

# **Doux Commerce: Markets, Culture, and Cooperation in 1850-1920 U.S**

## **Abstract**

We study how rising market integration shaped cooperative culture and behavior in the 1850–1920 United States. Leveraging plausibly exogenous changes in county-level market access driven by railroad expansion and population growth, we show that increased market access fostered universalism, tolerance, and generalized trust—traits supporting cooperation with strangers—and shifted cooperation away from kin-based ties toward more generalized forms. Individual-level analyses of migrants reveal rapid cultural adaptation after moving to more market-integrated places, especially among those exposed to commerce. These effects are unlikely to be explained by changes in population diversity, economic development, access to information, or legal institutions.

This paper is joint work with Itzchak Tzachi Raz (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

**Max Posch**

**Assistant Professor (Lecturer) at the University of Exeter  
Business School**