in historical settings? The authors detail the importance of customs records as primary sources of trade volumes, acknowledging their advantages and limitations – partial coverage, misreporting, or inconsistent definitions across time periods. Market integration, by contrast, often relies on spatially dispersed price data; convergence in prices across regions signals reduced trade costs and deeper interdependence.

The authors then take us another step back to examine the determinants of trade. Here, they highlight the gravity equation, the most widely used empirical framework for analyzing bilateral trade flows. In its simplest form, the gravity model relates trade volumes between two entities to their economic mass and distance – much like Newton's law of gravitation. Lampe and Sharp emphasize that this framework enables historical researchers to test what factors – market size, distance, shared borders, linguistic or institutional affinity – drove trade expansion or contraction over time.

They explore how key episodes, such as the rise of the Cobden-Chevalier bilateral tariff network in the mid-19th century, can be modeled and understood using thoughtfully constructed gravity-style data. These exercises reveal how trade networks expanded under certain institutional arrangements and contracted under others.

A particularly policy-relevant section is devoted to trade policy itself. Measuring trade policy in long-run historical settings is notoriously complex. Tariffs, quotas, and trade agreements were often patchy, time-varying, and politically contingent. The authors discuss attempts to quantify these through average tariff series, treaty networks, or tariff schedules, but caution that such measures are a simplification of fluid policy realities.

Throughout the chapter, Lampe and Sharp emphasize the interplay between theory, measurement, and historical context. For example, they point out that while gravity models can capture structural trade determinants, they must be interpreted within the broader institutional and infrastructural landscapes: railways, shipping costs, colonial links, and wars all reshaped trade in ways that models alone cannot fully capture.

What emerges is a narrative of heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. The effect of trade on growth (or vice versa) varied across countries and time. In some periods and regions, trade openness correlated with growth; in others, the connection was weak or even adverse, depending on political institutions, economic structures, and prevailing global conditions.

To conclude, Lampe and Sharp reflect on the promise and limits of cliometric methods applied to international trade. They stress that while cliometrics brings rigor and quantitative clarity, it must be deployed with historical sensitivity. Data series must be carefully constructed and interpreted, models must be contextualized, and results cannot substitute for narrative nuance. Yet the rewards of such integration – seeing how trade evolved, how markets integrated or fragmented, and how policy shaped that evolution – are substantial.

In sum, the chapter offers a sweeping cliometric survey of international trade, tracing its theoretical foundations, measurement challenges, empirical determinants, and policy dimensions. It urges readers to appreciate the richness, complexity, and context-dependence of trade's historical trajectories, while demonstrating how theory-driven quantitative analysis can sharpen our understanding of those trajectories when applied with care and insight.

16. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

The chapter, authored by Timothy J. Hatton and Zachary Ward (2024), opens with an evocative framing of what economic historians have long called the "Age of Mass Migration." Between 1850 and 1913, the transatlantic migration of peoples from Europe to the Americas reached unprecedented heights, reshaping economies, societies, and entire continents. Hatton and Ward immediately engage readers by recognizing not only the scale of this movement but the enduring fascination it holds – and convey that many foundational ideas about why – and how – such migrations occurred are still being reexamined in light of new data and methods.

After setting this stage, the chapter proceeds in a logically structured arc, covering four central themes that lie at the heart of cliometric inquiry: the determinants of mass migration, the development of immigration policy, selection and assimilation of migrants, and the economic effects and enduring legacy of this migration wave.

First, Hatton and Ward analyze the economic incentives that propelled migration. They revisit and refine traditional explanations rooted in wage differentials, population pressure, and labor market arbitrage. Drawing upon the *Roy model*, they explain how migration flows were shaped by skill selectivity – positively selected from some European regions, negatively selected from others – depending on relative income distributions and returns to skill across sending and receiving economies. This nuanced perspective replaces simplistic assumptions with a more structured, empirical understanding of who moved and why.

Next, the chapter scrutinizes the evolution of immigration policy in the New World. Moving away from portrayals of the period as entirely open and welcoming, Hatton and Ward detail how liberal entry regimes gradually gave way to restrictions, especially as labor markets and political pressures responded to the economic and social impacts of migration. These shifts, they argue, anticipate the broader backlash against globalization and help to explain the tightening of borders in the early twentieth century.

The third theme turns to the assimilation and integration of migrants. From labor markets to local communities, Hatton and Ward explore how the skills, backgrounds, and networks of migrants influenced their outcomes in the New World. Cliometric methods offer powerful insights here: by combining census data, passenger records, and occupational indicators, researchers have reconstructed how newcomers were selected, where they settled, and how they fared economically – and how their presence transformed labor markets in both origin and destination regions.

The fourth theme considers the economic consequences of mass migration and its enduring legacy. Drawing on comprehensive cliometric research, the chapter shows how migration contributed to factor price convergence between Europe and the Americas, ironing out long-standing disparities in wages and living standards. This convergence, however, was not mechanical; it was the product of integrated commodity, labor, and capital markets that migration helped to forge. Moreover, the chapter demonstrates that migration supported growth by alleviating labor shortages in the New World and by reducing Malthusian pressures in Europe – a dynamic that underpinned the first wave of globalization's prosperity.

