

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20059]

Proposed title of the session

The Maddison Project: measuring economic performance across time and space.

Abstract

Angus Maddison's life work on the measurement of GDP and population in the world economy between Roman times and the present was not only an unprecedented achievement, but also produced a service that was of great value to the community of economists and economic historians. The Maddison Project was established with the aim of continuing this work by creating new generations of estimates of GDP, population, and GDP per capita in the world economy which integrate the state of the art of current research in the field.

In January 2013, the Maddison Project has launched its first update: <http://www.ggd.net/maddison/maddison-project/home.htm>. This second generation of statistics focussed mainly on improving the quality of the pre-1820 series.

The project now finds itself in a new phase where it's time to direct attention towards two important new topics which will be discussed at the XVIIth World Economic History Congress. The first is how to integrate the new rounds of purchasing power parities (PPP's) in international comparisons. The second is to move beyond the relatively well-developed European series in the original Maddison dataset and concentrate on improving our estimates of the diverse development paths experienced by countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa over the long run.

With respect to the first topic, including new rounds of PPP's, it's important to note that while the Maddison dataset still uses the 1990 PPPs to convert national series to a common currency, the International Comparison Program has recently released the 2011 PPP's. An important question the Maddison Project faces is how to integrate these new 2011 PPP's, which have major consequences for the comparative level of GDP for large emerging economies, in particular China – and therefore for the consistency of the whole dataset.

The second topic of our session focuses on improving historical national accounts estimates for Asia, Latin America and Africa. The historical income estimates for these regions which are now included in the Maddison dataset are subject to substantial margins of error. One example is China, for which we know that the historical growth estimates are highly uncertain. Given its huge size, different estimates of Chinese growth can have major impact on the overall results. But there are similar concerns about the historical income estimates for other parts of Asia, as well as Latin America and Africa. Improving those estimates, to start with for the period 1700 to 1950, will greatly advance our knowledge of the diversity in development of the various world regions.

The aim of the session at the XVIIth World Economic History Congress is to bring together scholars working on these issues. The discussion on these subjects should advance the work on improving historical GDP estimates, and stimulate a new generation of scholars working in this field.

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Dr. Jutta Bolt (University of Groningen [Netherlands])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Prof. Debin Ma (London School of Economics [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])

III. Expected Participant(s)

1. same as correspondent.
2. Steve Broadberry (London School of Economics [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
3. Leandro Prados de la Escosura (Universidad Carlos 3 de Madrid [Spain])
4. Jan Luiten van Zanden (Utrecht University, University of Stellenbosch [Netherlands])
5. Kyoji Fukao (Hitotsubashi University [Japan])
6. Osamu Saito (Hitotsubashi University [Japan])
7. Leticia Arroyo Abad (Middlebury College [United States of America])
8. Luis Bertola (Universidad de la República [Uruguay])
9. Morten Jerven (Simon Fraser University [Canada])
10. Herman de Jong (University of Groningen [Netherlands])
11. Xuyi Xuyi (Guangxi Normal University China [China])
12. Bas van Leeuwen (Utrecht University [Netherlands])
13. Debin Ma (London School of Economics [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
14. Ye Ma (University of Groningen [Netherlands])