

NILS HAAKON LEHR

Department of Economics
270 Bay State Rd, Room 515
Boston Massachusetts 02215 USA
Mobile: (617) 417-4235
Email: nilslehr@bu.edu
Website: <https://nilslehr.com>

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Economics, Boston University, Boston MA, May 2023 (expected)
Dissertation Title: *Essays on the Determinants of Economic Growth*
Dissertation Committee: Stephen Terry, Pascual Restrepo, Tarek Hassan, David Lagakos

M.S., Economics, Barcelona School of Economics, Barcelona, Spain, 2016

B.S., Economics, Humboldt University Berlin, Berlin, Germany, 2014

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Macroeconomics, Economic Growth

PUBLICATIONS

“[Nonprofits in Good Times and Bad Times](#),” (with Christine Exley and Stephen Terry)
Journal of Political Economy Microeconomics, (forthcoming)

WORKING PAPERS

“[R&D Return Dispersion and Growth](#),” September 2022. Job Market paper.
“[R&D Misallocation and the Growth Slowdown](#)”, September 2022.
“[Optimal Gradualism](#)”, (with Pascual Restrepo), September 2022.
“[Innovation in an Aging Economy](#),” February 2022.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“Making An Impact — Inventor Preferences and R&D Externalities”

PRESENTATIONS

American Economic Association, New Orleans, LA, 2023 (scheduled)
17th Annual Economics Graduate Student Conference of Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, October 2022 (scheduled)
Green Line Macro Meeting, Boston, MA, 2022
Workshop on Entrepreneurial Finance and Innovation - Ph.D. Workshop, Online, 2021
ZEW International Conference on “The German Labor Market in a Globalized World: Trade, Technology, and Demographics”, Online, 2021
Green Line Macro Meeting, Boston, MA, 2020

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Best Second Year Paper Award, Department of Economics, Boston University, 2019-2020

WORK EXPERIENCE

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

Professor Pascual Restrepo, Department of Economics, Boston University, 2018-2022
Professor Yuhei Miyauchi, Department of Economics, Boston University, 2020-2021
Professor Christine L. Exley, Negotiation, Organizations & Markets Unit, Harvard Business School, Summer 2020
Professor Stephen J. Terry, Department of Economics, Boston University, Winter 2019

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Senior Associate, Economic Consulting, Deloitte LLP, London, UK, 2016-2017

REFeree EXPERIENCE

Management Science, Review of Economic Dynamics, Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE

Officer for Graduate Economic Association, Boston University, 2019-2020
Co-organizer of Macro (Summer) Reading Group, 2019-2022

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, EC704: Advanced Macroeconomics, Department of Economics, Boston University, Spring 2019
Teaching Assistant, EC 102: Macroeconomics, Department of Economics, Boston University, Winter 2018

LANGUAGES

Fluent in English and German.
Intermediate Spanish.

COMPUTER SKILLS: MATLAB, STATA, R, Fortran, LaTeX

CITIZENSHIP/VISA STATUS: Germany/F1

REFERENCES

Professor Stephen J. Terry

Department of Economics
Boston University
Phone: (617) 353-4455
Email: stephent@bu.edu

Professor Pascual Restrepo

Department of Economics
Boston University
Phone: (617) 353-6824
Email: pascual@bu.edu

Professor Tarek A. Hassan

Department of Economics
Boston University
Phone: (617) 353-7082
Email: thassan@bu.edu

Professor David Lagakos

Department of Economics
Boston University
Phone: (617) 353-8903
Email: lagakos@bu.edu

NILS HAAKON LEHR

R&D Return Dispersion and Growth (Job Market Paper)

This paper documents large and persistent differences in R&D returns across listed US firms, with firms at the 75th percentile having two times the median return. This dispersion is surprising as workhorse endogenous growth models predict that R&D resources flow from low to high return firms until return equalization. I investigate frictions as a potential mechanism and find mixed results. On the one hand, I document that high R&D return firms are not credit constrained nor have a higher return on capital, suggesting that financial frictions are not a key driver. On the other hand, I document that high R&D return firms face a more inelastic supply of inventors, suggesting that return differences might reflect labor-market power. Calibrating a Schumpeterian growth model to match key data moments, I find that inventor market power differences can explain 1/3 of the measured R&D return dispersion and reduce the annual growth rate by 0.06 p.p., thereby reducing welfare by 2.1%.

R&D Misallocation and the Growth Slowdown

This paper identifies worsening R&D allocative efficiency as a potential driver of declining US economic growth. Within a simple endogenous growth framework, I develop a closed-form solution of the growth rate that can be decomposed into a frontier growth rate, only achievable with the growth-maximizing resource allocation, and an allocative efficiency measure, measuring the gap between realized and frontier growth. Combining the model with data on the innovation activity of US firms I estimate that allocative efficiency declined significantly from 1975 to 2014. Comparing the 1975-94 period to the 2005-14 period, I find that declining allocative efficiency can account for a 25%-40% lower economic growth in the latter period, which can explain the entire concurrent decline in economic growth as documented in the literature. I discuss potential drivers of declining allocative efficiency including waning federal support for R&D, institutional and technological change, and increasing labor market power over inventors.

Optimal Gradualism

(with Pascual Restrepo)

This paper studies how gradualism affects the welfare gains from trade, technology, and reforms. When people face adjustment frictions, gradual shocks create less adverse distributional effects in the short run. We provide formulas to quantify the distributional gains from gradualism. We also derive formulas for optimal short-run taxes on trade and technology, and show that there are welfare gains from inducing a more gradual transition via temporary distortions. These formulas can be used to compute the optimal timing of economic reforms or trade liberalizations. Using these formulas, we compute the welfare gains from gradualism and the optimal temporary taxes needed to mitigate the distributional consequences of rising import competition from China and the deployment of automation technologies substituting for routine jobs. We also use our formulas to study Colombia's trade liberalization in 1990 and show that optimal policy called for a more gradual reform.