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Notes on CEPII's distances measures: The *GeoDist* database

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NOTES ON CEPII'S DISTANCES MEASURES: THE *GeoDist* DATABASE

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

GeoDist makes available the exhaustive set of gravity variables developed in Mayer and Zignago (2005) to analyze market access difficulties in global and regional trade flows. *GeoDist* provides useful data online (http://www.cepii.fr/anglaisgraph/bdd/distances.htm) for empirical economic research including geographical elements and variables. A common use of these files is the estimation by trade economists of gravity equations describing bilateral patterns of trade flows. Covariates such as bilateral distance, contiguity, or colonial historical links have also been used in other fields than international trade: for the study of bilateral flows of foreign direct investment for instance, but also by researchers interested in explaining migration patterns, international flows of tourists, of telephone traffic, etc. Even outside economics, several researchers in different social sciences use these types of variables. Political scientists, for instance, use distance and contiguity (among other determinants) to explain why some pairs of countries have a higher probability than others of going to war. Other datasets have been proposed in the literature and provide geographical and distance data, notably those developed by Jon Haveman, Vernon Henderson and Andrew Rose. We try to improve upon the existing sets of variables in terms of geographical coverage, measurement and the number of variables provided.

Our first dataset (*geo_cepii*), incorporates country-specific geographical variables for 225 countries in the world, including the geographical coordinates of their capital cities, the languages spoken in the country under different definitions, a variable indicating whether the country is landlocked, and their colonial links. The second dataset (*dist_cepii*) is dyadic, in the sense that it includes variables valid for pairs of countries. Distance is the most common example of such a variable, and the file includes different measures of bilateral distances (in kilometers) available for most countries across the world.

The main contribution of *GeoDist* is to compute internal (or intra-national) and international bilateral distances in a totally consistent way. How define internal distances of countries? How make those constructed internal distances consistent with 'traditional' international distances calculations? The latter question is in fact crucial for obtaining a correct estimate of trade impediments. Any overestimate of the internal / external distance ratio will yield to a mechanic upward bias in the border effect estimate. We have computed these distances using city-level data to assess the geographic distribution of population (in 2004) inside each nation. The basic idea, inspired by Head and Mayer (2002), is to calculate distance between two countries based on bilateral distances between the biggest cities of those two countries, those inter-city distances being weighted by the share of the city in the overall country's population.

ABSTRACT

GeoDist makes available the exhaustive set of gravity variables used in Mayer and Zignago (2005). *GeoDist* provides several geographical variables, in particular bilateral distances measured using city-level data to assess the geographic distribution of population inside each nation. We have calculated different measures of bilateral distances available for most countries across the world (225 countries in the current version of the database). For most of them, different calculations of "*intra*-national distances" are also available. The *GeoDist* webpage provides two distinct files: a country-specific one (*geo_cepii*) and a dyadic one (*dist_cepii*) including a set of different distance and common dummy variables used in gravity equations to identify particular links between countries such as colonial past, common languages, contiguity. We try to improve upon the existing similar datasets in terms of geographical coverage, quality of measurement and number of variables provided.

JEL Classification: F10, F12; F13, F14, F15, C80.

Keywords: Distances, International Trade, Databases, Gravity, Trade Costs, Border Effects.

NOTES SUR LA BASE DE DONNÉES DE DISTANCES DU CEPII (*GeoDist*)

RÉSUME NON TECHNIQUE

GeoDist fournit l'ensemble des données développées par Mayer and Zignago (2005) pour mesurer les difficultés d'accès aux marchés mondiaux. GeoDist, ou base de données de distances du CEPII, propose en ligne (http://www.cepii.fr/anglaisgraph/bdd/distances.htm) des données géographiques utiles à la recherche empirique, en particulier pour l'estimation des équations de gravité dans le domaine du commerce international. Par rapport aux séries élaborées par Jon Haveman, Vernon Henderson et Andrew Rose, nous avons étendu la couverture géographique, affiné les mesures et développé le nombre des variables. Au-delà de l'analyse du commerce, la distance entre deux pays, leur contigüité, les liens historiques sont autant de variables utilisées dans d'autres champs de recherche, comme ceux des investissements directs, des flux migratoires ou touristiques, du trafic téléphonique, etc. Les chercheurs en sciences sociales recourent également à des variables ; en sciences politiques par exemple, distance et contigüité sont prises en compte dans le calcul des probabilités de conflit.

