

Im Rahmen der öffentlichen Vortragsreihe

Economic Theory and Policy

der Forschungsgruppe Ökonomie
am Institut für Stochastik und Wirtschaftsmathematik
der TU Wien

hält

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einen Vortrag
mit dem Titel

The Physiological Foundations of Comparative Economic Development

Abstract: *In this paper we provide a new explanation, based on physiological constraints of long-run human evolution, for the so called reversal of fortune. Specifically we explain why for most of human history the more densely populated regions were situated at low absolute latitude and produced more technological innovations and why, nevertheless, the originally less densely populated regions at higher latitudes were the first to initiate the fertility transition, investment in education, and the take-off to modern growth. The explanation is based on the evolution of comparative advantage in the child quality-quantity dimension, taking place long before the onset of formal education. Humans evolving in temperate zones developed a comparative advantage in investment in child quality in terms of nutrition because in cold environments larger bodies are more energy efficient. Consequently colder areas were less densely populated and less innovative during Malthusian times. The fact that humans in temperate zones faced higher nutritional costs per child explains why they started to invest earlier in formal education and experienced an earlier take-off to modern growth.*

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