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On the Status and the Future of Economic History in the World

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Abstract

How many economic historians are there in the world? In which countries or world regions are they concentrated? Can we explain differences in the number of economic historians who are participating in world congresses, and which determinants encourage or limit participation propensity? Using an e-mail questionnaire, we analyse the global situation of this discipline. Overall 59 countries were available to be surveyed in this overview. We estimate the overall number of economic historians in the world to be around 10,400 scholars.

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INTRODUCTION

Economic History has developed into a truly global discipline over the past two decades, just as the world economy in general. For example, the World Congresses of the International Economic History Association occurred increasingly outside of Europe and North America, such as in Argentina in 1998, and Latin America has developed a regular continent-wide congress over the last decade. The next World Economic History Congress will occur in Africa, in Stellenbosch (South Africa), in 2012. In addition, the topics of economic history sessions have become internationally and even globally comparative. In spite of this rapid globalisation of our discipline, surprisingly little is known about economic history as a discipline and the scholars who are representing it. How many economic historians are there in the world? In which countries or world regions are they concentrated, and where are there only a few of them, perhaps in spite of an otherwise developed university system? Can we explain differences in the number of economic historians who are participating in world congresses? Which determinants encourage or limit the propensity to publish in international economic history journals?

This study is based on the first initiative to estimate the extent of the field of economic history in the world. Using an e-mail questionnaire, we analyse the global situation of this discipline. However, it is quite a challenge to estimate the number of economic historians because respondents probably have in mind different definitions of what an economic historian is. For example, should people working in museums who develop economy history exhibitions be included or only those who are working full-time at universities? Should retired colleagues be included in the estimates? Moreover, economic history combines methods and rhetorical styles from economics, history and sometimes other scholarly disciplines. This position between academic fields offers a large potential for interdisciplinary and exciting work, but it also generates a certain heterogeneity. Our strategy for coping with these issues consists of asking a substantial number of people to give an estimate of the number of

economic historians in a broad sense (including doctoral students) because the average of many different definitions might yield a common-sense estimate. Especially in large countries, the average of different estimates helps to improve accuracy.

To obtain these estimates, we sent an e-mail questionnaire to all countries of the world in which we have contact persons or could find contact and asked for, among other things, the number of economic historians in the respective country. We conclude the survey with a quite remarkable coverage. For North America (plus Australia and New Zealand) and Western Europe, we obtained evidence on all countries. In addition, the region of East Asia shows a very high coverage, and five other world regions are well represented. Only the sub-Saharan Africa region was slightly less covered by the survey. In sum, we provide quite a comprehensive picture of global economic history in this article.

The outline of this study is as follows. After a short review of the current literature on economic history, we analyse the number of economic historians by country. To verify the accuracy of these numbers, we countercheck our new data by comparing them to data on conference participation, membership in national organisations and the number of publications in economic history journals. In the next section, we give a short overview of the status of the lower-level students and doctoral students in our field. We then report the topics that concern researchers today and what the International Economic History Association should do to promote our discipline in the world. The paper ends with a brief conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While there are a number of studies describing the discipline dimension of economic history and the main approaches of its different schools, a quantitative study of the number of economic historians has thus far been lacking. With regard to the former type of study, the excellent survey of Jan Willem Drukker is noteworthy. In a background chapter on the evolution of economics, Drukker describes the disputes among nineteenth and twentieth

century economists, who were mainly divided into the historical and neoclassical schools.¹ The historical school influenced traditional economic historians, whereas neoclassical thought affected the cliometric movement of the 1960s and 1970s. However, as the latter movement became interested in institutional effects on economic development, a number of elements of the historical school became part of a rediscovery by quantitative economic historians (“Cliometricians”).

Some steps to quantify the discipline were taken by individual country studies. For example, Canada’s Economic History Group was recently surveyed, with a special focus on courses taught in the various universities and colleges. One of the questions raised in this article was how retired colleagues should be counted when a quantitative survey is performed. Clearly, retired colleagues are often active in research, and some continue to teach while others turn to alternative pursuits. Including them in the total number yielded, in the Canadian case, a slightly higher number of economic historians than our interviewed partners suggested.

Recently, Helen Paul (2008) performed a survey for the Economic History Society which is mainly active in the UK. The major aim was to identify persons who were interested in economic history, and might be motivated to contribute to the field and the society. The author also decided to include retired scholars.²

An international overview of publication behaviour, including differences by nationalities, was given by Jaime Reis in a presentation at the European Historical Economics Conference in Geneva, 2009. The author provided his data to us, and thus they can be included in the analysis below.³

¹ Drukker, *Revolution*.

² Paul, “Census”.

³ See also Di Vaio and Weisdorf, “Ranking”, who analyzed citation behaviour, although their main interest is in evaluating different journals.

The editors of the Journal of Economic History regularly present quantitative data, not on the number of economic historians but on the topics of journal submissions by world region. In the latest issue, March 2011, Price Fishback showed that Non-North American topics increased somewhat among the submissions, bringing down the US and Canada share to “only” 32 percent in 2009-10. In contrast, Africa increased as a region of study from only one submission per year in both 2006/7 and 2007/8 to four submissions in 2008/9 and eight in 2009/10. While this result still only accounts for five percent of total submissions, the increase is substantial. Western Europe, including the UK, accounts for 43 percent, and most of the other world regions account for 4-5 percent. These regional submissions include Asia and Pacific (5), Eastern Europe (4), Latin America, including the Caribbean (6), and the Middle East (4).⁴ Clearly, the geography of topics is not identical to the geography of economic historians, but tables such as this one can be used for comparisons with our new estimates presented below.

SAMPLE AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Evidence dealing with the situation of our discipline was collected on the basis of an e-mail questionnaire (for the questionnaire see Appendix A). The questionnaire included eight questions and was divided into three parts. In the first section, we asked about the status of economic history in the respective country of each participant. In the following section, we interviewed the respondents about the most relevant topics in the field of economic history. The last part of the questionnaire asked for information about the responding person.