Une première série de données rassemble les variables caractérisant chacun des 225 pays. Le fichier geo_cepii (geo_cepii.xls ou geo_cepii.dta) contient les variables géographiques des pays et de leur principale ville ou agglomération : l'identification du pays (codes ISO) ; la superficie (en km2), utilisée en particulier pour le calcul des distances internes, les coordonnées géographiques de la (ou des) capitale(s), l'éventuel enclavement, le continent, etc. Cette série de données comporte aussi plusieurs variables de langue permettant de déterminer les proximités linguistiques. Pour chaque pays, on peut avoir jusqu'à trois langues officielles ; la base distingue les langues parlées par plus de 20 % de la population et celles parlées par un tranche de 9 à 20 % de la population. Les relations coloniales passées constituent une autre information souvent utilisée par les économistes pour approximer les similitudes culturelles politiques ou institutionnelles.

Une seconde série de données est dyadique, au sens ou les variables sont calculées par couple de pays : la distance (km) entre deux pays est l'exemple type de ce genre de variables bilatérales. Le fichier dist_cepii (dist_cepii.xls ou dist_cepii.dta) contient les variables bilatérales : les différentes mesures de distances et les variables muettes indiquant la contigüité, la communauté de langue, ou de liens coloniaux. On mesure deux types de distances : simple, pour laquelle on recourt à une seule ville ; pondérée, qui considère plusieurs villes par pays afin de prendre en compte la répartition géographique de l'activité économique.

Ces distances pondérées sont la principale contribution de GeoDist. Pour pouvoir comparer les flux internationaux aux flux de commerce "intra-nationaux", ce que nous faisions dans Mayer et Zignago (2005) en estimant des effets frontière sur l'ensemble des pays du monde, il fallait construire une bonne approximation des distances moyennes parcourues par les biens à l'intérieur de chaque pays. En effet, une sous-estimation des distances relatives biaise mécaniquement à la hausse l'effet frontière estimé. Pour éviter cela, nous tenons compte de la répartition géographique de l'activité économique à l'intérieur des nations en utilisant les populations et coordonnées des principales villes de chaque pays dans le calcul de la matrice des distances. L'idée, inspirée de Head and Mayer (2002) est de calculer les distances entre

deux pays comme une moyenne des distances entre leurs principales villes pondérée par leur population. Cette méthodologie permet de calculer des distances internes aux pays de manière cohérente avec le calcul des distances internationales.

RÉSUMÉ COURT

GeoDist fournit l'ensemble des données développées par Mayer and Zignago (2005) pour mesurer les effets frontière dans le monde. GeoDist propose en ligne différentes données géographiques utiles pour l'estimation des équations de gravité. La première série de données comprend des variables géographiques pour 225 pays ; la seconde est dyadique, au sens où les variables sont calculées par couple de pays : la distance (en km) entre deux pays est l'exemple type de ce genre de variables bilatérales mais nous fournissons également la contigüité, la communauté de langue, de liens coloniaux. On mesure deux types de distances : la mesure simple recourt à une seule ville ; la mesure pondérée considère plusieurs villes par pays afin de prendre en compte la répartition géographique de la population. Ces distances pondérées sont la principale contribution de *GeoDist*. Pour pouvoir comparer les flux internationaux aux flux de commerce "intra-nationaux" (Mayer et Zignago, 2005), il fallait construire une bonne approximation des distances moyennes parcourues par les biens à l'intérieur de chaque pays afin de ne pas biaiser l'effet frontière estimé. L'idée de Head and Mayer (2002) reprise ici est de calculer la distance entre deux pays comme une moyenne des distances entre leurs principales villes pondérée par le poids des villes dans la population des pays.

Classification JEL : F10, C80.

Mots clés : Commerce international, Bases de données, Coûts au commerce, Distances, Géographie, Effets Frontière, Gravité.

