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ABSTRACT

We develop a TFP-equivalent measure of aggregate welfare gains and losses for economies with heterogeneous agents. Our measure is the largest scalar by which total factor productivity can be contracted while keeping every household at least indifferent to the status quo. This construction maps arbitrary shocks to the economy into an equivalent aggregate productivity change. Aggregate productivity rises when the post-shock economy can make every household whole and still have resources left over, and falls when doing so requires additional resources. Hence, this measure provides a general-equilibrium analogue of total surplus in cost-benefit analysis. Under standard representative-agent assumptions, it coincides with familiar measures such as real GDP, the sum of compensating variations, and consumption-equivalent welfare. We show how to extend results that hold for welfare in representative-agent settings, including Hulten's theorem, gains from trade formulas, and deadweight-loss triangles to heterogeneous-agent economies. We characterize this measure in terms of observables, including expenditures and price elasticities, and apply it to study productivity shocks, misallocation from wedges, and trade shocks, both with and without costly redistribution.

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1 Introduction

Individuals rank allocations differently. A productivity shock, a trade liberalization, or a change in market structure may benefit some households and harm others. Households disagree not only because they receive different incomes, but also because they have different tastes, face different prices, live in different places, or care differently about the consumption of others. Thus, in heterogeneous-agent economies, there is typically no single commonly agreed-upon ranking of economy-wide allocations. This raises a basic question: how should we measure the aggregate value of a change when individuals rank the economy-wide allocations differently?

We adapt the conventional definition of aggregate productivity in a way that answers this question. We measure the value of a change by the surplus resources left after every household is made at least as well off as before the shock. Formally, for any change in the economic environment, we define the change in *aggregate productivity* as the largest contraction in aggregate factor-augmenting productivity that is consistent with an equilibrium allocation in which no household is worse off than before. If this number is greater than one, the shock creates enough surplus to compensate all losers and still leave resources left over; if it is less than one, the post-shock economy cannot reproduce the status quo welfare levels for all households without additional resources. Hence, aggregate productivity rises if we can achieve the same outcome, in welfare terms, while saving on factor endowments.

Our emphasis on a compensability requirement connects our approach to traditional cost-benefit analysis. A common approach to aggregating welfare is to add up money-metric measures of individual welfare, such as compensating variations (see Harberger, 1971). The appeal of this approach is clear. It relies on revealed-preference information rather than arbitrary cardinalizations of utility, respects Pareto improvements, and is meant to capture whether the winners from a change could compensate the losers and still come out ahead. In this sense, it separates the question of whether a change creates surplus from the question of how that surplus should be distributed.

However, the usual implementation of this idea — summing compensating variations — does not generally answer this question correctly in heterogeneous-agent general equilibrium economies. Prices may change when compensation is attempted; the transfers needed to compensate losers may not be feasible; standard measures such as real GDP or the sum of compensating variations may change, even to a first-order, in response to pure redistributions that move the economy along the Pareto frontier. Thus, the familiar cost-benefit logic needs a general-equilibrium counterpart.

We provide such a counterpart, building on ideas from Allais (1979), Debreu (1951), and Luenberger (1996). The key difference from standard cost-benefit analysis is that we contract the economy's consumption possibility set rather than summing compensating variations at a given price vector. This makes the compensation exercise internally consistent in general equilibrium and allows us to incorporate limits on redistribution.

This construction has a number of desirable properties. First, it is tied to an idealized counterfactual experiment: starting from the observed status quo, how much of the factor endowments can we remove from the post-shock economy while still keeping every household indifferent? The answer is expressed in interpretable units and depends only on ordinal preferences. It is invariant to monotone transformations of utility and does not require the analyst to choose Pareto weights or cardinal utility functions. Accordingly, the answer can be characterized in terms of only supply and demand curves. Second, when resources remain after all households have been compensated, the measure does not take a stand on how those resources should be allocated. It separates the question of whether a shock creates surplus from the question of how that surplus should be divided. Third, the measure can be extended to environments in which redistribution is costly or limited, making the feasibility of compensation an object of analysis rather than an assumption.

Relationship with social welfare functions. Although our definition of aggregate productivity is not a social welfare function (SWF), the framework can accommodate SWF-style analysis. In the body of the paper, we focus on the benchmark case where individuals are selfish and care only about their own consumption. More generally, one could allow individuals to have preferences over the entire economy-wide allocation; call these social preferences. If these social preferences coincide across individuals — so that there is a common ranking of economy-wide allocations — then our measure applied to this common ranking yields a productivity-equivalent representation of that SWF: the change in the SWF measured in terms of total-factor-productivity. The point of our approach is that it does not require such a common ranking. That is, if individuals do have other-regarding preferences, our notion of aggregate productivity incorporates individuals' concerns for equity automatically. See Appendix B for an example.

Another important conceptual difference between our approach and a standard SWF is that our measure depends on the status quo allocation before the shock. A standard SWF ranks final allocations only, ignoring the process by which an allocation is reached. Unless the process is explicitly modeled and included in its domain, an SWF does not distinguish an allocation reached by consensus through compensation from the same allocation reached through uncompensated expropriation. In contrast, because it is status-quo dependent, our measure incorporates a version of this concern by asking whether the change creates enough surplus to make every household whole.[1]

Outline of paper. The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 2, we set up a flexible economic environment and define our measure of aggregate productivity (with lump-sum transfers to start).

In Section 3, we show that, under some assumptions, our measure can be calculated by solving the equilibrium of a fictional representative agent economy. The fictional representative agent's choices ensure that households in the original economy are compensated relative to the status quo. This result allows tools developed for representative-agent economies to be ported to heterogeneous-agent settings and forms the basis for many of the other results in the paper. In Section 3, we also establish the important benchmark result that if all households have identical homothetic preferences and face the same relative prices, our measure coincides with real GDP, Kaldor-Hicks efficiency (sum of compensating variations), and the welfare of the positive representative agent.

Outside of these common but restrictive assumptions (which rule out, for example, preference heterogeneity and incomplete markets), the measures generally differ. The rest of the paper focuses on these cases. In Section 4 we restrict attention to perfectly competitive economies without distortions. We show that in such settings, Hulten's theorem applies to our measure of aggregate productivity unaltered. That is, the elasticity of our measure to a productivity shock is simply the observed sales share. This means that, to a first-order, our measure coincides with the Solow (1957) residual in perfectly competitive economies. However, this equivalence breaks down beyond a first-order approximation. We show that for large shocks, real GDP, the Solow residual, and the sum of compensating variations have pathological properties that our measure does not have. We derive a nonlinear version of Hulten's theorem for our measure and use it to extend the nonlinear characterizations in Baqaee and Farhi (2019c) to economies with heterogeneous agents. We show that changes in aggregate productivity depend only on expenditure shares and price elasticities. We also generalize the sufficient-statistics of Arkolakis et al. (2012), developed for single-agent economies, to quantify the gains from international trade relative to autarky in economies with heterogeneous agents.

