

Anne Sofie Beck Knudsen

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Education

- 2018 University of Copenhagen
PhD in Economics
Advisor: Carl-Johan Dalgaard
Evaluation Committee: Sascha Becker, Uwe Sunde, Jeanet Bentzen
Fall 2015: Visiting Fulbright Scholar, Department of Economics, Brown University
Maternity leave 06/17-06/18, 11 months
- 2014 University of Copenhagen
MSc Economics
- 2013 London School of Economics & Political Science
MSc International Political Economy
- 2012 University of Copenhagen
BSc Economics

Academic Positions

- 2019- Harvard University, Department of Economics
Postdoctoral Fellow
- 2019- Lund University, Department of Economic History
Postdoctoral Fellow (on leave)

Research Fields

Economic History, Political Economy, Development Economics

References

Prof. Carl-Johan Lars Dalgaard
University of Copenhagen
carl.johan.dalgaard@econ.ku.dk

Prof. Sascha Becker
Monash University
sascha.becker@monash.edu

Prof. Nathan Nunn
Harvard University
nnunn@fass.harvard.edu

Awards and Honors

- 2020 Winner, Ester Boserup Thesis Prize, Copenhagen Centre for Development Research
- 2019 Finalist (one of three), Alexander Gerschenkron Prize for the best dissertation in non-US or Canadian Economic History, Economic History Association
- 2019 Finalist (one of five), Denmark's National Ph.D. Competition ("Ph.d. Cup")
- 2019 Carlsberg Foundation International Postdoc Stipend for independent research
- 2019 Lund University Postdoc Fellowship for independent research
- 2015 Fulbright Scholarship for research at Brown University
- 2015 Various travel grants from Danish foundations (totaling 15,000 USD)
- 2012 Mikael Kristiansen Full-Tuition Scholarship for MSc studies at London School of Economics

Seminar and Conference Presentations

- 2020 University of Copenhagen, California Institute of Technology, Economics of Migration Virtual Seminar, Bristol University, Harvard University, Berlin Colloquium in Economic History (scheduled), Boston University (scheduled), ASREC conference (scheduled)
- 2019 NBER Summer Institute (Political Economy), Stanford University Economic History Seminar, UC Davis Economic History Seminar, Brown University Macro Lunch, Harvard Economic History Lunch
- 2017 EHS Annual Conference at Royal Holloway, ASREC in Boston
- 2016 Harvard Economic History Lunch, ASREC in Copenhagen, Zeuthen Workshop in Copenhagen, HEDGE Young Scholar Workshop at University of Southern Denmark, University of Copenhagen MEHR Seminar
- 2015 NEUDC at Brown University, LACEA Annual Meeting in Bolivia, Brown University Macro Lunch, World Economic History Congress in Kyoto, Warwick Summer Workshop in Economic Growth, University of Copenhagen MEHR Seminar

Selected Dissemination of Research

International: The Economist, Slate Magazine, Financial Times, Nada Es Gratis
Scandinavian: Weekendavisen, Information, Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Minervaposten

Professional Activities

Referee: *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, *Journal of Economic Growth*, *Journal of Economic History*

Teaching

- Spring 2019 SASE11: Economic Change, Labor Market and the Population (undergraduate), Lund University Economic History
- Spring 2015 AGDK14005U: Economic Growth and Inequality (graduate), University of Copenhagen (ta, but helped construct course from scratch incl. learning objectives, curriculum, and teaching methods)
- Spring 2014 Principles of Economics II (undergraduate), University of Copenhagen (ta)

Research Papers

“Those Who Stayed: Selection and Cultural Change during the Age of Mass Migration”

Abstract: This paper studies the cultural causes and consequences of mass emigration from Scandinavia in the 19th century. I test the hypothesis that people with individualistic traits were more likely to emigrate, because they faced lower costs of leaving established social networks behind. Data from population censuses and passenger lists confirm this hypothesis. Children who grew up in households with nonconformist naming practices, nuclear family structures, and weak ties to parents' birthplaces were on average more likely to emigrate later in life. Selection was weaker under circumstances that reduced the social costs of emigration. This was the case with larger migration networks abroad, and in situations where people emigrated collectively. Based on these findings, I expect emigration to generate cultural change towards reduced individualism in migrant-sending locations, through a combination of initial compositional effects and intergenerational cultural transmission. This is confirmed in a cross-district setting with measures of actual cultural change over the medium and long run.