NOTES ON CEPII'S DISTANCES MEASURES: THE *GeoDist* DATABASE[1]

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1. INTRODUCTION

For the needs of our Mayer and Zignago (2005) work, which uses border effect methodology to assess market access difficulties in global and regional trade flows, we have built and made available *GeoDist* the database described in this working paper. *GeoDist*, also known as the CEPII's database on distances, provides useful data on line (http://www.cepii.fr/anglaisgraph/bdd/distances.htm) for empirical economic research including geographical elements and variables. A common use of these files is the estimation by trade economists of gravity equations describing bilateral patterns of trade flows. Other datasets have been proposed and provide geographical and distance data, notably those developed by Jon Haveman, Vernon Henderson and Andrew Rose. We try to improve upon the existing sets of variables in terms of geographical coverage, measurement and the number of variables provided. Covariates such as bilateral distance, contiguity, or colonial historical links have also been used in other fields than international trade: for the study of bilateral flows of foreign direct investment for instance, but also by researchers interested in explaining migration patterns, international flows of tourists, of telephone traffic, etc. Even outside economics, several researchers in different social sciences use these types of variables. Political scientists, for instance, use distance and contiguity (among other determinants) to explain why some pairs of countries have a higher probability than others of going to war.

Our first dataset `geo_cepii`, incorporates country-specific geographical variables for 225 countries in the world, including the geographical coordinates of their capital cities, the languages spoken in the country under different definitions, a variable indicating whether the country is landlocked, etc. The second dataset `(dist_cepii)` is dyadic, in the sense that it includes variables valid for pairs of countries. Distance is the most common example of such a variable, and the file includes different measures of bilateral distances (in kilometers) available for most countries across the world.

[1]We thank Guillaume Gaulier for his participation at earliest stages of this work. Mayer and Zignago (2006) is the previous version of this note, which has documented the data available on line since the mid of the 2000's.
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2. THE COUNTRY-SPECIFIC FILES: GEO_CEPII.XLS AND GEO_CEPII.DTA

The geo_cepii files provide data on countries and their main city or agglomeration. There are firstly three identification codes of the country according to the ISO classification, the country's area in square kilometers, used to calculate in particular its internal distance. Variables indicating whether the country is landlocked and which continent it is part of are also included.

There are several language variables that can be used to create different indices of language proximity or dummy variables for common language in dyadic applications like gravity equations. The sources for all language information are the web site www.ethnologue.org and the CIA World Factbook. For each country, we report the official languages (up to three), as well as the languages spoken by at least 20% of the population and the languages spoken by between 9 and 20% of the population (up to four languages in each of those cases). Colonial linkage variables are also often used by economists to proxy for similarities in cultural, political or legal institutions. Our dataset provides several variables (based on the CIA World Factbook, and the Correlates of War Project run by political scientists, available at cow2.la.psu.edu) that identify for each country, up to 4 long-term and up to 3 short-term colonizers in the whole history of the country.

The distance calculation described in the next section requires information on geographical coordinates of at least one city in each of the country. The simplest measure of geodesic distance considers only the main city of the country, reported here with the English and French names, latitude and longitude. In most cases, the main city is the capital of the country. However, for 13 out of the 225 countries, we considered that the capital was not populated enough to represent the 'economic center' of the country. For these countries, we propose the distances data calculated for both the capital city and the economic center. Consequently, there are 238 (225+13) observations in the geo_cepii.xls file.[2] Also included is a variable providing the number of cities for each country (available in the www.world-gazetteer.com dataset) used to calculate our weighted distances described in the next section.

2.1. Country-level variables

- iso2, iso3, cnum: ISO codes in two and three characters, and in three numbers respectively. [3]
- country, pays: Name of country in English and French respectively.[4]
- area: Country's area in km^2.

[2]The 13 repeated lines for countries having two capitals can be easily dropped using for instance the dummy maincity explained in the next subsection.

[3]The numeric codes are the United Nations Standard Countries/Area codes used in trade data. Consequently, the code for Belgium is not 056 but 058, the Belgium-Luxembourg code.

[4]Countries and capital names in French follow "Pays et capitales du Monde. Pays indépendants au 1.01.2001" of the Institut Géographique National. English names follow "The World Factbook" of the CIA.

- `dis_int`: Internal distance of country i, $d_{ii} = .67\sqrt{\text{area}/\pi}$ (an often used measure of average distance between producers and consumers in a country, see Head and Mayer, 2002 for more on this topic).
- `landlocked`: Dummy variable set equal to 1 for landlocked countries.
- `continent`: Continent to which the country is belonging
- `langoff_i`: Official or national languages and languages spoken by at least 20% of the population of the country (and spoken in another country of the world[5]) following the same logic than the "open-circuit languages" in Mélitz (2002).
- `lang20_i`: Languages (mother tongue, lingua francas or second languages) spoken by at least 20% of the population of the country.
- `lang9_i`: Languages (mother tongue, lingua francas or second languages) spoken by between 9% and 20% of the population of the country. [6].
- `colonizeri`: Colonizers of the country for a relatively long period of time and with a substantial participation in the governance of the colonized country.
- `short_colonizeri`: Colonizers of the country for a relatively short period of time or with only low involvement in the governance of the colonized country [7]