In Section 5 we consider distorted economies, and derive versions of Hsieh and Klenow

[1] For example, suppose all agents have the same utility function. An analyst using a utilitarian social welfare function would be indifferent between the status quo and a policy that arbitrarily permutes consumption bundles across households since the sum of utilities is unchanged. Such a policy would, in practice, be objectionable to most people because it treats households' claims to their initial bundles as irrelevant, and would generally require coercion.

(2009), Petrin and Levinsohn (2012), Harberger (1954, 1964), and Baqaee and Farhi (2020) that apply to economies with heterogeneous agents. We show that, once prices are not equal to marginal costs, then real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency are not reliable measures of aggregate efficiency even to a first-order. In particular, they can rise or fall in response to pure redistributions that move the economy from one Pareto-efficient allocation to another. We also derive a version of the famous Harberger triangles formula that can be used to quantify misallocation with heterogeneous agents.

In Section 6 we consider economies with costly redistribution (i.e. without lump-sum transfers). We show that, starting in perfect competition, the change in aggregate productivity is still, to a first-order, the same as Hulten (1978) under some mild assumptions. To a second-order, the change in aggregate productivity is equal to what would have happened with lump-sum transfers (characterized in Section 4) minus the additional Harberger triangles (characterized in Section 5) caused by inefficient redistribution (which are zero if lump-sum transfers are available). We provide a worked-out example showing how limited redistributive tools raise the costs of moving to autarky compared to when lump-sum transfers are available. We end the section with a quantitative example studying how the rise of China affected aggregate productivity in the United States. We show that the gains for the U.S. due to the rise of China depend on the ease with which workers can move across sectors, and the range of redistributive tools available to protect losers. Whereas the change is positive when workers can move across sectors or if lump-sum transfers are available, it is negative if workers are restricted to working within narrow industries and redistribution is impossible or very costly (highly distorting).

Applications of this framework in other papers. The focus of this paper is the conceptual framework and general-purpose results, rather specific applications. In companion work, we demonstrate the applicability of the results in this paper by applying them in settings where household heterogeneity is central. Baqaee and Burstein (2025b) applies our notion of aggregate productivity and sufficient statistics formulas to quantify misallocation from financial market incompleteness, within and across borders. Baqaee and Burstein (2025a) uses this framework to characterize aggregate productivity in random utility models with discrete choice, as in spatial economies, where households make different choices due to differences in preferences. Baqaee et al. (2026a) develop a general linear-quadratic approximation theory for optimal policy in distorted heterogeneous-agent economies where maximizing aggregate productivity is the policymaker's objective. Baqaee et al. (2026b) characterize the aggregate-productivity-maximizing monetary policy in a quantitative heterogeneous-agent new Keynesian economy.

Related literature. Our approach to measuring aggregate productivity is related to willingness-to-pay based measures, which have a very long history in economics. (For example Dupuit, 1844; Hicks, 1939; Kaldor, 1939). Our approach is also related to the notion of distributable surplus in Allais (1979), the coefficient of resource utilization in Debreu (1951, 1954), the measure of efficiency in Farrell (1957), and the benefit function in Luenberger (1996). Our contribution relative to these works is to provide a characterization without assuming Pareto efficiency or lump-sum transfers and to apply these types of measures to modern models.

Our paper is also related to cost-benefit analysis, typically performed by using the sum of compensating variations, as in Harberger (1971), and related ideas like the marginal value of public funds (Hendren and Sprung-Keyser, 2020). The idea behind these measures is to ask: "after the winners compensate the losers using lump-sum transfers, is there still money left on the table?" Our measure of productivity coincides with these measures when the equilibrium is perfectly competitive, the consumption-possibility set is linear, and lump-sum transfers are available. However, outside of these cases, our measure is different. First, if prices are not equal to marginal costs, then pure transfers can raise or lower real GDP and the sum of compensating variations, even if allocations are Pareto-efficient. In contrast, our measure of productivity does not increase unless a potential Pareto improvement is possible. Second, if the consumption-possibility set is nonlinear, then as shown by Boadway (1974), a pure transfer between agents can cause the sum of compensating variations to exceed zero even if the economy is perfectly competitive. Our measure does not have this property and only rises if there is a potential Pareto improvement. Third, unlike the sum of compensating variations, our measure need not presuppose that lump-sum transfers are feasible. In this sense, our approach shares similarities to Schulz et al. (2023), who generalize the sum of compensating variations to allow for limited redistribution.[2]

Our paper complements and differs from Schulz et al. (2023) in many ways, the most important being a difference in focus. They consider economies with a single consumption good, focusing their attention on a mechanism design problem where lump-sum taxes are unavailable because of asymmetric information. Although our formalism and definitions can be applied to such economies, we do not focus on these issues. Instead, we focus on allowing for multiple goods and heterogeneity in preferences and relative prices faced by consumers. This means that even with perfect information and lump-

[2] In response to a shock, they consider a tax reform that makes households indifferent to the status quo and then measure the monetary value of aggregate welfare gains or losses by the fiscal surplus from this reform.

sum transfers, there are interesting questions about how to aggregate across consumers that consume and value different goods.[3]

As mentioned above, a different approach to aggregation is to use a social welfare function to evaluate outcomes. A prominent example is the behind the veil-of-ignorance measure of Harsanyi (1955). Social welfare functions are by far the most common approach in the modern literature to aggregating across heterogeneous agents.[4]

Following in the social-welfare-function tradition, a recent set of papers, including Bhandari et al. (2021), Dávila and Schaab (2022, 2023), and Donald et al. (2023) provide decompositions of changes in social welfare functions. Our goal in this paper is different: we do not provide decompositions of social welfare functions, but instead, define and characterize aggregate productivity directly as an answer to a counterfactual question. The decompositions in the papers mentioned above contain components the authors refer to as capturing efficiency. However, since our objective is different, our notion of productivity is also generically different from the efficiency components in these papers (see Appendix A for a discussion). Defining productivity directly, instead of as part of an infinitesimal decomposition, is also useful because it means that we can also study large changes.[5]

In terms of the tools and methods, our paper is most closely related to the literature that studies the macroeconomic consequences of microeconomic productivity changes and wedges. For productivity changes, this includes Gabaix (2011), Acemoglu et al. (2012), Baqaee and Farhi (2019c), Carvalho and Tahbaz-Salehi (2019) and others. For wedges, this includes Restuccia and Rogerson (2008), Hsieh and Klenow (2009), Bigio

[3]A related approach, Auerbach and Kotlikoff (1987), quantifies aggregate efficiency in overlapping-generations economies by using lump-sum transfers to keep generations before a specified date at their status quo utility level and increase the utility of all cohorts after that date by a common amount. Our measure is different because it keeps every agent indifferent to the status quo, allows for limited redistribution, and measures productivity in terms of resource-savings instead. It would be interesting to apply our measure to an overlapping-generations economy.

