Noah Sutter

PhD Candidate, London School of Economics (LSE)

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Research Interests

Primary	Economic History · Social Mobility · Inequality
Secondary	Political Economy · Document Processing · Cultural Economics

Education

London School of Economics
PhD/MPhil Economic History (funded through LSE Studentship), 2022-2027

Paris School of Economics
Visiting PhD Student Economics, 2025

University of Oxford, Balliol College
Master of Philosophy in Economics, 2019-2021

University of Zurich
B.A. Economics, 2014-2018

References

Neil Cummins
London School of Economics
Professor of Economic History

Harvard Kennedy School
Stone Visiting Professor of Public Policy

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Mohamed Saleh
London School of Economics
Professor of Economic History

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Paula Gobbi
Université Libre de Bruxelles (ECARES)
Professor of Economics

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Research

Surnames and Distinction: Surname-based measures of the Persistence of the French Elite 1791-1902, Wealth, Honours, and Office - Job Market Paper

Bi-generational estimates of intergenerational wealth mobility imply that economic advantages dissipate within only a few generations. Surname-based methods, by contrast, uncover much higher rates of intergenerational persistence. I extend the surname-based method to nineteenth-century France, using a newly digitised dataset of 1.8 million observations of wealth at death. I find high rates of persistence comparable to the ones for England during the same period - between 0.74 and 0.93. I use data on 22 elite registers linked at the surname level, yielding more than 240,000 observations, to further test these results and confirm the persistence levels. I do not find evidence for the economic decline of the *Ancien Régime* nobility. While sorting on wealth gives a persistence rate of 0.898 for the highest ventile, sorting on wealth and hereditary noble titles yields a persistence estimate statistically indistinguishable from 1 with a tight bootstrap standard error (0.037). I propose the hypothesis that the latent factor can be interpreted as a durable endowment of social and cultural capital.

Presented: *ASSA 2027 Annual Meeting (forthcoming), Seminar on "New Directions in the Historical and Comparative Sociology of Elites" (LSE) 2026 (forthcoming), Department of Economics Seminar University of Southern Denmark 2026 (forthcoming), Oxford Graduate Seminar in Economic and Social History 2026 (forthcoming), LSE Economic History Graduate Seminar 2026, IT19 Winter School on Inequality and Social Welfare Theory 2026, International Inequalities Institute Graduate Seminar (LSE) 2025, LSE Seminar*

for Political Economy and Economic History (SPEECH) 2025

From Records to Riches: An Automated Pipeline for Digitising French Tax Records, 1790–1870 (with Aurelius Noble)
The *Tables des Successions et Absences* constitute one of the richest sources for the study of wealth, inequality, and social mobility in modern France, recording individual-level wealth at death for the entire population from 1791 to 1870. Yet they have remained largely inaccessible at scale. The most extensive prior digitisation, the *Enquête TRA*, comprises approximately 56,000 individuals sampled by surname. This is too few to support disaggregated analysis - a problem compounded by intergenerational studies, where record linkage reduces usable sample sizes. This paper presents a pipeline for the automated digitisation of these handwritten tabular records. Applying this pipeline across twenty French *départements*, we produce a database of nearly 1.8 million individual inheritance records, providing the coverage necessary for fine-grained analysis by class, occupation, and region. We complement the pipeline with an evaluation framework designed for economic historians. This examines the downstream impact of these methods on later analysis. We provide pedagogical materials, including workshops and open-source model weights, intended to make the pipeline accessible to the broader historical research community.

Presented: *Thema CY Cergy Paris Université Internal Seminar 2025, IT18 Winter School on Inequality and Social Welfare Theory 2025, Datini-ESTER Advanced Seminar "Social and Geographic Mobility" 2024, EHS Annual Conference 2024 (Poster Session)*

Illegal Book Trade and the Market for Ideas in Enlightenment Europe (with Julius Koschnick)
Eighteenth-century Europe was a patchwork of autocratic regimes with active censorship and without a free market for ideas. Yet, we find that this period produced significant innovations in science, technology, and politics. Joel Mokyr (2016) has argued that the fragmentation of Europe into different states was key to avoid censorship and to nurture the European knowledge economy. We provide the first quantitative evidence that European fragmentation managed to undermine censorship and that the clandestine print market was not capacity constrained but supply could expand elastically, thereby being a crucial element of the European knowledge economy. We study a fiscal shock, the introduction of a tax on paper in 1771, which gave a competitive advantage to foreign clandestine publishers over domestic French publishers. We use data from the complete archive of transactions of the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel (STN), the most important publishing house of the Enlightenment book trade outside the Kingdom of France, containing information on 854,000 individual book sales, combined with La France Littéraire, a French national bibliography listing French publications between 1700 and 1830. We apply a difference-in-differences approach and a synthetic DiD to assess the causal effect of the paper tax. We find that the paper tax reduced domestic book production by 27%, increased STN exports to France by roughly 180%, and shifted the composition of imports towards more radical and illegal content, mostly radical Enlightenment and pornography.

