

## **The Geography of Economic Growth in the US since 1850**

**Faculty Member:** [Michael Peters](#)  
[Costas Arkolakis](#)

### **Proposal Description:**

In this project we study the spatial nature of the process of US economic growth. Examples are abound: the rapid process of urbanization, changes in transport costs induced by the expansion of the railroad in the late 19th century or the wave of industrialization in the North East in the mid 19th century are important aspects of the economic transformation of the US, which were inextricably linked to the economic geography of the US economy.

To understand and quantify the importance of such spatial forces, we aim to develop a general framework of spatial growth accounting. Building on recent theoretical advances in spatial models of economic growth and using novel historical data on the spatial distribution of economic activity, we plan to apply our measurement framework to the last 150 years of US economic growth. Using this framework, we then aim to quantify the macroeconomic effects of the rise of the American cities and the aggregate consequences of the westward expansion and the subsequent migration wave.

### **Requisite Skills and Qualifications:**

We are looking for research assistants with experience in computational work using MATLAB (or related software) and with an interest in deepening these skills. In particular, students who took classes like “Econ 417b. Computational Methods in Economics”, “ECON 433b. The Economics of Space” or related classes in computer science or math are strongly encouraged to apply. We are particularly interested in applicants who seriously consider applying to graduate school in economics after finishing their undergraduate studies.

**Award:** Loften Deprez  
Lydia Wickard  
Gloria Wu

**Tobin Application Link:** [Tobin Application](#)

**Project Type:** Tobin RA

**Project Year:** 2018

**Term:** Fall 2018

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