We have sent the e-mail questionnaire to colleagues in all countries of the world in which we could find contacts, building on the list of participants of the last world economic history congresses and on the leadership personnel of the 44 economic history societies

⁴ Fishback, “Editors’ Notes”.

existing in the world. A snowball system allowed us to reach many of the main persons and researchers in the field of economic history. Although we offered no gift for participation, the survey concluded with 242 respondents.⁵ To give an overview of the share of countries covered by responses, we divided the countries into nine main world regions and weighted them by population (Table 1). North America (plus Australia and New Zealand), East Asia and Western Europe reach coverage values of 98-100 percent. Eastern Europe, Latin America, South and Southeast Asia also have quite good levels of documentation. Only sub-Saharan Africa, with a coverage of 0.17, is not as well represented by the survey, mainly because the number of participants at earlier world congresses was quite low. The under-representation of the sub-Saharan region at past world congresses might also be a sign of the lack of governmental support and a thinner research infrastructure.⁶ Only South Africa, as the most productive country in social sciences in the sub-Saharan region, was an exception in the past.⁷ Overall, 59 countries could be included in this overview, including countries such as Vietnam, Ghana and Haiti.

All survey questions entailed open-ended responses, and participants' responses were anonymous. The average age of the respondents was around 46 years, and it varied from 24 to 80. We also asked whether the respondents would characterise themselves more as an economist, more as a historian, or whether they saw themselves somewhere between the two professions. Overall, 82 individuals saw themselves as being historians, and 82 respondents situated themselves in between. Fifty individuals chose a clear economist designation.

⁵ Questionnaires were sent to some 1,100 persons. If the information would refer to individual opinion, this would be a "response rate" of around 22%, which is quite remarkable compared to similar questionnaire activities. Because we asked participants about an objective estimation referring to their country (the number of economic historians) and not about individual opinions or characteristics, one person's estimate would be appropriate enough.

⁶ Research in this region is quite under-funded, and the few existing science institutions in some African countries were sometimes even destroyed by domestic policies and events during the past decades. UNESCO, *Social Science Report*, p. 65.

⁷ South Africa was actively measured by the UNESCO by its output of ISI papers over the past twenty years. This measurement showed that South Africa produces about half of all output in the social sciences and more than three times more than Nigeria, the second most productive country. *Ibid*, p. 64.

Twenty-seven participants abstained from responding to this question. It seems that the respondents cover the various fields of economic history quite well.

NUMBER OF ECONOMIC HISTORIANS

Now that we have taken a close look at the structure of the questionnaire and its participants, we will document the number of economic historians per country. In the first section of the questionnaire, we asked for an estimate of this number.

As already mentioned, economic history is characterised by a certain heterogeneity. As is the case for most scholarly fields, there is no clear-cut, universal definition of ‘the economic historian’. Respondents probably have in mind different definitions. We, therefore, asked respondents to include historians, economists and other social scientists with strong interests in this field in their definition. This estimation included doctoral students, professors, and other scholarly staff (permanent and temporary).⁸ Especially in large countries, the average or median of many different definitions might yield a common-sense estimate and help to improve the accuracy. The results are reported in Table 2.

In first place, there is Japan with an absolute number of 1,340 economic historians, followed by China (800), the United Kingdom (770) and the United States (675). Astonishingly high numbers were also reached for Vietnam, Mexico and Turkey.

Why has Japan the largest number? When we take a look at Japan’s long and continuous history and the strong interest of the Japanese public in the history of the country, the high number of economic historians seems to be no surprise. Japan is even today a country that returns to its traditions and history in many facets of life. In particular, the number of

⁸ Because a countrywide estimation might have been sometimes too difficult, we also asked for an estimated number of economic historians within their own universities, if that were more feasible.

business historians is quite high in Japan. They are well presented in national organisations and perhaps, therefore, slightly more visible than in other countries.⁹

On the other side of the spectrum, there are some countries with few economic historians. We consider economic historians in those countries to be pioneers who promote our discipline even without a strong group around them. We have to admit that sometimes our estimates are based on slightly less precise statements for those countries.¹⁰ Please note also that only 59 countries are listed. Most of the other countries typically have small communities.

One reason for the high absolute number of economic historians, especially in China, Japan and the US, might be the large population relative to other countries. China and the US have a huge pool of potential economic historians. To take this into consideration, we document in the next step the number of economic historians relative to the population (Table 3). Sweden occupies the first rank with 20 economic historians per million inhabitants, followed by Uruguay (13.3), Norway (13.1) and Portugal (11.4). The United Kingdom with 11.3 and Japan with 10.6 are in positions five and six, respectively. As expected, China and the US had lower values in per capita terms. Some might suggest that these estimates might be too small. Especially the US is one of the leading nations in the field of economic history. But we measure here only the number, not the productivity of scholars. Differences of productivity might impact on the perceived real number of economic historians in a particular country such as the US.

We were also curious about this question: Is there a linkage between the income of the corresponding country and the number of economic historians per capita? Are economic historians perhaps something like a “luxury product”? Is economic history consumed in

⁹ As a caveat, we should also mention that some countries with high degree of specialization, such as the US, might not count the majority of business historians as economic historians.

¹⁰ For example, if the number of economic historians was only given for one of the two universities, we multiplied by two after making sure the universities were similar in size and character.

greater quantity if incomes are high? To analyse this question, we compare our results with the GDP of each country (Figure 1). In fact, there seems to be a linkage between the number of economic historians in a country and its GDP. Sweden, with the highest rate of economic historians, has a high GDP. Rich countries, such as the United Kingdom, Norway and Portugal, also feature many economic historians per capita, whereas Haiti, Mauritania and Ghana have relatively small numbers. However, there are also some countries that are rich, but do not have as many per capita. For example Germany had a special situation in that during the boom period of the “Historical School” of the 19th and early 20th century, economists were also partly economic historians. When this school was replaced by other approaches in the post-war period, the chair denominations were not changed proportionally in favour of more economic history. The overall correlation between GDP and the number of economic historians is a reason for optimism for economic historians in some of the rapidly growing countries. For example, the Brazilian economic history society has already changed its forecast for the number of participants for its next economic history congress after seeing a working paper version of this article.¹¹

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

In order to countercheck our data, we now ask whether the new estimates can be confirmed by comparing them to (1) conference participation statistics, (2) memberships in national organisations, and (3) publications in economic history journals? Apart from counterchecking the numbers of scholars, this comparison process allows us to understand some of the determinants of conference participation and publication propensities in international journals. First, we turn to conference participation.

¹¹ Friendly communicated by its vice president Angelo Alves Carrara.