Presented: *ASREC Europe Conference 2026, LSE Seminar for Political Economy and Economic History (SPEECH) 2026, University of Southern Denmark Economics Brown Bag Seminar 2025, LSE Economic History Graduate Seminar 2025*

Work in Progress

Putting AI on Trial: Benchmarking LLMs against Expert Coding of French Customary Law (with Paula Gobbi, Marc Goñi, and Morgane Rigaux)
Until the early modern period, most of Europe was governed by customary law. The transfer of wealth between family members constituted a large part of this customary law and gender was an important aspect in these transfers. We hand-code a database of legal provisions in *Ancien Régime* French customary law and use this hand-coded database to test the performance of an LLM-based pipeline for coding customary law. We discuss potential biases introduced into the data by contemporary large language models and aim to make our pipeline publicly available to enable researchers to exploit variation in customary law.

Presented: *ERC conference - Historical Human Capital in the Age of Big Data 2026*

The New Regime of the Family: Persistent Effects of French Customary Law on the Gender Wealth Gap, 1791-1870
The *Code Napoléon* attempted to impose a *New Regime of the Family*. In a conscious effort to adhere to the Revolutionary ideal

of equality, universal partition of inheritance was introduced. Although intensely patriarchal in most other regards, this included the introduction of legal equality of women in inheritance. Using a new dataset of 1.8 million observations of wealth at death and employing a Regression Discontinuity Design, I investigate whether pre-Revolutionary customary legal norms, which were not outlawed by the *Code Napoléon*, had persistent effects on the gender wealth gap. I study variation in customary marital community property norms (*communauté des acquests*) and in the inclusion of women in inheritance.

Presented: *Workshop on "The Dynamics of Inequality: Long-Term Perspectives" 2026, LSE Historical Economic Demography Workshop 2026, Cambridge Economic and Social History Workshop 2025, European Center for Advanced Research in Economics and Statistics Seminar (Solvay Brussels School Economics & Management) 2025, Economic History Association 85th Annual Meeting (Poster Session) 2025, World Economic History Congress 2025, First LSE/PSE Joint Economic History Workshop 2025*

Mapping the French Elite from the *Ancien Régime* to the 20th Century (with Davis Kedrosky and Christopher Sims)
No studies of long-term social mobility in France exist that are built on a consistent source that both bridges the chasm of the Revolution and covers all of France. We digitise the French state almanacs, the French administrative directory listing state employees and notables in wider society. Under changing names - *almanach royal*, *almanach national*, *almanach impérial* - the publication appeared between 1691 and the early 20th century undergoing only minor changes. Using large language models, we can transcribe and structure this data, which allows us to study elite persistence and change in France across the Revolution of 1789.

The Colonial Origins of Economic Development in Europe: Evidence from the Interior Colonisation of modern-day Switzerland (with Andrés Irarrázaval)
Fernand Braudel compared the converted plains of the Mediterranean with the cleared forests of northern Europe and proposed the hypothesis that differences in the acquisition of new land during the period of European internal colonisation in the High Middle Ages, are causally connected to the economic reversal of fortunes between Southern and Northern Europe. Where labour-intensive forest clearing was employed, a more egalitarian social order arose. We empirically investigate this claim and whether these differences in land acquisition had long-term effects on economic development and political culture, using data from the complete corpus of the Historical Lexicon of Switzerland on 5229 settlements. We extract detailed information on the medieval institutional makeup of all these locations and construct an index of institutional quality. We find that forest clearing was associated with higher medieval institutional quality. In the pre-industrial period, we find that areas colonised by forest clearing, conditional on fundamentals, have lower population density and therefore, in a Malthusian world, potentially higher living standards. We find that in German-speaking Switzerland, colonisation through forest clearing led to an advantage in early proto-industrialisation. Industrialisation led to a reversal of fortunes and the areas colonised through forest clearing fell behind economically. We find causal evidence that colonisation through forest clearing is connected to higher acceptance of taxes in a fiscally decentralised system, as well as rugged individualism directed towards the centre evidenced by high rates of rejection of the federal measures to counteract the Covid pandemic.