[4]There is a branch of the literature that assumes observed allocations maximize a social welfare function within some parametric class. These papers estimate this function, and uses it to conduct policy analysis (see Heathcote and Tsujiyama, 2021 and the references therein). This is equivalent to assuming that there exists a normative representative agent: a hypothetical single decision-maker whose utility function is maximized by observed allocations (Chapter 4 of Mas-Colell et al., 1995). Our approach is different since we do not need to assume the existence of either a positive or a normative representative agent. Furthermore, even if a normative representative agent exists, there is nothing to say that its preferences should be privileged over any other social welfare function (see Appendix E.5).

[5]Whereas infinitesimal changes in our measure of efficiency can be integrated to study large changes, integrals of components in a decomposition of social welfare are path-dependent. To see this point, suppose we approximately decompose changes in some function $y = f(x_1, x_2)$ into $dy \approx (\partial f/\partial x_1)dx_1 + (\partial f/\partial x_2)dx_2$. Then we can write non-infinitesimal changes as $\Delta y = \int(\partial f/\partial x_1)dx_1 + \int(\partial f/\partial x_2)dx_2$ but, unless $f(x_1, x_2)$ is linear in x_1 and x_2, the size of each component of this nonlinear decomposition depends on the arbitrary path of integration.

and La'O (2020), Liu (2019), Baqaee and Farhi (2020), among others. Recent work has begun to combine this misallocation perspective with household heterogeneity. Hsieh et al. (2026) study how policies that reduce size-dependent misallocation affect inequality, while Atkin et al. (2025) quantify the incidence of distortions across households using linked household-firm data. These papers ask how distortions and their removal affect different households. Our question is complementary: how to measure the aggregate efficiency effect of a shock or distortion when households rank allocations differently without imposing a social welfare function.[6]

Finally, because we use gains from trade as one of our examples, our paper is also related to the literature on gains from trade with heterogeneous agents. Much of the work on international trade with heterogeneous agents focuses on the distributional effects of trade. Some papers also compute aggregate welfare measures: Antras et al. (2017) and Galle et al. (2023) use an Atkinson (1970)-style social welfare function with inequality aversion, Kim and Vogel (2020) use the sum of compensating variations, and Rodríguez-Clare et al. (2022) use a population-weighted average of welfare gains across regions. These measures differ from our measure for the reasons discussed above.

2 Setup

In Section 2.1, we set up a flexible general-equilibrium framework, and in Section 2.2 we define our aggregate productivity measure.

2.1 Economic Environment

We consider general equilibrium with heterogeneous agents, arbitrary neoclassical production functions, and distorting wedges. We describe the households' problem, followed by the producers', and then the resource constraints. Although we define a Walrasian equilibrium, the presence of arbitrary distorting wedges allow us to replicate non-Walrasian economies as well.

Households. Households are indexed by $h \in \{1, ..., H\}$. Agent h has ordinal preferences $\succeq_h$ over commodity vectors $\boldsymbol{c}_h \in \mathbb{R}^N$, where N is the number of goods. Assume

[6] Relatedly, Bornstein and Peter (2024) study aggregate misallocation with differences in tastes and markups across households. In their setting, symmetry and the law of large numbers imply that every household's problem is identical despite the fact that households have different preferences. Because of this symmetry, there is a natural notion of aggregate welfare.

preferences are represented by utility functions $u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)$.[7]

A *consumption allocation* is a matrix $\boldsymbol{c} \in \mathbb{R}^{H\times N}$ whose hth row, denoted by $\boldsymbol{c}_h$, equals the consumption vector of agent h. Each household maximizes utility subject to a budget constraint

$$\max\ u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) \text{ such that } \sum_i p_i c_{hi} \leq \sum_f \omega_{hf} w_f z_f L_f + T_h. \tag{1}$$

The left-hand side of the budget constraint is total expenditures and the right-hand side is total income. As in Debreu (1959), commodities could be indexed by time and state of nature. On the left-hand side, p_i is the price of i and c_{hi} is the quantity of good i purchased by household h. On the right-hand side, households derive income from factors and lump-sum transfers. Household h owns a share ω_{hf} of factor f, where w_f is the wage, z_f is a productivity, and L_f is the total quantity of primary factor f. Lump-sum transfers are T_h.[8]

Producers. Producer i chooses its inputs to minimize costs

$$\min \sum_j p_j y_{ij} + \sum_f w_f l_{if}, \text{ such that } y_i = z_i G_i\left(\{y_{ij}\}, Z\{l_{if}\}\right), \tag{2}$$

where y_i is the quantity of output, G_i is a constant-returns production function, y_{ij} are intermediate inputs used by i produced by j, and l_{if} are primary factors used by i. The scalar Z is an aggregate factor-augmenting productivity shifter, which we use later to define the TFP-equivalent variation. The assumption that G_i has constant-returns is without loss of generality, since we can capture decreasing returns using producer-specific factors. The parameter z_i is a Hicks neutral productivity shifter. The price of i is equal to a markup or tax, $\mu_i > 0$, times i's marginal cost of production

$$p_i = \mu_i mc_i. \tag{3}$$

That is, the price of i is inclusive of the wedge on i's output. These wedges may be exogenous or may be functions that depend on other equilibrium variables (in a way we do not fully specify here).

Remark (Endogenous Wedges). The wedges $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ can capture different market structures.

[7]That is, for each household $u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) \geq u_h(\boldsymbol{c}'_h)$ if, and only if, $\boldsymbol{c}_h \succeq_h \boldsymbol{c}'_h$. We assume that preferences are continuous, convex, and locally nonsatiated. As usual, utility functions are only determined up to an increasing transformation.

[8]Labor-leisure choice can be accommodated by treating leisure as a consumption good and each household's time endowment as a primary factor. See Example 7.

For example, with perfect competition, the wedge function maps any preferences and technologies to a vector of all ones. With monopolistic competition, the wedge function depends on the own-price elasticity of residual demand and hence on equilibrium quantities and prices (see e.g. Baqaee et al. 2024). With nominal rigidities, the wedge function also depends on productivity shocks and the price level (see e.g. La'O and Tahbaz-Salehi, 2022 and Rubbo 2020). With incomplete financial markets, wedges depend on idiosyncratic income fluctuations (see e.g. Baqaee and Burstein 2025b).

Resource constraints. The resource constraint for goods and factors is

$$\sum_j y_{ji} + \sum_h c_{hi} \leq y_i, \qquad \text{and} \qquad \sum_i l_{if} \leq z_f L_f, \tag{4}$$

where z_f, when f indexes a factor, controls the endowment of efficiency units of factor f. Finally, net transfers across households are equal to the revenues generated by the wedges:

$$\sum_h T_h = \sum_i p_i y_i \left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i}\right). \tag{5}$$

We now define a general equilibrium with wedges.

