

Pablo Álvarez-Aragón

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Contact Information

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Personal Information

Citizenship: Spanish
Born in 1997

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Primary: Development Economics

Secondary: Economic History, family economics, Economics of Religion

REFERENCES

Catherine Guirkinger
Full Professor of Economics
University of Namur
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Jean-Philippe Platteau
Emeritus Professor of Economics
University of Namur
jean-philippe.platteau@unamur.be

Jean-Marie Baland
Full Professor of Economics
University of Namur
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DOCTORAL STUDIES

2021-2025, University of Namur (CRED)

Ph.D Development Economics Advisor: Catherine Guirkinger

Dissertation jury: Jean-Marie Baland, Augustin Bergeron, Pauline Rossi

September 2023 - March 2024, Paris School of Economics

Visiting Scholar Supervisor: Denis Cogneau

March 2025, Vancouver School of Economics

Visiting Scholar Supervisors: Siwan Anderson and Nathan Nunn

PRE-DOCTORAL STUDIES

2019-2021 - MSc in Economics, UCLouvain. *Summa Cum Laude*

2015-2019 – BA in Economics, University of Valladolid.

2016-2019 – BA in Economics, University of Lille.

RESEARCH WORK

(Abstracts are in the last page)

Job Market paper

- [Ancestral Beliefs and Fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Working Papers

- [School Clustering and Religious Competition: Persistence of Educational Inequality in Colonial and Post-Colonial D.R. Congo](#)
(With P. Villar and C. Guirkingner)
Submitted
- [Measuring Norms and Enumerator Effects: Survey Method Matters](#)
(With H. Champeaux)
Revise and Resubmit, The World Bank Economic Review
AEA RCT Registry: AEARCTR-0011696
- [Kinship Structure and Fertility](#)
(With L. Angelini and A. Jolivet)
Draft available upon request

Work in Progress

- Religious Conversion and Womens Economic Emancipation in Sub-Saharan Africa
(With J-P. Platteau and C. Guirkingner)
- Husbands in the Room: The Impact of Joint vs. Women-Only Training on Household Dynamics in Benin
(With C. Guirkingner, A. Jolivet and A. Lulle)
AEA RCT Registry: AEARCTR-0008898
- Robustness and Replicability in Development Economics
(PI: Jorg Ankel-Peters, co-PI: Anna Dreber and Magnus Johannesson)

TEACHING AND RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

Teaching

- 2022 – Applied Econometrics (graduate), University of Namur
Teaching Assistant to Prof. Wouter Gelade, National Bank of Belgium (12h)
Contents: Linear regression, Non-linear models, Panel data, Experimental and quasi-experimental methods

- **2024** – Economic Tools to Solve Global Challenges (graduate), UCLouvain and U. Namur Teaching Assistant to Prof. Guilhem Cassan, University of Namur and to Prof. Amma Panin (UCLouvain)
Contents: Replication, causal inference

International experience

- **2020-2021** – Research Assistant to Marcus Biermann, Bielefeld University
- **2018-2019** – Research Assistant to Oscar Carpintero, University of Valladolid

Fieldwork and data entry

- **2025** – Data collection and supervision, Benin (x2)
- **2024** – Data collection and supervision, Benin (x2)
- **2023** – Data collection and supervision, Benin
- **2022** – RA supervision to digitize historical documents
- **2021** – Data collection and supervision, Benin

SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

2024-2025 – Pontificia Universidad Javeriana*; ASREC Conference, University of Macedonia; CRED Workshop, UNamur; Job Market Training, CERDI; II Spanish Workshop in Development Economics, Navarra Center for International Development, IRES Lunch seminar, UCLouvain; Doctoral Workshop UCLouvain, Namur, USaint Louis (x2); Vodoun School of Economics, Ouidah; CSAE 2025 Conference, Oxford University; International Conference in Development Economics (ICDE), Paris Nanterre University (Scheduled)

2023-2024 – LAGV*; International Conference in Development Economics (ICDE), Aix Marseille School of Economics, DIAL*; University of Santiago de Compostela, AFEPOP2024, EHES; Bolzano Historical Economics Workshop*, EUDN Bocconi*, Casual Friday Development Seminar, Paris School of Economics; Sassari*; Cagliari*; Annual Conference of the Spanish Economic Association, University of Salamanca; CERDI*; Atelier Simiand, Paris School of Economics; UCLouvain, UNamur and U. Saint Louis Doctoral Workshop (x2); Institutions, Culture, and Long-Term Development: Lessons from sub-Saharan Africa Conference, CRED; Center for Research in the Economics of Development (CRED) Workshop, UNamur; Development Economics Workshop, Universitat de Barcelona School of Economics; ENS Lyon Applied Seminar*

2022-2023 – International Conference on Development Economics (ICDE), Paris School of Economics*; Bordeaux School of Economics Internal Seminar*; University of Valladolid Internal Seminar; ASREC Conference, Harvard University; UCLouvain, UNamur and U. Saint Louis Doctoral Workshop; PARSC Conference, African School of Economics; Center for Research in the Economics of Development (CRED) Workshop, UNamur

2021-2022 – University of Castilla-La-Mancha; Workshop in Gender and Family Economics,

CY Cergy Paris University*; CRED Workshop, UNamur; UCLouvain, UNamur and U. Saint Louis Doctoral Workshop

* Presented by a co-author

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2025: Scientific Stay Grant – Special Research Fund (FSR)

