

Mapping the State: Measuring Infrastructural Power Through Cadastral Records

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SUMMARY

State capacity, broadly understood as the ability of states to implement political decisions, has become a core concept in social sciences. A large interdisciplinary literature has empirically established the independent effects of state capacity on a number of important outcomes, ranging from economic development, civil war and human development indicators. Despite this progress, the development of the field is hampered by poor empirical indicators of state capacity, which fail to meet contemporary scientific standards of validity and reliability,, have limited spatial and temporal coverage, and are frequently conflated with the outcomes.

On the basis of a systematic review of the existing conceptualizations and prevailing measurements of state capacity, and aiming to address the existing problems with empirical measures, the paper develops a novel empirical indicator of state capacity - Cadastre Index.

The papers discusses at length the construction of the Cadastre Index indicator, which measures the information-gathering activity of the state in relation to one of the key economic assets – land – for 159 states over 1000 years. The paper also provides the results of a validation test for the measure.

The consusion outlines how the availability of this measure may move our understanding of the independent effect of state capacity on socially valuable outcomes further.

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