We fit a gravity model that explains conference participation in relation to distance, number of economic historians in the source country, home market effects of the country in which a world congress occurs and other variables. The data stem from the participation statistics on world congresses over the past decade. We have collected participation statistics on the three world congresses of Buenos Aires 2002, Helsinki 2006 and Utrecht 2009 (Table 4). Unfortunately, those statistics were not always available on a country basis, but sometimes groups such as “Scandinavia” or “Other Asia” were formed (see the notes to the Table for further information). Nevertheless, the majority of countries (and groups) could be made comparable. Because we will assess a home market effect below, we decided to separate Finland and “other Scandinavia” in the case of the Helsinki congress.

What do the figures show about participation trends? In general, the participation from African countries is relatively modest (Table 4, columns 1-3).¹² Chinese and Japanese participations have grown substantially (in the Chinese case, we can observe this only for 2006-2009 because from 2002 it was included in “other Asia”). Russia was represented better in Helsinki than elsewhere, which might be caused by the geographic proximity of Finland to the northwestern parts of Russia. Geographic proximity clearly also played a role in the case of European countries which had sent fewer delegates to Buenos Aires than to the other two congresses (and the macroeconomic crisis in Argentina was probably also important here). The largest participation figure in all congresses was the one of the Finnish in Helsinki, with 157 participants.¹³ However, the British, US, Spanish and “other Scandinavia” communities were also quite well represented. These countries sometimes reach values of more than 100 participants. Their large groups of economic historians at home might explain this result--

¹² We will discuss the “Forecast 2012 column” below.

¹³ Please note that the number of Finnish participants exceeded the number of economic historians of the country. Also other historians and economists participated at the congress.

although Japan and China also feature large groups, which promise additional potential for the future.¹⁴

To compare the number of economic historians in our field and conference participation, we need to take into account additional factors: What are the most important control variables that potentially might distort this comparison? An obvious distortion could be the language issue. Because English functions often as a global language in the scientific world, non-native speakers are, in a way, disadvantaged because they have to devote a great effort to learn the language; otherwise, they would be less successful at international conferences and get fewer publication opportunities.¹⁵ In other words, the success of a scholar, nowadays, might be partly related to his or her English language skills.¹⁶ According to the UNESCO, English is the most widely used language in social science journals (85.3 percent of the referred journals are in the English language), followed by French (5.9 percent), German (5.4 percent), Spanish (4.0 percent) and Portuguese (1.7 percent). The most common non-European language is Chinese (1.5 percent), followed by Japanese (1.0 percent).¹⁷ Therefore, we created a dummy variable “English”, which is coded as 1 for the US, Canada, the UK, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.¹⁸ As additional variables to distinguish the cultural proximity to the English language, we collected the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) test score by country from the respective Internet page.¹⁹ We defined a group with TOEFL values below 70 points (the main example here is Japan, which is quite astonishing) and the group with modest TOEFL values between 70 and 84. Country

¹⁴ It is a bit astonishing that, according to the Buenos Aires statistics, there were no participants from “other Latin America” (apart from Argentina, Mexico and Brazil). This might be a small data mistake because nearby Uruguay and other countries might also have sent delegates. Otherwise, the participation statistics seem relatively reliable.

¹⁵ UNESCO, *Social Science Report*, pp. 154-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 151.

¹⁷ Results based on the Ulrich database. For further information, see *Ibid*, p.149.

¹⁸ Although there are obviously language minorities in some of those countries. There are also some English-speaking countries in other country groups.

¹⁹ The TOEFL test is the most accepted international test to score English language skills. It consists of reading, listening, writing and speaking sections. The maximum total score is 120 points.

groups that are not mainly English speaking but have fairly good TOEFL scores represent the constant.

In our regressions, we find that the number of economic historians and the distance from the congress are significant determinants of world congress attendance (see Table 5). Less distance and more economic historians mean higher congress participation in the respective country. As expected, GDP and the English-language variable also matter. Researchers from countries with high GDP can more easily afford the travel expense, while those from countries with low GDP face greater obstacles. English language skills affect participation positively. The home market effect is always positive and has a large coefficient but is statistically not significant. We also tested whether visa requirements played a role and obtained a negative but significant coefficient. Also a time trend (“year”) was insignificant. Finally, including country fixed effects in a least square dummy variable model (column 5) did not make a difference.

In Table 6, we list the residuals of congress participation. After controlling for distance, language barriers, income and size of the economic history community, the three country groups with the highest residual participation propensity are Iberia, Scandinavia and, surprisingly, Eastern Europe (excluding Russia).

Based on these regression results, we attempt a forecast of participation at the World Congress 2012. In Column 4 of Table 4, we estimate the participation at the next World Economic History Congress that will occur in Stellenbosch (South Africa). The most astonishing fact is the non-participation of Africans (outside South Africa). Please note that this is a *ceteris paribus* forecast that does not take into account special stipends and other interventions that would encourage African participation. The forecast in Table 4 is based only on the variables in Table 5: the number of economic historians, which is small in most African countries, the distance, which is quite large (the northern part of the continent is closer to Europe than to South Africa), low GDP and similar variables. Looking at the

sessions already accepted for 2012, we are sure that the actual participation of this country group will be at least 40-50.

Because of a potential home market effect, the participation of South Africa will be the highest ever. We also forecast that some historians and economists will attend, as these groups did in Helsinki. The largest participation is estimated for the US, with more than 90 delegates. The British will also be quite well represented. China's participation at recent congresses was relatively modest but is growing substantially because of the large group of economic historians at home and the growing integration and income of the country. Compared with the showing at Utrecht in 2009, participation will climb from 23 to a forecasted 54 delegates at the congress in Stellenbosch. Furthermore, Japan's participation is estimated to be 54 delegates. In our estimation, the European countries will send fewer delegates to Stellenbosch 2012 than to the last congresses in Helsinki and Utrecht, but they will send more than they did in 2002 (to Buenos Aires). From the Latin American group, Argentina and Mexico will be represented quite well with 37 and 31 delegates, respectively. Altogether, we predict a participation number of 1064 delegates (excluding accompanying persons). That number is slightly less than that for the last two World Economic History Congresses in Utrecht (1211 delegates) and Helsinki (1292 delegates), but more than for the congress in Buenos Aires in 2002 (712 delegates). 1064 delegates is a number that will facilitate a very successful world congress. Moreover, this number is an estimate based only on travel costs and similar variables. The unusual location of South Africa and the fact that this event will be the first world congress in Africa will probably attract an even higher number, as the number of session proposals already indicates.

