

“Copyrights and Creativity: Evidence from Italian Operas in the Napoleonic Age”

Journal of Political Economy, 2020

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Applied Micro in Stata Workshop

RoME, 2022

Motivation and research question

- Copyrights establishing intellectual property rights are meant to foster the creation of intellectual creative works
 - E.g., literature, film, music
- Identifying the causal effects of copyrights on the creation of new works has proved challenging so far
- Research question:
 - What are the effects of copyrights on creativity?

Summary of the paper

- Exploit a historical policy change to identify causal effects of copyrights
 - 1801: Annexation by Napoleon of Lombardy and Venetia, which adopted French copyright laws: composers were granted exclusive rights for the duration of their lives, plus 10 years for their heirs
 - Until 1820, Lombardy and Venetia only Italian states that offered copyrights
- Outcomes: Creation of new operas and their quality

Data

- Newly collected data on 2,598 new operas by 705 Italian-born composers between 1770-1900
 - Source: reference books for operas, records of notable performances, contemporaneous availability on Amazon
 - Title, composer name, year and location of premiere, measures of quality
- Dataset:
 - Unfortunately, replication files do not include raw data at the opera level
 - We will use instead the aggregate data at the state-year level:
 - `operas_1781_1820.dta`

Empirical approach

- Difference-in-differences (DiD)
 - treated units: Lombardy and Venetia
 - control units: Sardinia, Modena and Reggio, Parma and Piacenza, Tuscany, Papal State, and Sicily
 - before/after 1801
- Key assumption: parallel trends in number of new operas in the absence of copyrights