Definition 1 (Decentralized Equilibrium with Wedges)**.** A *decentralized equilibrium with wedges* is the collection of prices, quantities, wedges, and transfers such that: (1) each producer chooses quantities to minimize costs taking prices as given; (2) the price of each good i equals its marginal cost times the wedge μ_i, which may depend on other equilibrium variables; (3) each household chooses consumption quantities to maximize utility taking prices and income as given; (4) net transfers across households are equal to wedge revenues; (5) all resource constraints are satisfied.

2.2 Definition of Aggregate Productivity

We now define our welfare-based measure of aggregate productivity. Index by a scalar t the exogenous parameters of interest, and let $t = 0$ denote the parameter values corresponding to the status quo. These parameters could include productivities, factor ownership, and the function that determines the wedges. For any equilibrium object X, we write $X(t)$ to denote the equilibrium value induced by the parameter values indexed by t.[9] Without loss of generality, we assume that Z is constant and equal to one as a function

[9] In the case of multiple equilibria, we assume there is an equilibrium selection mechanism. All statements below are conditional on this selection.

of t.[10]

We take the status quo, $t = 0$, to be the observed equilibrium allocation (i.e. parameter values under which the model is mapped to the data). The status quo consumption allocation is therefore $\boldsymbol{c}(0) \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times N}$; note that in a dynamic or stochastic model, $\boldsymbol{c}(0)$ is the entire stochastic process for consumption given initial parameter values, not the consumption realizations in the first period of the model.

Let $\mathcal{C}(t, Z)$ denote the set of consumption allocations that can be supported as part of an equilibrium in the economy indexed by t, with factor-augmenting productivity shifter Z:

$$\mathcal{C}(t, Z) = \left\{ \boldsymbol{c} \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times N} : \begin{array}{l} \text{there exist lump-sum transfers such that } \boldsymbol{c} \text{ is part} \\ \text{of an equilibrium satisfying (1)-(5)} \end{array} \right\}.$$

This is the set of consumption allocations that can be attained via lump-sum transfers. It depends on t through the exogenous parameters indexed by t. It depends on the factor-augmenting productivity shifter Z because changing Z changes the set of supportable equilibrium allocations. When the wedge function $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ is always equal to one for every good, the second welfare theorem implies that the consumption possibility set, defined above, is the set of Pareto efficient consumption allocations.

Definition 2 (Aggregate Productivity)**.** *Aggregate productivity* at t, given lump-sum transfers, is the largest scalar $Z > 0$ by which factor-augmenting productivity can be contracted while keeping every agent at least indifferent to the status quo allocation. Formally,

$$A(t) \equiv \max \left\{ Z > 0 : \text{there is } \boldsymbol{c} \in \mathcal{C}(t, 1/Z) \text{ and } \boldsymbol{c}_h \succeq_h \boldsymbol{c}_h(0) \text{ for every } h \right\}. \tag{6}$$

If $A(t) > 1$, then the economy at t can keep every agent at least indifferent to the status quo even after uniformly contracting factor-augmenting productivity. If higher factor-augmenting productivity Z results in greater consumption possibilities, then this also implies that a strict Pareto improvement is possible at t. If $A(t) < 1$, then no allocation in $\mathcal{C}(t, 1)$ can make every agent at least as well off as in the status quo. The cardinal value of $A(t)$ is interpretable: it converts the shock at t into an equivalent change in total factor productivity that brings everyone back to the status quo.[11] For example, if $A(t) = 1.01$,

[10] Changes in aggregate factor-augmenting productivity as a function of t can be captured by uniform changes in the efficiency units of factors, z_f.

[11] If, instead of a uniform factor-augmenting shift, we define the value of a shock by the equivalent change in a subset of factor endowments, say labor, then our measure would have a labor-productivity interpretation instead of an aggregate productivity one. Under such a definition, even with a single agent, Hulten's

then this means that it is possible to make everyone at least as well off as in the status quo and discard roughly 1 percent of every factor endowment, or more precisely, a fraction $1 - 1/A(t)$. Agents may not be consuming the same bundle as in the status quo after they are compensated — we only require that they be at least indifferent to the status quo.

When t indexes a counterfactual in which wedges are set to one while technologies are held fixed, $A(t)$ is the Debreu (1951) *coefficient of resource utilization*. This statistic measures the economic waste from misallocation in the status quo allocation in units of factor endowments (see Appendix B). [12]

The measure in Definition 2 has some desirable properties. First, it answers a counterfactual question about feasible allocations in interpretable units. The value $A(t)$ is invariant to monotone transformations of utility functions and depends only on ordinal properties of preference relations. Second, while it measures surplus value, it does not prescribe how that surplus should be distributed if $A(t) > 1$; similarly, when $A(t) < 1$, it reports the TFP-equivalent shortfall required to make everyone whole, and it does not take a stance on how losses should be borne absent more resources. Third, this definition can be modified to environments with imperfect redistributive tools; Section 6 is devoted to this topic. Fourth, as we show below, the measure coincides with traditional measures like real output (GDP), Kaldor-Hicks efficiency, and Lucas consumption-equivalent variation in cases where those measures are well-behaved. In this sense, $A(t)$ provides a way to extend these measures to capture cases with preference heterogeneity.[13]

Remark (Altruism and Equity Concerns). We have assumed that agents are selfish and only care about their own consumption allocation. However, Definition 2 can also be

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theorem would have to be modified by dividing Domar weights by the income share of labor.

[12]We define $A(t)$ by scaling the post-shock TFP subject to making every agent indifferent to the status quo. One could alternatively scale the pre-shock TFP to make every agent indifferent to some post-shock equilibrium allocation. All of our results can be converted to such a case simply by exchanging the pre- and post-shock variables. While mathematically similar, the meaning is very different. The way we define $A(t)$ means that $A(t) > 1$ implies that all agents can be made to prefer the post-shock economy given redistributive tools — so the post-shock economy is better by consensus. If we use a new equilibrium allocation as the reference point, instead of the status quo, then this consensus property no longer applies. If some agent is made worse off in the new equilibrium, they do not require any compensation for this change under this alternative definition. Moreover, the information requirements are different because one would have to specify a specific post-shock equilibrium for the indifference conditions, whereas our measure uses the pre-shock indifference curves.

[13]Our measure of aggregate productivity orders feasible sets relative to a given status quo. As with Scitovszky (1941), the ordering of two feasible sets may depend on the reference status quo allocation: a feasible set that dominates another relative to one status quo need not do so relative to a different status quo. This status quo dependence is not a defect of the criterion, but part of its appeal. Unlike a standard social welfare function that ranks final allocations only (see the example in Footnote 1), our measure encodes a compensability requirement: the post-shock feasible set is valuable only insofar as all agents can agree that there is surplus to be had. In applications, this status quo is not chosen freely by the analyst; it is the observed initial allocation.

applied to agents that have altruistic preferences. In this case, $A(t)$ automatically incorporates individuals' concerns for equity. See Appendix B for an example. In the special case where every agent ranks economy-wide allocations in the same way, then $A(t)$ becomes a TFP-equivalent variation for the commonly-held SWF.