MEMBERSHIPS IN NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In the next step, we compare our estimated number of economic historians with the memberships in national economic history organisations. Do our estimated economic

historian numbers match the number of memberships in national organisations in the respective country? We interviewed representatives of several national organisations via e-mail about their current number of memberships. Some of these organisations include foreign scholars, such as the Economic History Society, which is mainly located in the UK but includes some foreigners. Nevertheless, these organisations are the exception rather than the rule, though the comparison is still informative.

Comparing our data on economic historians to those for the memberships in national organisations, we can see a strong linkage between them (Figure 2). Japan and the US, as countries with relative high estimated numbers of economic historians, also have high numbers of members in their national economic history organisations. In addition, for the other countries, we observe a close numerical correlation. Economic historians in the documented countries seem to be highly organised and represented by their associations. However, this correlation might mean that economic historians are more visible for respondents precisely because they are well represented in those national organisations.

Of course, the ability to correctly estimate the number of economic historians by the respondents might also depend on the size of the particular nation. E.g. correspondents from the US could probably estimate the number of economic historians for their own state much more accurately than the number for the entire US. In the figure, both large and small countries lie closely to an imagined regression line

Therefore, respondents base their estimates on the number of members in their national association. Nevertheless, in general, our estimates are confirmed.

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

In another plausibility check, we regress journal publications by country (or country group) against our new estimates of the number of economic historians, adding additional control variables. We collected a dataset from nine economic history journals that are contained in the

EconLit database 2005-2010. The criterion was whether the title included “economic history” (or a translation thereof) and whether the journal was considered established and international enough to be included in this database. A list of journals is given below in Table 7. We have to acknowledge that the latter criterion generates a certain bias towards economics-oriented publications in our field because the more history-orientated colleagues do not publish as much in journals as in books and edited volumes. There is also a bias in favour of English language journals because those are more often included in EconLit. However, our main purpose here is to assess the plausibility of the new estimates of the number of economic historians.²⁰ The number of journal publications per country should correlate with the number of economic historians, after controlling for intervening variables (such as language).

We obtained a dataset of 825 publications appearing between 2005 and 2010 and consisting of 1218 authorships sorted by affiliation. One author might have several authorships here. Again, we included control variables that potentially distort the comparison between the number of scholars in our field and publications in those nine mostly English-language journals. The language variables obviously had to be included again. Moreover, we included a dummy variable representing the fact that the journal is situated in a given country. For example, Australians will publish more often in the *Australian Economic History Review*, and Indians will do so in the *Indian Economic and Social History Review*. Those considerations are confirmed by the regression results: language and location of journals matter. But even more important for our study, the variable “Number of economic historians” is significant again, even though the number of cases was only 25 country (groups). This regression confirms the plausibility of our new results.

Jaime Reis provided a dataset for comparative purposes, which he collected for a presentation at the 2009 European Historical Economics Society Congress in Geneva.

²⁰ For studies about the variety of measures of scientific productivity. See, for example, Kalaitzidakis, Mamuneas and Stengos, “Ranking of academic journals”; Di Vaio and Weisdorf, “Ranking”.

Compared to our dataset of 2005-2010, the one that Reis used had a larger time frame, sampling the years 1996, 1998 and 2008, covering four journals. The results we obtained above for our new publication database were fairly robust (Table 7, Column 4).

These three comparisons enabled counterchecking the plausibility of the new country-specific estimates. Both the results for regressing congress participation and journal publications on the number of economic historians were fairly robust. In addition, the comparison between our estimated number of economic historians and the memberships in national economic history organisations confirms our result. In summary, the average of many different definitions might yield a common-sense estimate of an “economic historian”. Especially in large countries, the average of different estimates helps to improve the accuracy. Counterchecking the plausibility by three plausibility checks reinforces our estimates of the number of economic historians in the respective country.

In the next step, we estimate the overall number of economic historians in the world by interpolating values for all countries with a population of 500,000 inhabitants or more that had missing values due to non-reported data. We interpolate the values of missing countries by utilising our estimated number of economic historians relative to the population in the same geographical region. For example, the value for Ivory Coast was an estimate based on the per capita value for Ghana and the population of the Ivory Coast. We find that the overall number of economic historians in the world might be around 10,400 scholars, almost 8,700 of which are in the 59 surveyed countries and 1,700 in the other countries.

NUMBER OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS

To estimate the number of doctoral students, the participants should estimate how many of the estimated number of economic historians might be doctoral students. In Table 8, we report the number of doctoral students by world region. Again, there is a lot of variation, but the measure might be within acceptable bounds for some of the world regions. It displays the

expected differences, which we based on qualitative information about doctoral schooling. For example, the share of doctoral students among all economic historians is high in Western Europe, where not all of those students aim at starting an academic career. In the North American system, the pervasive goal of doctoral students is to start an academic career.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we focused on a number of questions. How many economic historians are there in the world? In which countries or world regions are they concentrated and where are they lacking, perhaps in spite of an otherwise developed university system? Can we explain differences in the number of economic historians who are participating at world congresses, and which determinants encourage or limit publication propensity?

As a result, we found that the overall number of economic historians in the world might be around 10,400.

Breaking the number of economic historians down by country, Japan obtained a high value with an estimated 1,340 economic historians, followed by China (800), the United Kingdom (770) and the United States (675). Astonishingly, high numbers were also reached for Vietnam, Mexico and Turkey. In per capita terms, Sweden occupies the first rank with 20 economic historians per million inhabitants, followed by Uruguay (13.3), and Norway (13.1). Portugal with 11.4, the United Kingdom with 11.3 and Japan with 10.6 occupy positions four to six. There were some noteworthy surprises, such as the cluster of economic historians in Senegal, which could indicate a promising future for economic history in Africa.

Clearly, this estimation procedure does not reveal the impact each nation had on overall knowledge creation, nor on the neighbouring fields of economics and history. For example, US and other economic historians had a large impact on the development of the

discipline due to high productivity or original ideas.²¹ But establishing estimates for the number of economic historians is a necessary first step to understand the dynamics of the discipline.

To countercheck our new data on economic historians, we implemented three plausibility checks. First, we fitted a gravity model that explains conference participation in relation to distance, the number of economic historians in the source country, home market effects of the country in which a world congress occurs, and other variables. The data originated from the participation statistics on world congresses over the past 15 years. As expected, distance and the number of economic historians were statistically significant across all regressions. In addition, GDP and English language skills had a significant impact on economic historian numbers.

