

Development constrained

Essays on land as a factor in nineteenth-century
industrialization and trade

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Handelshögskolans fakultetsnämnd vid Göteborgs
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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation consists of an introductory chapter, four research essays and one essay that describes the collected dataset. The first essay examines how the balance of land embodied in British trade developed during the nineteenth century and provides the first all-encompassing accounts on this topic. It is shown that the contribution of vertical expansion has been far larger than that of horizontal expansion. The former thereby contributed significantly more than the latter to overcoming British land constraints and fostering economic development throughout the nineteenth century.

The second essay examines the contribution of colonies and colonialism in abolishing Britain's land constraints. It is found that land embodied in trade from British colonial and former colonial territories represented the lion's share of total land embodied in imports from overseas territories. The commodities that contributed the most to this process of territorial expansion were the European settlements in British North America and Australia. The results also provide circumstantial evidence that the institution of colonialism could have contributed to consolidating nineteenth-century industrial specialization by providing advantages additional to the terms of trade associated with factor endowments.

The third essay provides a sustainability assessment of Britain's socio-economic system during the nineteenth century, using the ecological footprint methodology. It is found that the economic development of the new industrial socio-economic system was already unsustainable during the period under study, and the socio-economic system thereby represented a system in overshoot. British society was consuming resources to an extent that other European late-industrializers would only reach approximately 100 years later. Additionally, the empirical evidence illustrates that the relationship between globalization, industrialization and sustainable development may be more dynamic and multifaceted than some previous research has assumed.

The fourth essay performs a comparative analysis of agricultural productivity in Senegambia in relation to that found in the plantation complex in the Americas. The aim of the essay is to examine the region's capacity to produce an agricultural surplus, and what implications this might have had for the transatlantic slave trade. It is found that differences in land productivity between Africa and the Americas were very large, indicating a very low agricultural productivity in Senegambia. It is argued in the essay that this low agricultural productivity also could have served as a motivation for the transatlantic slave trade.

Keywords: economic development, industrialization, 19th-century, land, land productivity, coal, colonies, trade, empire, colonialism, slave trade, ecological footprint, ghost acres, sustainability

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