“Urban-Rural Differences in Cultural Transmission” (draft available upon request)

Abstract: This paper studies the intergenerational transmission of cultural traits across two million families in historical population censuses from Sweden and Norway in the period 1865-1910. The cultural traits of focus are collectivism and religiosity, which I proxy with the commonness and Biblical content of first names. With this data, I study the relative importance of family and community in shaping cultural traits. I relate a changing nature of cultural transmission to one of the most general aspects of a developing economy: Urbanization. I find that family matters more and community less in the transmission of culture in urban versus rural municipalities. This result remains true when exploiting within-municipality changes in urban status over time. Exploring mechanisms, I find that assortative matching between parents with similar cultural traits is particularly strong in urban areas. Larger and culturally more diverse marriage markets in cities relieve constraints on finding a culturally similar match, facilitating a more efficient transmission of own traits.

“The Bounty of the Sea and Long-Run Development” (with Carl-Johan Dalgaard and Pablo Selaya, University of Copenhagen)

Abstract: We document that a high level of natural productivity of the ocean – a rich bounty of the sea – has had a persistently positive impact on economic development: societies inhabited by people who descend from regions with eco-climatic conditions supporting a highly productive ocean are more prosperous today. We argue that an explanation is that a rich bounty of the sea facilitated early coastal settlements, which ultimately created a pre-industrial occupational structure that benefited long term economic development. Specifically, we propose that societies that were more coastally oriented during the pre-industrial era were characterized by a less agrarian occupational structure, and thereby gained more experience in non-agricultural production. In the long run, this produced capabilities that were complementary to industrialization, and allowed for an early take-off to growth.

Research in Progress

“City growth: The Role of Selective In-Migration” (with Carl-Johan Dalgaard, University of Copenhagen, and Kerstin Enflo, Lund University)

Abstract: This paper studies the drivers of city growth in 19th century Sweden. We propose that selective rural-to-urban migration of people with individualistic cultural traits created an environment in cities that favored economic growth. This proposition is based on two findings from the literature. First, people with individualistic traits place a lower value on belonging to specific social groups and are hence more geographically mobile (Knudsen, 2019). Second, individualism has been associated with economic growth due to its emphasis of individual achievement and wider scope of cooperation (Gorodnichenko and Roland, 2011; Fogli and Veldkamp, 2019, Enke 2019). In the empirical analysis, we use an expansion of the Swedish railroad network in 1855-1870 as an exogenous shock to transportation costs. With data on city populations and full-count population censuses, we find that railroads generated stronger population growth in cities surrounded by municipalities with stronger individualistic cultural traits. We find evidence of individualistic selection into railroad towns, with selection being stronger with longer migration distances. Railroad cities thus attracted people of certain cultural characteristics, shaping cultural differences both within urban locations and between urban and rural areas. Next steps are to study the occupation choice of people with different cultural traits in order to understand if culture played a role in subsequent economic development.

“Dangers at Sea and Religiosity in Maritime Societies” (with Jeanet Bentzen and Gustav Angeman, University of Copenhagen)

Abstract: Religious beliefs influence individual behavior in many settings. But why are some societies more religious than others? This paper tests a prominent hypothesis from anthropology by Malinowski (1945) that fishing societies exposed to varying degrees of danger differ systematically in their superstitious and religious beliefs. We construct an exogenous measure of dangers at sea with information on wave heights across the globe, and we combine this with oceanographic measures on marine resource abundance from Dalgaard et al. (2017). With data on pre-modern societies from the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample, we find that a reliance on fishing in dangerous waters is associated with a stronger prevalence of rituals. In next steps, we will expand the measure of ethnic rituals to the rest of the Ethnographic Atlas based on the original ethnographies. We will further explore the link to religiosity in contemporary survey data (the World Values Survey and the European Values Study).

“Imitation, Mobility, and Inequality: Evidence from the Second Industrial Revolution”

Abstract: This paper studies the role of cultural learning and imitation in the spread of economic opportunity in the Industrial Revolution. I do so in the context of Norway, which experienced rapid industrialization in the later half of the 19th century. I collect individual level data from full-count population censuses and link them to municipality specific occupational income scores from Modalsli (2018). To detect social influences, I study the diffusion of trends in first names among different groups in the population. I find that names chosen by economically more successful families experience a subsequent increase in popularity among other people in society. This holds both within and across socioeconomic classes. The extend of cross-class imitation is weaker in municipalities characterized by higher economic inequality, suggesting either a lack of interaction between different groups or reduced payoffs to imitation. Similarly, I find that individuals who were given names from higher classes were more likely to experience upward economic mobility. In future steps, I will test to what extend these results are driven by segregation, using information on addresses from the census records. I will also link the prevalence of cultural learning to changes in actual behavior such as fertility and marriage. Finally, I will explore sources of exogenous variation in the exposure to different groups of people in society.