In another plausibility check, we compared our new estimates with the memberships in national economic history associations. The results of this approach supported our estimated number of economic historians. Economic historians seem to be highly organised by their national organisations.

Additionally, we implemented a third plausibility check by regressing journal publications by country (or country group) on the new estimates of the number of economic historians and using additional control variables such as the English language or the journals' home country. We collected this dataset from nine economic history journals that were contained in the EconLit database. The results showed that language and location of journals matter. However, even more important for our study was the result that the variable "Number of economic historians" was significant again, even if we restricted the number of cases to 25 country (groups).

²¹ To site another example: Waldenström, "Swedish", criticized the Swedish economic history mainstream for focussing very much on national or regional economic history, whereas the share of international comparative work published in international journals was quite limited in his view. See also Waldenström, "Reply".

Especially these comparisons of different measure allow to overcome the definition problem of what exactly is an economic historian. Moreover, by comparing the participation at international congresses with the number of economic historians, a clearer understanding of the scholarly knowledge generation process of congress participation is possible. The intriguing question about limiting factors of participation (language, travel costs, visa...) is quantified here for the first time. A similar model is created for publications in international journals. For example, this allows to specify how many publications can be expected by, say, a junior economic historian with TOEFL value 70. This knowledge can be important in research evaluation which becomes a part of everyday university life and which is not always performed appropriately.

To forecast the participation at the next World Economic History Congress in Stellenbosch (South Africa) in 2012, we analysed participation statistics on the three world congresses of the last decade, namely those in Buenos Aires 2002, Helsinki 2006 and Utrecht 2009. Our estimated participation number of economic historians at the congress in Stellenbosch suggests that the participation of East Asia will increase. The total number will be around 1064 delegates. Hence, the expected success in Africa will help to spread even more activity on this continent, which had slightly lower numbers in the past.

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Table 1: Coverage of world regions

World Region	Coverage in percentage
East Asia	98
East Europe/Central Asia	62
Latin America/Caribbean	73
Middle East/North Africa	51
North America/Australia/New Zealand	100
South Asia	77
Southeast Asia	54
Subsaharan Africa	13
Western Europe	100

Note: Oceania is not included, because we focused only on countries with a population of 500,000 and more in 2010 (Philippians are included in South East Asia)

Table 2: Ranking of economic historians by country

Country	Number of economic historians	Population (in mio)	Respondents
Japan	1340	128	5
China	800	1346	1
United States	770	312	5
United Kingdom	675	63	4
Russian Federation	488	143	2
Mexico	350	115	2
India	350	1241	1
Spain	346	46	11
Italy	342	61	13
France	336	63	7
Argentina	300	41	1
Germany	210	82	9
Viet Nam	200	88	1
Turkey	200	74	1
Sweden	183	9	6
Brazil	160	197	2
Netherlands	138	17	2
Portugal	114	11	5
Taiwan	113	23	3
Colombia	100	47	1
Korea (South)	100	49	1
Peru	100	29	1
Greece	80	11	4
Hungary	70	10	1
Bulgaria	65	8	3
Belgium	60	11	1
Austria	60	8	1

Norway	53	5	4
Switzerland	52	8	4
Canada	44	35	3
Denmark	43	6	4
Finland	43	5	5
Senegal	41	13	1
Cuba	40	11	1
Uruguay	40	3	1
Australia	35	23	2
Chile	33	17	3
Poland	30	38	1
Indonesia	30	238	1
South Africa	28	51	3
Egypt	20	83	1
Israel	18	8	3
Serbia	15	7	1
Slovenia	15	2	1
New Zealand (Aotearoa)	15	4	1
Ireland	11	5	2
Romania	10	21	1
Total	8666	4816	137

Note: We excluded very few outliers (5), especially if respondents added notes saying: "I really do not know, but maybe around...".

Line "Total" contains 10+ economic historians.

1-10 economic historians in the following countries: Morocco, Bolivia, Estonia, Algeria, Syria, Ghana, Cameroon, Mauritania, Kyrgyzstan, Haiti.

Population data from 2010.

Table 3: Economic historians relative to population by country

Country	Economic historian / Population	GDP (per capita)	Respondents
Sweden	20.4	20442	6
Uruguay	13.3	7708	1
United Kingdom	10.7	19972	4
Japan	10.5	20876	5
Norway	10.5	24471	4
Portugal	10.4	14126	5
Finland	8.5	20290	5
Bulgaria	8.1	5505	3
Netherlands	8.1	21656	2
Slovenia	7.5	13650	1
Austria	7.5	20161	1
Spain	7.5	15464	11
Argentina	7.3	8340	1
Greece	7.3	12277	4
Denmark	7.1	23086	4

Hungary	7	7286	1
Switzerland	6.5	22144	4
Estonia	6	11495	3
Italy	5.6	18890	13
Belgium	5.5	20833	1
France	5.3	20950	7
Taiwan	4.9	16428	3
New Zealand (Aotearoa)	3.8	16064	1
Cuba	3.6	2445	1
Russian Federation	3.4	5428	2
Peru	3.4	3658	1
Senegal	3.2	1454	1
Mexico	3	7154	2
Turkey	2.7	6274	1
Germany	2.6	18636	9
United States	2.5	28039	5
Israel	2.3	15733	3
Viet Nam	2.3	1820	1
Ireland	2.2	22015	2
Serbia	2.1	2354	1
Colombia	2.1	5091	1
Chile	2	9921	3
Korea (South)	2	14508	1
Australia	1.5	21712	2
Canada	1.3	22250	3

1-10 economic historians in the following countries (0.1-0.8 economic historians per million inhabitants):
Bolivia, Brazil, Poland, China, Romania, South Africa, Mauritania, India, Cameroon, Morocco,
Kyrgyzstan, Ghana, Egypt, Syria, Indonesia, Algeria.

