

the crash of stock exchanges much better than alternative linear and logistic models (Are Stock Markets Bifurcational? The View of the Catastrophe Theory). Juraj Kopecsni with his co-author Radovan Chalupka proposed a methodology to estimate loss given default and applied it to a set of micro-data of loans to SME and corporations. They find that the main de-

terminants of recovery rates are a certain collateral type, loan size, business connection and year of the loan origination (Modelling Bank Loan LGD of Corporate and SME Segments).

Revised versions of some of the papers presented at the conference will be published in the special issue of the AUCO/Czech Economic Review.

Northeastern Universities Development Consortium Conference

Boston University, 8–9 November, 2008

Michal Bauer*

Northeastern Universities Development Consortium Conference (NEUDC) has become a major forum for the field of development economics by organizing annual conferences since 1967. The location and sponsorship of the NEUDC conferences rotates among five institutions: Yale University, Boston University, Cornell University, Harvard University and Williams College. This year the move was rather modest, the event stayed within the boundaries of studentish Boston area and moved from Harvard to Boston University, Institute of Economic Development.

In five parallel sessions of four slots, the conference accommodated 140 papers. The structure of presented papers nicely reflects the unusual interest among development economists to collect original data in poor countries to test very particular hypotheses about behavior of the poor. Let me pick a few papers to illustrate the diversity of questions one can address with well designed field experiments or carefully collected survey data.

Lot of attention is traditionally devoted to fertility behavior. For example, Ming-Jen Lin, Jin-Tan Liu and Nancy Qian estimate a trade-off between sex-selective abortion and post-natal discrimination of girls using legalization of abortion in Taiwan as an exogenous shock. In their paper “The Impact of Abortion on Sex Ratios at Birth and Excess Female Mortality in Taiwan” they find that approximately 15 more female infants survived for every 100 aborted female fetuses. Development is full of such uneasy value judgements.

How to make children going more to school? The research of James Berry “Rotten kids or rotten parents? Child motivation and education decisions in India” shows that incentives given to children result in better outcomes than incentives given to parents for initially weak students, while the reverse is true for initially strong students. This suggests importance of inter-generational within-household frictions in education decisions. Karthik Murlidharan and Ven-

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katesh Sundararaman in a paper called “Contract teachers: Experimental evidence from India” try to address a controversial policy question if it is more efficient to use well-educated well-paid contract teachers or more teachers without professional training using renewable contracts.

Pamela Jakiela (“How Fair Shares Compare: Experimental Evidence from Two Cultures”) uses abstract experiments to estimate willingness to reward effort in US and Kenya. She finds that US subjects and educated Kenyan subjects value effort more than uneducated Kenyan subjects who do not distinguish if the income is a result of luck or effort. Bruce Wydick and Alessandra Cassar (“Does social capital matter? Evidence from a five-country group lending experiment”) study differences in dynamics of microcredit borrowing depending on group heterogeneity and availability of information on actions of other agents.

The success of microcredit around the world inspires academicians and prac-

tioners to test its various extensions. Jonathan Robinson and Pascaline Dupaz (“Savings Constraints and Microenterprise Development: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Kenya”) designed a new savings account for a local village bank in rural Kenya. Despite the fact that the savings accounts paid no interest and featured substantial withdrawal fees, take-up and usage was high among women. The savings accounts had substantial, positive impacts on productive investment levels and expenditures. However, not every field experiment delivers promising results. Jaikishan Dessai and Alessandro Tarozzi (“Microcredit, family planning programs and contraceptive behavior: Evidence from a field experiment in Ethiopia”) estimate synergies in providing family planning programs bundled with microcredit. They show that neither type of program, combined or in isolation, led to an increase in contraceptive use.

More questions and a few answers are available on the conference website: <http://www.bu.edu/econ/neudc/>.

The 5th Czech Economic Society Biennial Conference 2008

Prague, 29 November, 2008

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The Czech Economic Society (CES) is an association of scholars working or interested in the field of economics, and the Czech Economic Society’s biennial conference is the key event of the Society.

The main mission of the Society is to enhance the development and promote

knowledge of economics in the Czech Republic in a way that fully respects and supports autonomy of different streams of economics scholarship. To achieve this aim, the Society regularly organizes lectures and seminars, awards young economists, and publishes papers in economics. Every two years, it holds a bien-

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