2.2. Cities variables used in the computation of distances

The following (country-specific also) variables describe the city used to calculate simple distances, i.e. the ones where only one city by country is considered (city or "agglomeration", which usually corresponds to an enlarged definition of the city: "Essen" is for instance the biggest agglomeration of Germany in our sample). In most cases, the main city is the capital of the country. However, for 13 out of the 225 countries, we considered that the capital was not populated enough to represent the "economic center" of the country. For these countries, we propose the distances data calculated for both the capital city and the economic center. Consequently, there are 238 (225+13) observations in the `geo_cepii.xls` file.[8]

- `city_en`, `city_fr`: Names of capitals or main cities of the country in English and French.

[5]Because their similarity, we consider the Papiamento as Spanish.

[6]The first source of the language variables is the web site http://www.ethnologue.com/which allows us to calculate the share of the population of each country speaking any languages but mainly as a mother tongue. Hence, to have precise idea about the lingua francas and second languages spoken in each country, we used two other valuable sources : the CIA world factbook and Jacques Leclerc web page "L'aménagement linguistique dans le monde."

[7]The main sources to create this variables were TheFreeDictionary.com, the Correlates of War Project and the CIA World Factbook.

[8]Those cases where the economic center differs from the capital are: South Africa (The Cap), Germany (Essen), Australia (Sydney), Benin (Cotonou), Bolivia (La Paz), Brazil (São Paulo), Canada (Toronto), Côte d'Ivoire (Abidjan), United States (New York), Kazakstan (Almaty), Nigeria (Lagos), Tanzania (Dar Es Salam) and Turkey (Istambul).

- `lat`, `lon`: Latitude and longitude of the city.[9]
- `cap`: Variable equals to 1 if the city is the capital of the country, to 0 if the city is the most populated city (`maincity` equals to 1) but not the capital, and to 2 in the cases of two capitals, if the city is the most populated but the "second" capital or the previous capital[10].
- `maincity`: Variable coded as 1 when the city is the most populated of the country and as 2 otherwise[11].
- `citynum`: Number of cities for each country used to calculate our weighted distances described in the next section.

3. THE BILATERAL FILES: DIST_CEPII.XLS AND DIST_CEPII.DTA

The `dist_cepii` files provide the bilateral data: the different distance measures and dummy variables indicating whether the two countries are contiguous, share a common language or a colonial relationship.

There are two kinds of distance measures: simple distances, for which only one city is necessary to calculate international distances; and weighted distances, for which we need data on principal cities in each country. The simple distances are calculated following the great circle formula, which uses latitudes and longitudes of the most important city (in terms of population) or of its official capital. These two variables incorporate internal distances based on areas provided in the `geo_cepii` file. The two weighted distance measures use city-level data to assess the geographic distribution of population inside each nation. The idea is to calculate distance between two countries based on bilateral distances between the largest cities of those two countries, those inter-city distances being weighted by the share of the city in the overall country's population. The distance formula used is a generalized mean of city-to-city bilateral distances developed by Head and Mayer (2002), which takes the arithmetic mean and the harmonic means as special cases. We provide the two variables corresponding to those cases.

3.1. Simple distances: `dist` and `distcap`

Geodesic distances are calculated following the great circle formula, which uses latitudes and longitudes of the most important cities/agglomerations (in terms of population) for the `dist` variable and the geographic coordinates of the capital cities for the `distcap` variable. These two variables incorporate internal distances based on areas and also provided in the `geo_cepii.xls` file (see description above).

[9]The source of these geographic coordinates is generally the PcGlobe software. In 14% of the cases different web sources were additionally consulted (http://www.world-gazetteer.com most notably).

[10]In general we have considered only one capital by country. Some countries have however a second official capital city more important in size like South Africa with Cape Town, Benin with Cotonou or Bolivia with La Paz. Similarly, recent capitals are generally smaller than old capitals as for instance Dodoma, which is planned as the new Tanzania capital, or Abuja in Nigeria, or Astana in Kazakhstan.

[11]Keeping where `maincity` equals to 1, the sample has 225 observations with one city per country country.