Note: GDP data from 2000

Table 4: Participation in world congresses 2002-9 and forecast for 2012

Country (group)	Buenos Aires 2002	Helsinki 2006	Utrecht 2009	Stellenbosch* 2012
South Africa	8	6	9	84
Africa others	1	3	2	0
China		4	23	53
India	12	9	10	9
Japan	19	55	78	54
Asia others	14	31	13	37
Russia	12	30	17	39
Eastern Europe others		48	50	16
Austria / Switzerland	10	37	36	37
Belgium	14	40	26	32
Finland		157		
France	25	71	88	55
Germany	25	71	52	42
Greece / Turkey / Israel		18	24	42
Italy	40	60	63	55

Scandinavia	38		108	54
Scandinavia others		121		
Spain / Portugal	35	108	119	57
The Netherlands	20	44	94	39
UK / Ireland	42	136	145	82
Argentina	113	18	14	37
Brazil	24	13	12	18
Mexico	31	24	9	31
Latin America others	0	11	26	14
Canada	26	27	25	29
USA	109	131	124	93
Australia / New Zealand	19	19	13	28
Unknown	75	0	31	35
Total	712	1292	1211	1064

Notes: *Stellenbosch 2012 is the average of the previous 3 unknown figures

The fact that there were 8 South Africans was constructed from the academic program

The high participation rate of Finland in 2006 includes not only economic historians, but also all historians and economists who participated.

A forecast based on our model, see text.

Sources: Buenos Aires: Internet PowerPoint-Presentation, congress website

Helsinki: Excel sheet sent by Riitta Hjerpe, thanks for that

Utrecht: Excel sheet sent by Jessica Dijkman, thanks for that

All figures exclude accompanying persons. The country groups were different in the cases of the Buenos Aires and the Utrecht congress, the previously mentioned "other Europe", and the latter distinguished between East and West Europe. The former also had an "other countries in the world category", which is why the "unknown" category in Table 4 is a bit larger. Also the arrangement "Greece/Turkey/Israel" was given by the world congress statistics, country specific numbers were not available.

The predicted value for "Africa others" in 2012 is actually -11, but we report a 0, because participation cannot be negative.

Asia others in 2002 includes China, Scandinavia in 2002 is only Finland and Sweden. Unknown 2012 is the average of the previous 3 unknown figures. The fact that there were 8 South Africans in Buenos Aires was constructed from the academic program.

Table 5: Panel Regressions: Determinants of world congress participation

	1	2	3	4	5
Number of ec.hist.	5.97*** (0.002)	8.27*** (0.000)	6.11*** (0.003)	6.05*** (0.010)	8.80*** (0.000)
Distance (logs)	-17.77*** (0.000)	-12.81*** (0.001)	-14.16*** (0.001)	-10.27** (0.017)	-13.20*** (0.009)
Home market	24.93 (0.258)	33.39 (0.129)	25.89 (0.289)	32.89 (0.214)	33.57 (0.233)
GDP/capita (logs)		15.35*** (0.001)	9.98* (0.054)	10.33* (0.076)	19.58*** (0.000)
TOEFL (low)		-68.74*** (0.006)			
TOEFL (medium)		1.97 (0.850)			
English	32.60*** (0.010)	19.33*** (0.005)	23.09** (0.042)		
TOEFL			0.57 (0.369)	0.76 (0.277)	
Visa requirements				-9.37 (0.200)	
Year				0.86 (0.328)	
Countries fixed effects	No	No	No	No	Yes
Constant	161.31*** (0.000)	-24.78 (0.650)	-9.70 (0.889)	-1,788.54 (0.325)	-30.26 (0.686)
Observations	71	71	71	71	73
R-squared	0.58	0.70	0.64	0.60	0.89

Notes: Number of economic historians was divided by 100 for expository purposes.

Table 6: Residuals of congress participation, after controlling for distance, number of economic historians and other variables of Table 5 (specification 2).

Country	Residual
Spain / Portugal	34.3
Scandinavia	22.7
Eastern Europe others	22.2
Africa others	20.8
USA	19.2
Argentina	6.5
Brazil	6.4
India	5.3
France	3.6
UK / Ireland	3.5
Italy	3.0
Latin America others	1.7
Japan	0.0
South Africa	-0.6
Germany	-1.0
Mexico	-2.7
The Netherlands	-8.5
Asia others	-9.6
Austria / Switzerland	-9.6
Australia / New Zealand	-9.9
Canada	-12.2
Belgium	-12.6
Greece / Turkey / Israel	-21.6
Russia	-25.4
China	-41.6

Table 7: Regressions: Determinants of publication number by countries

	1	2	3
Sample	New	New	Reis
Years	2005-10	2005-10	1996, 1998, 2008
Number of economic historians	16.62** (0.038)	12.90* (0.058)	4.94* (0.057)
TOEFL	3.47* (0.075)	2.24 (0.211)	0.86 (0.168)
English	121.06** (0.025)	97.82** (0.040)	38.37** (0.021)
Journal home		67.61** (0.038)	
Constant	-337.39* (0.071)	-231.32 (0.172)	-89.70 (0.140)
Observations	25	25	25
R-squared	0.57	0.66	0.58

Notes: Number of economic historians was divided by 100 for expository purposes.
 Journals: Australian Economic History Review, Economic History Review, European Review of Economic History, Explorations in Economic History, Indian Economic and Social History Review, Journal of Economic History, Revista de Historia Economica, Rivista di Storia Economica, Scandinavian Economic History Review.

Table 8: Number of doctoral students by world region

World Region	Number of economic historians	Number of doctoral students	Doctoral students per economic historian
East Asia	2108	245	0.12
East.Eur./Cntr. Asia	591	94	0.16
Latin America/ Car.	1094	n.a.	n.a.
Mid.East/N. Afr.	249	n.a.	n.a.
North America/Au/Nz	769	95	0.12
South Asia	275	75	0.27
South East Asia	225	n.a.	n.a.
Subsaharan Africa	76	n.a.	n.a.
Western Eur.	2033	711	0.35

Notes: Column 1 excludes doctoral students

Figure 1: Are economic historians a luxury product?