Remark (Aggregate Productivity for Subsets of Agents). Definition 2 can also be applied to measure productivity for a subset of agents (e.g. by age, education, or country). In this case, we contract the endowments owned by those agents subject to indifference and budget-balanced transfers in (6) that apply only to agents in the chosen subset. Agents outside of this subset are part of the economy, but their endowments are held constant and their preferences are not taken into account when defining $A(t)$. See Section 6.4 for an illustration of this idea. If this subset contains only a single agent and that agent is too small to affect prices, then $A(t)$ collapses to a compensating variation for that agent.

3 Characterization via a Representative Agent

Aggregate productivity can be computed directly from Definition 2. Scale the productivity of all factors by a common scalar $1/Z$, and consider the set of equilibria in the economy indexed by t. If there exists an equilibrium consumption allocation in which all agents are strictly better off than in the status quo, then productivity can be contracted further, so increase Z. If every equilibrium allocation leaves some agent worse off than in the status quo, then the contraction is too large, so decrease Z. Aggregate productivity $A(t)$ is the largest scalar Z such that, after scaling all factor productivities by $1/Z$, there exists an equilibrium allocation that leaves every agent at least indifferent to the status quo.

In this section, we provide a useful alternative approach to computing $A(t)$. In Section 3.1, we show that, under some assumptions, computing $A(t)$ is formally equivalent to solving for the equilibrium of a fictional representative agent economy. This result is useful because, when it holds, theorems that are true in representative agent economies can be deployed to study $A(t)$. We use this result in Section 3.2 to show that, under some common but strong assumptions, $A(t)$ coincides with real GDP, Kaldor-Hicks efficiency, and the consumption-equivalent of a positive representative agent. This provides a clean benchmark and the rest of the paper is devoted to understanding deviations from it.

3.1 Equilibrium with Compensated Representative Agent

First, define *individual h's consumption-equivalent* variation.

Definition 3 (Consumption-equivalents)**.** Let $u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)$ denote a utility representation for agent h. The *individual consumption-equivalent* function $\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)$ is implicitly defined by

$$u_h\left(\frac{\boldsymbol{c}_h}{\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)}\right) = u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h(0)).$$

This is the factor by which household h's consumption bundle $\boldsymbol{c}_h$ must be divided to make the household exactly indifferent to the status quo. By construction, $\tilde{u}_h$ is homogeneous of degree one in consumption and equal to 1 at the status quo $\boldsymbol{c}_h(0)$.

Example 1 (Single good). Suppose there is a single consumption good $|N| = 1$. In this case,

$$\tilde{u}_h(c_h) = \frac{c_h}{c_h(0)}.$$

For a more complex example of $\tilde{u}_h$, with multiple goods and non-homotheticities, see Appendix C.

We now define equilibrium with a fictional representative agent.

Definition 4 (Equilibrium with Compensated Representative Agent)**.** An *equilibrium with a compensated representative agent* is the general equilibrium of an economy with the same technologies, resource constraints, and wedge function as the original economy but where there is a representative agent with preferences

$$U(\boldsymbol{c}) = \min_h \{\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)\}.$$

Note that $U(\boldsymbol{c})$ is homogeneous of degree one by construction, and depends on the status quo allocation because $\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)$ is a consumption-equivalent relative to the status quo allocation.[14] The equilibrium with the compensated representative agent is not of direct interest, but is instead a useful device to calculate changes in aggregate productivity. For any equilibrium variable X, denote its value in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent by X^{comp}.

Theorem 1 ($A(t)$ via Compensated Agent)**.** *For $t \geq 0$, suppose:*

(i) there exists $\boldsymbol{c}^*(t) \in \mathcal{C}\big(t, 1/A(t)\big)$ such that $u_h\big(\boldsymbol{c}_h^*(t)\big) = u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h(0))$ for all h;

[14]We call this agent the compensated representative agent because, as we show in Appendix C, the budget shares generated by these preferences are the average of the compensated (i.e. Hicksian) budget shares of all the agents weighted by each agent's compensating income. Computing this is straightforward given knowledge of uncompensated (i.e. Marshallian) demand, since compensated and uncompensated demand functions carry the same information and are related to one another via Slutsky's equation.

(ii) wedges are invariant to Z in the equilibrium with a compensated representative agent.

Then the following is true:

$$A(t) = U(\boldsymbol{c}^{comp}(t)).$$

Moreover, if $A(0) = 1$, then prices and quantities in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent coincide with those in the decentralized equilibrium.

If the conditions hold, then Theorem 1 shows that solving for aggregate productivity $A(t)$ is equivalent to solving a representative-agent equilibrium. Utility in that representative-agent economy equals $A(t)$.

The fictional representative agent has Leontief preferences over individual consumption equivalents of the agents in the true economy. This ensures that the compensated representative agent respects the "indifference to the status quo" constraint for every household. The consumption allocation $\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t)$ in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent is interpretable. As we show in the proof, $\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t) = A(t)\boldsymbol{c}^*(t)$ — that is, $\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t)$ is a feasible consumption allocation such that every agent can be made indifferent to the status quo with a fraction $1 - 1/A(t)$ of every good left over when $A(t) > 1$, or with a fraction $1/A(t) - 1$ of every good additionally required when $A(t) < 1$.

The final sentence of the theorem states that if $A(0) = 1$, i.e. lump-sum transfers cannot on their own engineer a Pareto improvement, then the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent replicates prices and quantities in the decentralized status quo at $t = 0$.

The conditions for Theorem 1 not strong assumptions in many standard applications. We discuss them in turn. Condition (i) states that every agent can be made exactly indifferent to the status quo in (6). This is satisfied if, in equilibrium, every agent's utility changes in response to a lump-sum transfer to that agent. Intuitively, if an agent is strictly better off in $\boldsymbol{c}^*(t)$ than the status quo, then that agent can be taxed and the proceeds distributed to other agents, allowing a greater reduction in Z. Hence, violations of (i) require cases where such transfers are not feasible. For example, if some agent h is in autarky from the rest of the agents in H, so that lump-sum transfers to or from that agent are not feasible, then condition (i) is violated and Theorem 1 cannot be used. However, outside of such examples, condition (i) is likely to be satisfied.

Condition (ii) requires that, in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent, scaling the productivity of factor endowments does not alter wedges. If wedges are endogenous, this means that the same wedge specification used in the original economy generates wedges that are invariant to Z in the compensated-agent economy. Since utility and technologies in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent are both constant-returns-to-scale by construction, this assumption is likely to hold for many models of endogenous wedges.[15] Of course, the condition is also trivially satisfied if wedges are exogenously given, or if the equilibrium under consideration is perfectly competitive (i.e. $\boldsymbol{\mu}(t) \equiv \mathbf{1}$). This latter case is relevant for measuring misallocation, because in that case counterfactual wedges are set to one.

