

Christmas development goodies

by Terence Wood
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After the last week's news you will probably be striving to avoid thinking about aid, development, or the problems of the world more generally over your holiday break (I know I'm going to try). But just in case you can't shake your development fix, here are a few interesting reads and listens.

Drug cartels, the police, and corrupt local government: Blogging Heads has a fascinating, albeit depressing, [podcast](#) on Mexico's ongoing travails. (To listen to the MP3 rather than watch the video go to [this link](#).)

Just as people who like sausages should never visit a sausage factory, people who use global poverty numbers should never learn too much about how they are constructed. However, if you're the poverty data equivalent of a vegetarian, Angus Deaton has [three fascinating lectures](#) on the problems of poverty measurement, and associated issues (the first lecture is a particularly good introduction to the challenges and politics of poverty measurement; the second lecture is more of a PPP thing; and the third lecture is marred slightly at the end by Deaton's misunderstanding of Rawls and Nagel's claims about obligations to the poor in other countries).

Meanwhile, if you have an uncle who often ruins Christmas lunch by propounding grand laws of capitalism (and let's face it, who doesn't?), have a listen to this fascinating [Econotalk podcast](#) in which Daron Acemoglu offers a lucid new-institutionalist critique of Thomas Piketty's explanations of rising inequality, set amongst a more general critique of economic iron laws. (And, if you just want to hide from your family and take solace in equations, there is an associated [working paper](#)).

On the other hand, if that aforementioned uncle is actually an institutionalist himself, and you want to stop him in his tracks, here are [four excellent blog posts](#) that threaten to lay waste to some of the empirical evidence underpinning the "better institutions equal better development outcomes" literature. (Speaking as a new-institutionalist, and an uncle, even I have to concede to these; I really hope they don't come up over lunch.)

And if development economics isn't your thing (and it really shouldn't be over Christmas), Michael Hobbes has a [great polemic](#) about the problems of development more generally. Unlike most development polemics it is remarkably well-considered and insightful. And [Benjamin Black's LSE talk](#) on working on the

Ebola front lines remains as excellent as it was when I first mentioned it on this blog.

And if you'd prefer some happier news, while a less oil-dependent United States sounds unlikely, [this](#) Bloomberg info-graphic suggests it is happening, and provides some intriguing explanations as to why.

And [this New Yorker article](#) has an interesting discussion on progress in treating AIDS and the possibilities of finding a cure for HIV.

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Link: <https://devpolicy.org/christmas-development-goodies-20141218/>