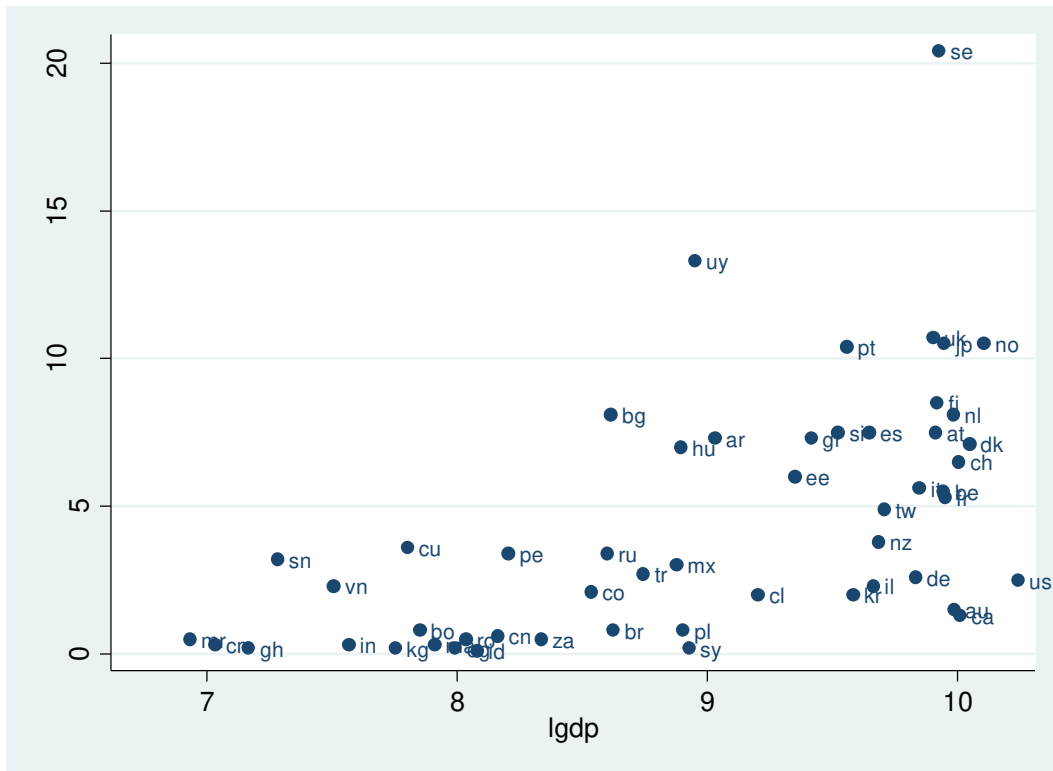
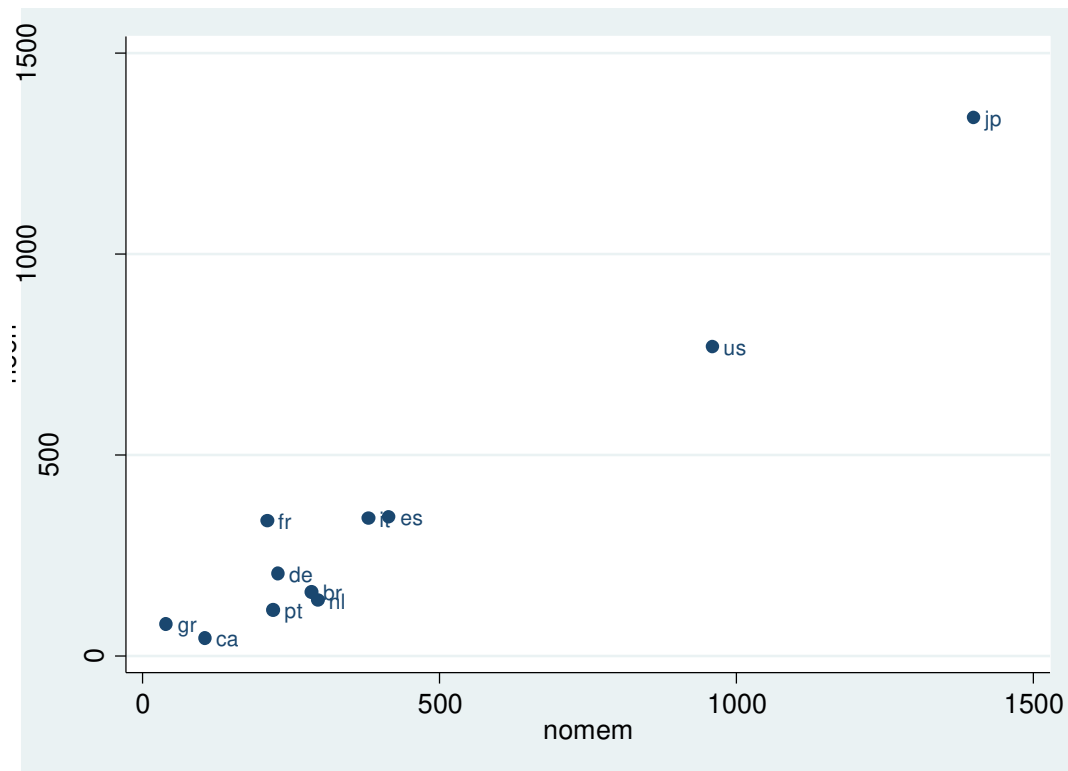


Figure 2: Comparison: number of economic historians and memberships in national organizations



Organizations: Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em História Econômica (Brazil), The Japan National Committee for Economic History (Japan), Association Française d'Histoire Économique (France), Portuguese Association of Economic and Social History (Portugal), Asociación Española de Historia Económica (Spain), Canadian Network for Economic History (Canada), Società italiana degli storici dell'economia (Italy), Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte (Germany), Economic History Association (United States), N.W. Posthumus Instituut (Netherlands), Greek Economic History Association (Greece).

Notes: noeh = number of economic historians; nomem = number of members in national organizations.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

The International Economic History Association would like to learn more about the situation of economic history in your country, and about your own views, hence you would do us a great favour answering the following questions. Please feel free to answer only questions 1 and 2, if you are very busy, this will not take you more than 1 minute. Answering all 8 questions might take 3 minutes. All answers will be treated completely anonymously, and all data will be deleted after the analysis.

On economic history in your country

8. In which country are you working as an economic historian?

2. Can you give a rough estimate of the number of economic historians working in your country, including historians and economists with strong interests in this field? Please include doctoral students, professors, and other scholarly staff (permanent and temporary). If a country-wide estimate might be too difficult, please estimate the number for your university (please specify to what you refer).

3. How many of those might be doctoral students?

4. Can you give a rough estimate about how many students below the doctoral student level (Bachelor, Master and similar; students of all fields) are taking at least one course in economic history presently in your country? Again, if a country-wide estimate might be too difficult, please estimate the number for your university (please specify to what you refer).