If conditions (i) and (ii) do not hold, then $A(t)$ is still well-defined, but cannot be computed using Theorem 1 and requires direct computation instead. In Sections 4 and 5, we maintain the assumptions of Theorem 1, so the compensated-representative-agent economy is used as a computational and characterization device. In Section 6, where lump-sum transfers are ruled out, Theorem 1 need not apply.

Theorem 1 is expressed in terms of endogenous variables in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent, but solving representative-agent models with homothetic preferences is a well-understood problem. For this reason, we relegate the full characterization of variables in the equilibrium with a compensated representative agent to Appendix E. Instead, we jump directly to using Theorem 1 to construct heterogeneous-agent generalizations of well-known results, beginning with an important but highly restrictive benchmark case we call a "miraculous consensus."

3.2 A Miraculous Consensus

A widely used but restrictive assumption is that every household has identical homothetic preferences and all households face the same relative prices (i.e. there are no household-specific wedges as in models with incomplete markets). Under these assumptions, nearly every road to defining a measure of aggregate economic activity leads to the same answer. Specifically, under these assumptions, $A(t)$ coincides with chain-weighted real GDP, Kaldor-Hicks (or cost-benefit) efficiency, and the consumption-equivalent variation of the positive representative agent.

To make these comparisons, we formally define these other aggregate measures.

[15] For example, consider a model with a single agent and preferences $u^{\rho(u)} = \int c_i^{\rho(u)} di$ (as in Auer et al., 2024). The elasticity of substitution depends on utility, so the wedge function under monopolistic competition is $1/\rho(u)$. Hence, in the decentralized equilibrium, wedges depend on factor-augmenting productivity Z, since higher Z results in higher u, which changes the price elasticity of demand. The preferences of the compensated representative agent are instead $U^{\rho^0} = \int (c_i/u^0)^{\rho^0} di$ where u^0 is utility in the status quo $u(0)$ and $\rho^0 = \rho(u^0)$ is the elasticity in the status quo. Hence, the wedge in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent is $1/\rho^0$ — which is a constant and does not vary as a function of Z.

Chain-weighted Real GDP. In national income accounting, real GDP is measured using approximations to the Divisia (1925) index. Real GDP, defined using the Divisia index, is

$$\log Y(t) = \int_0^t \sum_i \frac{p_i(s)c_i(s)}{\sum_{i'} p_{i'}(s)c_{i'}(s)} \frac{d \log c_i(s)}{ds} ds,$$

where $c_i(s) = \sum_{h \in H} c_{hi}(s)$ denotes aggregate consumption of good i at $s \in [0, t]$. In words, this is the cumulative expenditure-share weighted growth in aggregate consumption.

Kaldor-Hicks (or Cost-Benefit Efficiency, or Sum of Willingness-to-Pay). Another popular aggregate measure is the Kaldor-Hicks efficiency measured in monetary terms.[16] This measure compares the sum of compensating incomes to aggregate income at t. If the sum of compensating incomes, the income needed to make the household indifferent to the status quo, is less than aggregate income, then the winners can hypothetically compensate the losers and there can still be money left-over. The amount of money left over is a measure of the increase in efficiency. This method is the foundation of most of cost-benefit style analyses in applied welfare economics and policy evaluation in public finance and industrial organization.

To write this measure formally, let $e_h(\boldsymbol{p}, u_h)$ be an expenditure function representing preferences $\succeq_h$. The Kaldor-Hicks measure of efficiency at t is

$$A^{KH}(t) = \frac{\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(t))}{\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(0))}. \tag{7}$$

Note that, by construction, Kaldor-Hicks efficiency at the status quo is equal to one: $A^{KH}(0) = 1$.[17] In words, $A^{KH}(t)$ is the largest scalar by which aggregate income, given prices at t, can be contracted while keeping every agent indifferent to the status quo. Hence, the difference between $A(t)$ and $A^{KH}(t)$ is that $A(t)$ contracts the consumption possibility set rather than the aggregate budget constraint.[18]

[16] This definition differs from what Dávila and Schaab (2023) call Kaldor-Hicks efficiency. We contrast our measure with theirs in Appendix A, where we show that the two measures are different. In particular, that measure can rise or fall in response to movements along the Pareto frontier.

[17] In cost-benefit analysis, Kaldor-Hicks efficiency is usually written as the sum of compensating variations. To see that (7) is related to the sum of compensating variations, define the compensating variation for agent h as $cv_h(t) = e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(t)) - e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(0))$. Then, we can rewrite $A^{KH}(t)$ as $A^{KH}(t) = 1/(1 - \sum_h cv_h(t) / \sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(t)))$. That is, $A^{KH}(t)$ is an increasing function of the sum of compensating variations. We write this transformation to ensure that $A^{KH}(0) = 1$ and, as we will see later, this transformation coincides with $A(t)$ and $Y(t)$ under some strong but widely used assumptions.

[18] Formally, $A^{KH}(t)$ is equivalently defined as:

$$A^{KH}(t) = \max \{ Z > 0 : \text{there is } \boldsymbol{c} \in \mathcal{B}(t, 1/Z) \text{ and } \boldsymbol{c}_h \succeq_h \boldsymbol{c}_h(0) \text{ for every } h \},$$

Consumption-equivalent of Representative Agent. Another well-known aggregate measure, when a representative agent exists, is the consumption-equivalent variation used by Lucas (1987). A *representative agent* is a hypothetical single consumer such that the demand of the representative agent for each good, given prices and total income, coincides with the equilibrium quantity of that good, given the same prices and aggregate income. (For a formal definition, see Appendix C).

If a representative agent exists, define the consumption-equivalent for the representative agent, $A^{RA}(t)$, to be

$$u^{RA}\left(\boldsymbol{c}^{RA}(t)/A^{RA}(t)\right) = u^{RA}\left(\boldsymbol{c}^{RA}(0)\right),$$

where u^{RA} is the utility function of the representative agent. In words, $A^{RA}(t)$ is the amount by which the aggregate consumption bundle in t must be contracted to make the positive representative agent exactly indifferent to the status quo. As with all the other measures, $A^{RA}(0) = 1$ by construction.

Proposition 1 (Miraculous Consensus)**.** *If households have identical homothetic preferences, and face the same relative prices, then a positive representative agent exists and*

$$A(t) = Y(t) = A^{KH}(t) = A^{RA}(t).$$

In words, the change in aggregate productivity matches the change in chain-weighted index of real GDP, Kaldor-Hicks (cost-benefit) efficiency, and the consumption-equivalent of the positive representative agent all in the decentralized equilibrium. Hence, under these assumptions, one can compute $A(t)$ by calculating one of these alternative measures.