Presented: *LSE Work in Progress Seminar Series*

Conference Presentations

- *Jan. 2027* ASSA 2027 Annual Meeting (Washington DC), *Accepted (forthcoming)*
- *Sep. 2026* ASREC Europe Conference (Warwick Venice Centre)
- *Sep. 2026* Workshop on "The Dynamics of Inequality: Long-Term Perspectives" (University of Florence)
- *Jan. 2026* LSE Historical Economic Demography Workshop (LSE)
- *Jan. 2026* IT19 Winter School on Inequality and Social Welfare Theory (Canazei), Paper and Laboratory Session
- *Sep. 2025* Economic History Association 85th Annual Meeting (Philadelphia, PA), Poster Session
- *Jul. 2025* World Economic History Congress (Lund University)
- *Apr. 2025* First LSE/PSE Joint Economic History Workshop (Paris School of Economics)
- *Jan. 2025* IT18 Winter School on Inequality and Social Welfare Theory (Canazei)
- *May 2024* Datini-ESTER Advanced Seminar "Social and Geographic Mobility" (Prato)

- *Apr. 2024* EHS Annual Conference (Northumbria University), Poster Session

Seminar Presentations

- *Nov. 2026* Department of Economics Seminar at the University of Southern Denmark *(forthcoming)*
- *Nov. 2026* Seminar on "New Directions in the Historical and Comparative Sociology of Elites" (LSE) *(forthcoming)*
- *Oct. 2026* Oxford Graduate Seminar in Economic and Social History *(forthcoming)*
- *Oct. 2026* LSE Economic History Graduate Seminar
- *May 2026* LSE Seminar for Political Economy and Economic History (SPEECH)
- *Nov. 2025* Cambridge Economic and Social History Workshop
- *Nov. 2025* European Center for Advanced Research in Economics and Statistics Seminar (Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management)
- *Oct. 2025* LSE Economic History Graduate Seminar
- *Jun. 2025* Thema CY Cergy Paris Université Internal Seminar
- *Mar. 2025* International Inequalities Institute Graduate Seminar (LSE)
- *Mar. 2025* LSE Economic History Graduate Seminar
- *Feb. 2025* LSE Seminar for Political Economy and Economic History (SPEECH)

Grants and Awards

- LSE Summer School Class Teacher Award 2026
- *Economic History Society* PhD Bursary 2026
- LSE Class Teacher Award, Highly Commended (2024): Awarded by LSESU for the best class teachers by Department
- Carnevali Small Research Grant *Economic History Society* (2024)
- LSE Studentship (2022-2026): competitive four-year full funding PhD scholarship
- Annual Scholarship of the *Swiss Study Foundation* (2019): Funding for the MPhil at the University of Oxford (CHF 20,000)

Teaching

Teaching Assistant, Undergraduate Level (Instructor for seminar sessions accompanying the lecture)

- The Internationalisation of Economic Growth, 1870 to the present day, 2023-2026, LSE (Economic History) *(4.6-4.9/5.0)*
- Summer School: The Economic History of Inequality, 2024-2026, LSE (Economics/Economic History/Sociology) *(4.96/5.0)*
- History of Economics - How Theories Change, 2026-2027, LSE (Economics/Economic History)
- Mathematics for Economics, 2016, University of Zurich (Economics)

Lecture (Undergraduate level)

- Critical Junctures in the History of Inequality (as part of *The Economic History of Inequality*, 2025-2026, LSE Economic History) *(4.7/5.0)*

Skills

Languages	English (Fluent) · German (mother language) · French (Fluent) · Spanish (B2) · Italian (A2)
Programming	Stata · R · Python · GIS · Groovy (Java)

Academic Service

Co-organiser and panellist, Workshop on the Use of AI in History, EHS Women's Committee (2026, forthcoming)

Work Experience

Swiss National Bank (SNB) Traineeship in Monetary Policy Analysis (Department of Economics) *Aug. 2021 - Aug. 2022*
Saïd Business School (University of Oxford) Research Assistant to Renée Adams (part-time), *Apr.- Aug. 2020*
University of Zurich (Department of Economics) Predoctoral Fellowship with Joachim Voth *Jun. 2018 - Jul. 2019*

Swiss National Bank (SNB) Traineeship Banking Statistics (Department of Statistics) *Dec. 2017 - Jun. 2018*
Swiss Armed Forces Military Service (Conscription) as Corporal in CBRN Defense *Oct. 2013 - Aug. 2014*