As the narrative unfolds, Hatton and Ward emphasize how methodological advances and richer datasets have reshaped orthodox thinking. Historical records, combined with modern econometric models, allow scholars to challenge simplifying narratives – revealing, for instance, how migration was not uniformly beneficial for all involved populations, or how policy and economic responses varied across places and periods. They stress that, while the broad story of mass migration remains central to economic history, many of the details concerning who moved, under what conditions, and with what consequences, are now being refined.

The authors remains candid about unresolved questions. They acknowledge that debates persist over the extent and mechanisms of migrant assimilation, the long-term feedback effects on sending economies, and the cultural as well as economic dimensions of integration. They extend an open invitation, typical of cliometric scholarship, for continued research – urging scholars to harness new sources, mixed methods, and interdisciplinary collaboration to deepen our understanding.

This chapter delivers both a sweeping account of one of history's defining migratory epochs and a reflective, methodologically grounded reconsideration of how we study it. It encapsulates the power of cliometric analysis to interrogate foundational economic phenomena with precision and nuance – revealing migration not as a monolithic story of movement, but as a complex web of incentives, policies, selections, and outcomes that span continents and lifetimes.

CONCLUSION

Looking back over the journey we have undertaken in this article, it is impossible not to be struck by the intellectual resonance between the vocation of *Région et Développement* and the spirit of cliometric inquiry. Both approaches, each in their own way, refuse to accept surface explanations and instead insist on contextualization, rigor, and a long-term perspective. The journal has consistently placed spatial and territorial dynamics at the heart of its agenda, while cliometrics has brought to light the deep historical forces that underlie present-day inequalities and opportunities. Brought together, they reveal that the geography of development cannot be understood without history, just as historical analysis gains relevance when connected to spatial patterns of inequality and integration.

The chapters we have revisited underscore a lesson that speaks directly to the ethos of this journal: territories do not evolve in isolation, but within vast historical, economic, and institutional trajectories. These trajectories are often path-dependent, shaped by shocks and choices that continue to echo across generations. To analyze them requires the patience of the historian, the precision of the statistician, and the curiosity of the economist – an interdisciplinary ambition that *Région et Développement* has exemplified for three decades.

Yet it is with humility that we must also acknowledge how much remains to be done. The cliometric tradition teaches us that every dataset is incomplete, every interpretation provisional, and every conclusion an invitation to further investigation. In this sense, our anniversary reflection is not a closing word but an opening one: a call for sustained dialogue between quantitative economic history and spatial development studies, so that future research may continue to refine, challenge, and enrich our understanding of territorial dynamics.

As the journal moves into its fourth decade, the convergence of cliometric methods and regional analysis offers fertile ground for addressing the pressing questions of our time: the persistence of inequality, the consequences of globalization and deglobalization, the long-run effects of institutional reforms, and the resilience of territories facing demographic, technological, and ecological transformations. These are challenges that defy short-term answers, demanding instead the kind of temporal depth and spatial sensitivity that both cliometrics and *Région et Développement* can uniquely provide.

If there is one overarching message from our reflection, it is that the past and the present are inseparable in the study of development. History does not dictate the future, but it conditions the possibilities within which choices are made. By recognizing this, scholars and policymakers alike can craft strategies that are not only empirically grounded but also historically informed and spatially nuanced.

In honoring thirty years of *Région et Développement*, we thus celebrate not just a journal, but a scientific community committed to rigorous, relevant, and forward-looking research. It is our hope that this dialogue with cliometrics will help extend that tradition, offering a deeper sense of time to spatial economics and a sharper sense of place to economic history. Between continuity and renewal, between analytical precision and societal engagement, lies the path that the journal has traced – and to which we now, with gratitude and modest ambition, add our own contribution.

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Espace et développement à la croisée des chemins : regards cliométriques

Résumé - Cet article célèbre le trentième anniversaire de Région et Développement en revisitant le dialogue que la revue a su entretenir entre économie du développement et économie spatiale. Nous inscrivons notre contribution dans cette tradition en mobilisant une sélection de chapitres issus du Handbook of Cliometrics, afin de montrer comment les perspectives historiques de long terme peuvent éclairer les dynamiques spatiales et territoriales contemporaines. Dans le prolongement de la contribution de Diebolt et Hippe publiée dans Région et Développement, nous étendons leur approche cliométrique pour examiner la persistance des disparités, le rôle des institutions et l'impact des interventions publiques. Notre analyse souligne que le développement territorial doit être compris dans le cadre de trajectoires économiques de long terme façonnées par les forces démographiques, les chocs et les innovations. Nous soutenons que des approches ancrées dans l'histoire sont essentielles à la conception de politiques efficaces visant à réduire les inégalités régionales. En articulant les apports de la cliométrie et de l'économie régionale, notre contribution illustre la valeur d'un rapprochement entre causalité historique et analyse spatiale. Ce faisant, elle réaffirme la mission de la revue : allier rigueur analytique et pertinence pour les grands débats de société.

Mots-Clés

Développement régional
Cliométrie
Disparités territoriales
Institutions et politiques publiques
Dynamiques historiques de long terme