In the rest of the paper, we focus on cases where this consensus breaks down. In these cases, we show through examples that the other measures have undesirable and paradoxical properties. In Section 4, we consider non-identical preferences but assume perfect competition and complete markets. In Section 5, we allow for distortions, including the possibility that households face different relative prices for the same goods (nesting incomplete market models). In Section 6, we generalize the definition of $A(t)$ to allow for limits on redistributive tools, which also can cause Proposition 1 to break down.

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where $\mathcal{B}(t, 1/Z) = \{\boldsymbol{c} : \boldsymbol{p}(t) \cdot \sum_h \boldsymbol{c_h} \leq I(t)/Z\}$ and $I(t)$ is aggregate income in the decentralized equilibrium at t. The only difference relative to $A(t)$ is that the consumption possibility set $\mathcal{C}(t, 1/Z)$ in (6) is replaced by the aggregate budget constraint $\mathcal{B}(t, 1/Z)$.

4 Undistorted Economies

In this section, we characterize how $A(t)$ responds to changes in technologies, $\boldsymbol{z}(t)$, in perfectly competitive economies. In these economies, all wedges are equal to one and the first welfare theorem holds. Section 4.1 provides a version of Hulten's theorem for aggregate productivity with heterogeneous agents. Section 4.2 shows that, even in perfectly competitive economies, real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency display pathological properties once there is nontrivial heterogeneity in agents' preferences. By contrast, $A(t)$ does not suffer from these pathologies. Section 4.3 provides analytical examples to build intuition for $A(t)$, including a generalization of Arkolakis et al. (2012) to an environment with heterogeneous households and non-homothetic preferences.

4.1 Hulten's Theorem and Beyond

Denote the *Domar* weight of each producer or factor i by

$$\lambda_i(t) = \frac{p_i(t)y_i(t)}{\sum_{i'} p_{i'}(t)c_{i'}(t)} \mathbf{1}\{i \text{ is a producer}\} + \frac{w_i(t)z_i(t)L_i}{\sum_{i'} p_{i'}(t)c_{i'}(t)} \mathbf{1}\{i \text{ is a factor}\}.$$

This is the sales of producer i, or the payment to factor i, divided by total final expenditures. Recall that for factor i, the quantity of the factor is $z_i L_i$. The following is a well-known result characterizing changes in perfectly competitive economies.

Proposition 2 (Hulten's Theorem)**.** *The change in chain-weighted real GDP at t is*

$$\log Y(t) = \int_0^t \sum_i \lambda_i(s) \frac{d \log z_i}{ds} ds. \tag{8}$$

Differentiating with respect to t gives the familiar first-order version, $d \log Y/dt = \sum_i \lambda_i(t) d \log z_i/dt$. This formula, which generalizes Solow (1957), shows that the elasticity of real GDP with respect to the productivity of producer i or the quantity of factor i is the Domar weight of i.

Theorem 1 immediately implies the following version of Hulten's theorem for $A(t)$.

Proposition 3 (Compensated Hulten's Theorem)**.** *The change in aggregate productivity at t is*

$$\log A(t) = \int_0^t \sum_i \lambda_i^{comp}(s) \frac{d \log z_i}{ds} ds. \tag{9}$$

In Appendix E.6, we characterize $\lambda_i^{comp}(s)$ explicitly as a function of productivity changes, elasticities of substitution, and expenditure shares.

Differentiating (9) with respect to t and evaluating at $t = 0$ shows that, to a first-order approximation, the change in aggregate efficiency, $\Delta \log A$, coincides with the change in real GDP in the competitive equilibrium, $\Delta \log Y$.

Corollary 1 (First Order Changes in Aggregate Productivity)**.** *To a first-order approximation, the change in aggregate productivity is*

$$\Delta \log A \approx \sum_i \lambda_i^{comp}(0) \Delta \log z_i = \sum_i \lambda_i(0) \Delta \log z_i \approx \Delta \log Y \approx \Delta \log A^{KH}.$$

In words, the first-order version of Hulten's theorem applies unaltered to $A(t)$. The final approximate equality is standard, and shows that real GDP is approximately equal to Kaldor-Hicks efficiency. Hence the miraculous consensus of Proposition 1 holds to a first-order approximation in perfectly competitive economies, even if there are heterogeneous agents with non-homothetic preferences.

Baqaee and Farhi (2019c) show that, to a second-order approximation, changes in real GDP are given by

$$\Delta \log Y \approx \sum_i \lambda_i(0) \Delta \log z_i + \frac{1}{2} \sum_i \Delta \lambda_i(0) \Delta \log z_i.$$

Differentiating (9) twice with respect to t and evaluating at $t = 0$ gives the following extension of Baqaee and Farhi (2019c) to multi-agent settings.

Corollary 2 (Second Order Changes in Aggregate Productivity)**.** *To a second-order approximation, the change in aggregate productivity due to changes in primitives is*

$$\Delta \log A \approx \sum_i \lambda_i \Delta \log z_i + \frac{1}{2} \sum_i \Delta \lambda_i^{comp} \Delta \log z_i,$$

where λ_i is evaluated at the status quo, and $\Delta \lambda_i^{comp}$ denotes the change in the compensated Domar weight from the status quo. In Appendix E.6, we write $\Delta \lambda_i^{comp}$ explicitly as a function of the productivity changes $\Delta \log z$, microeconomic elasticities of substitution, and expenditure shares in the status quo.

Corollary 2 shows that, if the economy is efficient, then discrepancies between aggregate productivity $\Delta \log A$ and real GDP $\Delta \log Y$ start at second-order, since generically $\Delta \lambda \neq \Delta \lambda^{\text{comp}}$.[19] The gap between $\Delta \lambda_i$ and $\Delta \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}$ arises because the compensated representative agent's consumption demand responds differently to shocks than aggregate

[19] To derive (in Appendix E.6) an expression for $\Delta \lambda^{\text{comp}}$ in terms of microeconomic primitives, we use the fact that $\Delta \lambda^{\text{comp}}$ is the change in Domar weights in a special case of the environment considered by Baqaee

consumption demand in the decentralized economy. The compensated representative agent's demand is constructed to preserve indifference with the status quo for all households, whereas the decentralized aggregate demand comes from utility maximization by households whose incomes evolve according to equilibrium changes in relative factor prices.

4.2 Some Paradoxes of Real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks

We now contrast $A(t)$ with real GDP, $Y(t)$, and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency $A^{KH}(t)$, showing that when these measures disagree with one another, the latter can behave pathologically. In particular, when the conditions of the miraculous consensus fail, real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency need not perform the tasks they were designed to perform. Real GDP can decline even though the economy produces more of every good, and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency can rise even though the winners cannot feasibly compensate the losers.

