Research Proposal: Passports as Economic Access Mechanisms

Working Title

"Passport Privilege: Quantifying Global Economic Access Disparities Through the Economic Exposure Passport Index"

Abstract

This study proposes a novel framework for quantifying international mobility privilege through the Economic Exposure Passport Index (EEPI). Unlike traditional passport rankings that simply count visa-free destinations, the EEPI measures the percentage of global GDP accessible without visa restrictions. Preliminary findings suggest severe economic access disparities, with privileged nations enjoying up to 112 times greater economic exposure than disadvantaged ones. This research aims to explore the implications of these disparities on global economic opportunity, brain drain, and development outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

The proposed research is situated at the intersection of:

- Migration studies
- International development economics
- Global inequality research
- Citizenship studies

The core theoretical contribution posits that passport power should be reconceptualized as economic access rather than territorial access, providing a more meaningful measurement of mobility privilege.

Research Questions

1. How does the distribution of global economic access via passport privileges reinforce or challenge existing global inequality structures?
2. What are the economic implications of restricted economic access for citizens of low-ranking countries?
3. To what extent does passport-based economic isolation contribute to brain drain from disadvantaged regions?
4. How has this distribution changed over time, particularly following major geopolitical shifts?

Preliminary Methodology

The EEPI is calculated using:

1. World Bank GDP data (2023)
2. Visa requirement data from https://multinational.io/
3. For each country, calculating:
    - Total global GDP accessible without visa requirements
    - Expressing this as a percentage of total global GDP

Initial Findings

Preliminary analysis reveals:

- Extreme concentration: Only 5 countries (2.7%) have access to >80% of global GDP
- Regional disparities: North America (54.03%), Europe (51.79%), Africa (4.05%)
- Continental champions show dramatic variance: Japan (93.68%) vs. South Africa (10.28%)
- 65 countries (35%) have access to <5% of global GDP

Proposed Research Extensions

1. **Longitudinal analysis:** Track changes in economic access over 20+ years
2. **Correlation studies:** Examine relationships between economic access and development indicators
3. **Case studies:** In-depth analysis of migration patterns from low-access countries
4. **Policy implications:** Explore how visa liberalization impacts economic outcomes

Anticipated Scholarly Contributions

This research will:

1. Provide a quantitative foundation for discussions of mobility justice
2. Shift passport value discourse from travel convenience to economic opportunity
3. Create a new metric for understanding global inequality
4. Inform policy discussions on visa liberalization and its economic impacts

Requested Feedback

1. Methodological robustness of the EEPI calculation
2. Additional theoretical frameworks that might strengthen the analysis
3. Suggestions for establishing causality between passport restrictions and economic outcomes
4. Potential collaborations with scholars in related fields

Practical Applications

Beyond academic contributions, this research has practical implications for:

- Migration policy reform
- Development strategies for isolated economies
- Individual mobility decisions
- International business planning

Timeline and Resources

This concept was formulated in 2025.

- https://multinational.io/visa_requirements/: source of entry-free travel allowances that each country receives.
    - The database contains 200 countries with 17189 visa relationships
- https://data.worldbank.org/ : source of global GDP for 2022 financial year.
    - Merged country data - 161 out of 200 countries have GDP data
    - Total global GDP: $97,363,221,802,091
    - Calculated economic passport index for 189 countries