On the IEHA and its world congress

5. Which topics should be on the agenda of the 2012 world congress (max. 3)

6. Do you have suggestions what the International Economic History Association should do to promote economic history in your country, or to improve international contacts and cooperation?

On yourself

7. Do you consider your own preferred style of economic history to be closer to economics or history? Or exactly in the middle? Or are you mainly sociologist, political scientist or other?

8. May we ask for your age?

Appendix B: Topics and Promotion of economic history

To promote economic history and to attract more students of outstanding ability to this field, we asked the participants whether they possibly had suggestions for the International Economic History Association. What should the organisation do to promote economic history in their country? Can they do anything to improve international contacts and cooperation? In Table 9, we give an overview of the most frequently mentioned answers.

Travel stipends to participate in world congresses are the most relevant issue mentioned by the respondents to promote economic history in the different countries. These respondents suggested the organisation of regional meetings and summer schools for doctoral students by the International Economic History Association. Moreover, to be a successful researcher, it is necessary to have not only the skills and talent to search for the right themes but also the social capital consisting of knowing others with whom to collaborate and exchange ideas.²² In an international-orientated scholarly community, to exchange with other researchers at conferences is essential for being successful.²³ In particular, young talented researchers without financial support and developed international reputations should be supported by travel stipends and summer schools to promote their abilities and international prominence.

We also asked which topics should be on the agenda of the next world congress in Stellenbosch 2012. We classified the topics mentioned using the EH.net Classification. The results are presented in Table 10.

The most frequently mentioned topics fall into the category of ‘Economic Development, Growth, and Aggregate Productivity’. A number of respondents noted that,

²² Social capital defined here following Bourdieu, “Ökonomisches Kapital”, who considers it to be a capital asset consisting of useful relationships and contacts, whereas Putnam’s, “Bowling Alone”, definition of social capital is probably more often used in economics today.

²³ For example, see Liberman and Wolf, “Flow of knowledge”; Fox, “Productivity in Science”; Salaran, “Research Productivity”.

given the location of the next world congress in Africa, development processes should be particularly high on the agenda. In addition, ‘Macroeconomics and Fluctuations’ and ‘Financial Markets, Financial Institutions, and Monetary History’ are very popular and critical fields. Themes about economic crises and the financial sector concern economic historians and the general public all over the world. These themes will be approached with an economic history methodology so as to clarify the undercurrents of current economic issues, which escaped economists and other social scientists who limited themselves to theoretical and current considerations.

We were curious as to whether the preferences for the topics varied by age. One could imagine, for example, that more recent topics might be demanded by younger colleagues, whereas topics that were very popular, say, in the 1970s or 1980s, might be suggested by slightly more senior colleagues. Therefore, we examined the topics as a function of age (Table 11).

The age structure of respondents indicated that topics such as ‘Household, Family and Consumer History’ and ‘Education and Human Resource Development’ are quite popular among younger respondents.²⁴ Topics like ‘Labor and Employment History’ have a long tradition in our discipline and are also popular among the slightly more senior colleagues. In addition, the study of agriculture, natural resources and mining (which also includes some fields of environmental history), and anthropometric history, which are sometimes perceived as “young” fields, now have a certain history within our discipline.

²⁴ “Economy-wide Country Studies and Comparative History” seems like a relatively broad category into which topics fit that do not fit elsewhere.

Table 9: Promotion strategies to make the WEHC 2012 a success, as suggested by respondents

Promotion topics	Respondents
travel stipends to world congress	12
regional meetings	9
summer school (doctoral students)	9
travel stipends for several months	6
guest speakers in countries with small economic history groups	5
advertise eh in media	4
Host a world congress	3
international coop in doctoral education	2
joint doctoral education	2
new IEHA journal	2
travel stipends for last developed countries, competitive	1
IEHA newsletter (monthly)	1
weekly IEHA newsletter	1
1-week economics crash courses for historians	1
annual doctoral WEHC	1
travel cost stipends to sources	1
eh journals on IEHA webpage	1
Databases in internet	1
disseminate research written in Asian languages	1
Doctoral exchanges	1
encourage famous to participate in WEHC (as before)	1
annual WEHC	1

Abbreviation: WEHC = World Economic History Congress

Table 10: Topics that should be on the WEHC 2012, as mentioned by respondents

Topics	Respondents
Economic Development, Growth, and Aggregate Productivity	53
Macroeconomics and Fluctuations	43
Financial Markets, Financial Institution, and Monetary History	38
Business History	32
International and domestic Trade and Relations	30
Income and Wealth	29
Social and Cultural History, including Race, Ethnicity and Gender	26
Markets and Institutions	17
Development of the Economic History Discipline: Historiography	15
Education and Human Resource Development	13
Government, Law and Regulation, Public Finance	11
History Demography, including Migration	10
Economic Planning and Policy	9
History of Economic Thought, Methodology	8
History of Technology, including Technological Change	8
Labour and Employment History	8
Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Extractive Industries	7
Living Standards, Anthropometric History, Economic Anthropology	7
Household, Family and Consumer History	7
Industry: Manufacturing and Construction	6
Historical Geography	6
Military and War	5
Economywide Country Studies and Comparative History	5
Transport and Distribution, Energy and Other Services	3
Servitude and Slavery	2
Urban and Regional History	2

Table 11: Topics as a function of age

Topic	Age
Household, Family and Consumer History	41
Economywide Country Studies and Comparative History	43
Education and Human Resource Development	43
Economic Planning and Policy	44
Income and Wealth	45
Social and Cultural History, including Race, Ethnicity and Gender	45
Durchschnitt insgesamt	46
Business History	46
Macroeconomics and Fluctuations	46
Markets and Institutions	46
History of Technology, including Technological Change	47
Economic Development, Growth, and Aggregate Productivity	47
Financial Markets, Financial Institution, and Monetary History	47
History of Economic Thought, Methodology	47
History Demography, including Migration	48
Servitude and Slavery	48
International and domestic Trade and Relations	48
Industry: Manufacturing and Construction	49
Government, Law and Regulation, Public Finance	49
Development of the Economic History Discipline: Historiography	49
Historical Geography	49
Urban and Regional History	50
Living Standards, Anthropometric History, Economic Anthropology	52
Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Extractive Industries	52
Military and War	52
Transport and Distribution, Energy and Other Services	52
Labour and Employment History	55