

## **Bruno Witzel joins the Economic History research group with a project on inequalities in Brazilian long-run development (1850-1950)**

*A DAAD PRIME project for the Tübingen Economic History research group: Using historical rural accounting data and other micro evidence, Bruno Witzel explores inequality in socioeconomic outcomes between workers of different ethnolinguistic and professional backgrounds in Brazil.*

Bruno Witzel was successful to obtain a DAAD PRIME research grant for a postdoctoral research for 18 months at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and at Tübingen University. His study on Brazilian long-term development is a strong step forward in the research on Latin America. In his case study, Witzel will be able to focus on the microeconomics of one of the most important Brazilian plantations of the nineteenth century, looking at economic indicators for inequality. In a series of 3 papers, he will discuss productivity, remuneration, access to nutrition and health care among different laborers of the farm, including European immigrants, Brazilians, and ex-slaves that continued to work in the farm after the Brazilian abolition of slavery in 1888. Due to its interconnectedness with Tübingen University and the UCLA, his research project also aims to strengthen cooperative ties between the US, Latin America, and Germany.

**1817, Brazil, Ibicaba plantation.** Shortly after the foundation of the Ibicaba plantation, probably unintentionally, its first proprietors launched the creation of one of the most instructive datasets in Brazilian Economic History. Today, accounting data from this very plantation will shed light on systematic differences among different groups of workers in the farm for a number of socioeconomic dimensions, including remuneration and labour productivity, health and nutrition, and education levels. .

Founded in 1817 by Nicolau Pereira de Campos Vergueiro, a leading Senator of the Brazilian Empire, this plantation's greatest fame stems from an institutional innovation. It staged the first attempts to substitute European immigrant laborers for African and African-Brazilian slaves, starting in 1840 with Portuguese and following in 1847 with various German-speaking immigrants, including the Swiss. With the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the concomitant process of mass immigration of southern Europeans to the coffee zones, new patterns of specialization within this and other farms started to appear, with major consequences for the opportunities available to different ethnolinguistic groups.

In his new project, research fellow Bruno Witzel will now investigate the subject, with support and supervision of not one, but two mentors: William Summerhill (UCLA) and Jörg Baten (University of Tübingen) will be supporting Witzel throughout the different phases of his project.

In total, this project envisages the publication of three papers, all focusing on the period from 1850-1950. First is an exploration into labor productivity and remuneration. The main question at this stage of the study is whether these two variables showed tendencies of cointegration or of decoupling, especially in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery. This paper will look deep into the origins of income and wealth inequality – a pervasive theme in Latin American economic history. Second, Witzel will study income availability, nutrition, and access to basic consumables. Here, the focus will lie on the nutritional status of the different worker groups and its evolution over time. Were some groups even unable to reach certain minimum levels of adequate nutrition? Did households reach different nutritional statuses over time according to their ethnolinguistic origins? The third paper, in turn, will focus on morbidity and access to health services between households with different ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Aspects such as the types of diseases, opportunity costs, and the economic toll of the death of family members will be analyzed.

In many respects, the Ibicaba plantation data is ideal for conducting such case studies, and Witzel's use of historical rural accounting information from Brazil also presents an important contribution to current research, in general. Methodologically, this project will use high frequency microdata to provide new metrics of labor income, nutrition, and health, and of course includes a differentiated discussion of methods, as well. This will contribute to the ongoing discussion in Economic History on the practical advantages and difficulties of creating new datasets for the assessment of economic wellbeing and development in the long-run.

Thematically and geographically, the three studies will also contribute to the research conducted at the Chair of Economic and Social History in Tübingen: Latin America and the global south in general are underrepresented in international platforms of economic history research, as the focus currently still remains on Europe and U.S. Therefore, Witzel's research is an important contribution to global economic history, even if its results might not be applicable to Brazil as a whole.

By conducting his research multinationally, Witzel aims to strengthen cooperative ties between Latin America and Germany as well as the U.S. After the accomplishment of his 3-paper project, he plans on further establishing academic links between Germany and Brazil and especially working with the Brasilien-Zentrum at Tübingen University. Furthermore, another research proposal on the subject of urban economic structures of Latin American municipalities is already in the making.

We are happy to welcome Bruno Witzel as a part of our research group and are looking forward to our cooperation.