2024: Robustness and Replicability in Economics (R2E) – German Science Foundation (DFG) Priority Programme Meta-Rep

2023: Scientific Stay Grant (FSR-FNRS)

2023–2025: Doctoral fellowship – Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS)

2022–2023: Doctoral fellowship – Special Research Fund (FSR)

2021–2022: Doctoral fellowship – European Research Council, H2020/ERC – StG 759294

2018–2019: Collaboration Fellowship – MINECO, Spanish Government

2017–2018: Erasmus+ Mobility Scholarship – European Union

TECHNICAL STRENGTHS AND LANGUAGES

Languages: Spanish (Native), English (Fluent), French (Advanced)

Software & Tools: Stata, SurveyCTO, QGIS, \LaTeX , KoboToolBox, MS Office

REFEREEING

Review of Development Economics (x2)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

2023 – Organizer Doctoral Workshop in Economics – UNamur, UCLouvain and USaint-Louis

2022 – Book Review: "Unsustainable Inequalities: Social Justice and the Environment", by Lucas Chancel, Revista Papeles de Relaciones Ecosociales y Cambio Global, 2022.

2021 – Dissemination: Álvarez Aragón, P. (2021). Sobre los premios "Nobel" de Economía. Revista De Economía Crítica, (32), 29.

2019 – Book Review: "Globalists. The end of the empire and the birth of neoliberalism", by Quinn Slobodian, Revista de Economía Crítica, 2019, ISSN 2013 – 5254.

2019 – Editor of the Blog "[Puntos de Encuentro](#)", jointly with scholars and students from the University of Valladolid.

Ancestral Beliefs and Fertility in sub-Saharan Africa

This paper provides insights into the determinants of fertility collapse by examining the demographic consequences of traditional religious beliefs in sub-Saharan Africa. I focus on the impact of a belief system that emphasizes the role of ancestors, who have a strong interest in the continuation of their lineage into which they may be reincarnated. I combine first-hand data, novel ethnographic information and historical and contemporary surveys to show: 1) a strong, positive relationship between ancestral beliefs and fertility across contexts and time periods; and 2) that this relationship is specifically driven by the motive to continue one's lineage. Guided by a simple model where the total number of children in the lineage is a public good and depends on the kinship system, I show that 1) the effect of ancestral beliefs is driven by patrilineal societies, where the motive to continue one's lineage is stronger; and 2) in groups with ancestral beliefs, there is free rider behavior among siblings: In patrilineal societies, fertility decreases with the number of the husband's brothers, whereas in matrilineal societies, female fertility decreases with the number of sisters (but not brothers). These predictions are supported by the data.

School Clustering and Religious Competition: Persistence of Educational Inequality in Colonial and Post-Colonial Congo

(With Catherine Guirkingier and Paola Villar)

This paper examines the persistence of educational inequalities in Africa, focusing on colonial and contemporary Congo. By analyzing historical and contemporary surveys, archives, and school administrative data, we document the continuing impact of colonial-era factors and explore mechanisms of path dependency. We find that contemporary educational inequalities are driven by the clustering of post-independence schools around historical colonial schools. This clustering dynamic has increased over time and is shaped by religious competition between schools of different denominations. This spatial pattern significantly affects girls' education more than boys' because girls are more sensitive to distance barriers, explaining a stronger colonial legacy for female education. Our analysis suggests that parental education and missions as agents of structural change have limited influence on regional educational outcomes in this context.

Measuring Norms and Enumerator Effects: Survey Method Matters

(With Hugues Champeaux)

While the process of data collection can lead to bias, little empirical evidence investigates the role of the survey method. In this paper, we compare two survey methods: the standard face-to-face interview and an alternative method we call Human-Assisted Self-Administered survey (HASA). In the latter, respondents are guided by an enumerator reading questions, but they answer privately on an electronic device. Taking advantage of an RCT in Benin, we randomize the survey method across respondents while holding the questionnaire constant. We show that the survey method leads to different results depending on the degree of enumerator influence. Identifying this influence by quantifying how much of the variation in the outcome variable is attributable to enumerators, we document that variables that are unlikely to be influenced by enumerators do not differ significantly across survey methods. However, variables that are likely to be affected differ systematically. These variables are mainly related to norms, opinions, and beliefs. In particular, we find that respondents who answer

directly on an electronic device report less gender-equal behavior and values. Investigating the mechanisms, we show that social desirability bias is more likely to affect responses in classical face-to-face interviews, where individuals' responses are less confidential.

Kinship Structure and Fertility

(With L. Angelini and A. Jolivet)

We examine the relationship between the social organization of communities - their emphasis on unilineal descent - and fertility. In unilineal societies, descent is traced primarily through either the mother's or the father's side, which strongly determines social identity, increases cohesion, and reinforces interdependence within the lineage. Numerous children are valued as reinforcing the position of a continuous lineage, conferring strength and prestige on its members. We show that, across countries, unilineal societies have higher fertility levels and experience slower fertility decline. These results are validated within sub-Saharan Africa using a spatial regression discontinuity design along ancestral ethnic boundaries. Moreover, we show that the positive influence of unilineal descent on fertility is driven by patrilineal ethnic groups. In terms of mechanisms, we find suggestive evidence that the stronger motive to continue one's lineage, higher marital stability, the prevalence of extended households and polygyny, and the lower bargaining power of women in patrilineal societies drive fertility upwards.