3.2. Weighted distances: `distw` and `distwces`

GeoDist is largely cited in the gravity literature since it provides on line the exhaustive set of gravity variables developed by Mayer and Zignago (2005), covering all countries in the world. Even if authors citing *GeoDist* use in general all the gravity variables proposed, the main contribution of *GeoDist* is to compute internal (or intra-national) and international bilateral distances in a totally consistent way. How to define internal distances of countries and how to make those constructed internal distances consistent with 'traditional' international distances calculations? The latter question is in fact crucial for obtaining a correct estimate of trade impediments. Take the example of trade between the United Kingdom and Italy. The GDPs of the two countries being quite comparable, they will not affect much the ratio of own to international trade. The first reason why UK and Italy might trade more with themselves than with each other is that the average distance (and therefore transport costs) between a domestic producer and a domestic consumer is much lower than between a foreign producer and a domestic consumer. Suppose now that for some reason, one mis-measures the relative distances and thinks distance from Italy to Italy is the same as distance from UK to Italy. Then the observed surplus of internal trade in Italy with respect to the UK-Italy flow cannot be explained by differences in distances and has to be captured by the only remaining impediment to trade in the equation, the border effect. Any overestimate of the internal / external distance ratio will yield to a mechanic upward bias in the border effect estimate. This is why, in Mayer and Zignago (2005), we have computed these distances using city-level data to assess the geographic distribution of population (in 2004) inside each nation. The basic idea, inspired by Head and Mayer (2002), is to calculate distance between two countries based on bilateral distances between the biggest cities of those two countries, those inter-city distances being weighted by the share of the city in the overall country's population.

We use latitudes, longitudes and populations data of main agglomerations of all countries available in the World Gazetteer web site, which provides current population figures and geographic coordinates for cities, towns and places of all countries[12]. The general formula developed by Head and Mayer (2002) and used for calculating distances between country i and j is

$$d_{ij} = \left(\sum_{k \in i} (\text{pop}_k / \text{pop}_i) \sum_{\ell \in j} (\text{pop}_\ell / \text{pop}_j) d_{k\ell}^{\theta} \right)^{1/\theta}, \tag{1}$$

where pop_k designates the population of agglomeration k belonging to country i. The parameter θ measures the sensitivity of trade flows to bilateral distance $d_{k\ell}$. For the `distw` calculation, θ is set equal to 1. The `distwces` calculation sets θ equal to -1, which corresponds to the usual coefficient estimated from gravity models of bilateral trade flows.[13]

[12] More precisely, we use the popdata.zip file available at http://www.world-gazetteer.com and take the 25 more populated cities by country.

[13] For the 10 countries that have only one city counted in the dataset, the weighted distances, `distw` and

3.3. Other gravity variables

Finally the `dist_cepii.xls` file provides also dummy variables indicating whether the two countries are contiguous (`contig`), share a common language, have had a common colonizer after 1945 (`comcol`), have ever had a colonial link (`colony`), have had a colonial relationship after 1945 (`col45`), are currently in a colonial relationship (`curcol`)[14] or were/are the same country (`smctry`)[15].

There are two common languages dummies, the first one based on the fact that two countries share a common official language, and the other one set to one if a language is spoken by at least 9% of the population in both countries. Trying to give a precise definition of a colonial relationship is obviously a difficult task. Colonization is here a fairly general term that we use to describe a relationship between two countries, independently of their level of development, in which one has governed the other over a long period of time and contributed to the current state of its institutions.

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`distwces`, have been replaced by the simple distance, dist, since, otherwise, it would equal 32.186 kilometer (20 miles) which is the convention for the inner-city distance (the distance of a city to itself.)

[14]These colonial variables are widely influenced by the data of Andrew Rose.

[15]This variable complements the `comcol` variable setting to one if countries were or are the same state or the same administrative entity for a long period (25-50 years in the twentieth century, 75 year in the ninetieth and 100 years before). This definition covers countries have been belong to the same empire (Austro-Hungarian, Persian, Turkish), countries have been divided (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia) and countries have been belong to the same administrative colonial area. For instance, Spanish colonies are distinguished following their administrative divisions in the colonial period (viceroyalties). According to this definition, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay were thus a single country. Similarly, the Philippines were subordinated to the New Spain viceroyalty and thus `smctry` equals to one with Mexico. Sources for this variable came from http://www.worldstatesmen.org/.

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