Real GDP. It is well-known that Divisia-based indices, like real GDP, suffer from paradoxes unless households have identical and homothetic preferences (see Hulten, 1973). Specifically, if households do not have identical and homothetic preferences, then generically, the value of real output $Y(t)$ can be any positive number, depending on the path of integration. In particular, every element of $\boldsymbol{c}(t)$ can be lower than $\boldsymbol{c}(0)$ and yet $Y(t)$ can be greater than $Y(0)$ (see Appendix D for a worked-out Cobb-Douglas example).[20] Hence, although $A(t)$ and $Y(t)$ coincide up to a first-order approximation at $t = 0$, they are not the same nonlinearly.

Kaldor-Hicks Efficiency. The following proposition shows that $A(t)$ and $A^{KH}(t)$ are also not globally the same. Furthermore, $A^{KH}(t)$ can exceed one even though there are no potential Pareto improvements. This is because the hypothetical transfers needed to engineer a Pareto improvement would change equilibrium prices.

Proposition 4 (Paradox for Kaldor-Hicks Efficiency)**.** *For any change in technologies that shifts the Pareto frontier, we have:*

$$\Delta \log A \leq \Delta \log A^{KH}.$$

and Farhi (2019c) where the consumption growth of each agent is treated as-if it is a final good, and there is a Leontief final demand aggregator over final goods.

[20] The technical reason is the following. Real GDP $\log Y(t)$ is a line integral, and unless preferences are identical and homothetic, the vector field defined by Domar weights is not conservative, making $\log Y(t)$ dependent on the path of integration. See Baqaee and Burstein (2023) for related discussions.

For pure redistributions (movements along the Pareto efficient frontier), the change in $A(t)$ is zero, but the change in Kaldor-Hicks efficiency can be positive:

$$\Delta \log A = 0 \leq \Delta \log A^{KH}.$$

The gap between the two measures is strict outside of knife-edge cases. The final inequality is a restatement of the Boadway (1974) paradox. It states that $A^{KH}(t)$ assigns strictly positive value to pure redistributions when relative prices respond to transfers.[21]

Figure 1 illustrates the Boadway paradox using a two-good, two-consumer economy. Intuitively, redistributions lower the relative price of those goods that are more valued by the losers. Hence, in the new equilibrium, it is relatively cheap to compensate these households. Of course, such compensation is infeasible because, if it were to occur, relative prices would rise for those households that need compensation. Graphically, $\log A^{KH} > 0$ because $\boldsymbol{c}(0)$ is affordable given prices $\boldsymbol{p}(t)$ (the dashed line is the aggregate budget constraint given new equilibrium prices). In contrast, $\log A = 0$, because $\boldsymbol{c}(t)$ and $\boldsymbol{c}(0)$ are on the same consumption possibility frontier.

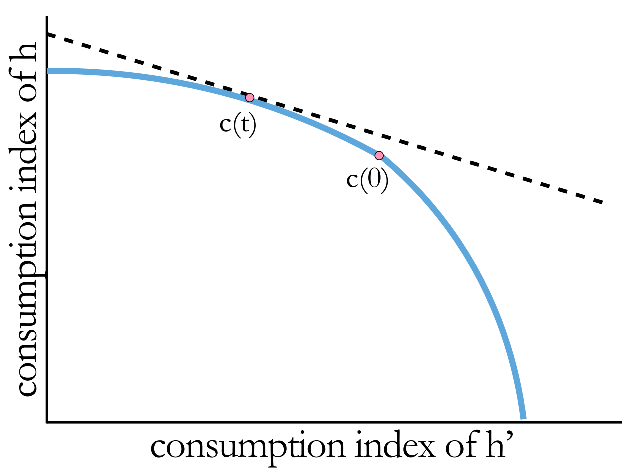

Figure 1: Redistribution from h' to h. The sum of compensating variations at $\boldsymbol{p}(t)$ is positive because the status quo allocation $\boldsymbol{c}(0)$ lies below the dashed straight line.

[21]See also Blackorby and Donaldson (1990) for a related critique of the sum of compensating variations as a measure of efficiency, and Jones (2002) for a detailed discussion.

4.3 Analytical Examples

To build intuition, we work through some analytical examples of how aggregate productivity responds to changes in technologies and trade costs. Appendix D contains detailed derivations.

Example 2 (Regional Technology Shocks). Consider households in different regions, indexed by h, with preferences over tradeable goods and locally produced nontradeable services:

$$u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = c_{hg}^{\alpha} c_{hs}^{1-\alpha}, \qquad \sum_h c_{hg} = z_g, \qquad c_{hs} = z_{hs}.$$

The first equation shows that utility in each region depends on goods and services with the expenditure share on goods equal to α. The second equation is the aggregate resource constraint for goods. The third equation is the region-by-region resource constraint for services. The parameters z_g and z_{hs} control the endowments of goods and services.

Households in region h own the local endowment of services and own a share χ_h of the aggregate endowment of the traded good. This implies that, in equilibrium, χ_h is the expenditures of each household as a share of total consumption expenditures. The Domar weight on goods is $\lambda_g = \sum_h \chi_h \alpha = \alpha$ and the Domar weight on services in region h is $\lambda_{hs} = \chi_h(1-\alpha)$. Hence, Domar weights are constant in response to technology changes $\Delta \log z_g$ and $\Delta \log z_{hs}$.

Before considering the change in aggregate productivity $\Delta \log A$, we start by considering the response of real GDP. By Proposition 2, the change in real GDP is the Domar-weighted sum of productivity shocks:

$$\Delta \log Y = \alpha \Delta \log z_g + (1-\alpha)\mathbb{E}_{\chi}\left[\Delta \log z_s\right],$$

where $\mathbb{E}_{\chi}\left[\Delta \log z_s\right]$ is the average shock to services weighted by the vector $\boldsymbol{\chi}$. This expression is exact because in the decentralized equilibrium, Domar weights do not change ($\Delta\lambda = 0$). Furthermore, since the Domar weights are constant in the competitive equilibrium, there exists a positive representative agent with Cobb-Douglas preferences over goods and services in all regions:

$$u^{RA}(\boldsymbol{c}) = c_g^{\alpha} \prod_h c_{hs}^{\chi_h(1-\alpha)}.$$

Since the positive representative agent has homothetic preferences, we also have that $\Delta \log Y = \Delta \log A^{RA}$.

In contrast, by Corollary 2, the change in aggregate productivity, to a second-order, is

$$\Delta \log A \approx \alpha \Delta \log z_g + (1-\alpha)\mathbb{E}_\chi \left[\Delta \log z_s\right] - \frac{1}{2}\frac{(1-\alpha)^2}{\alpha} Var_\chi \left[\Delta \log z_s\right] \leq \Delta \log Y = \Delta \log A^{RA}.$$

As implied by Corollary 1, the first two summands (which are first-order) agree with $\Delta \log Y$. However, $\Delta \log A$ features a nonzero second order term, which is absent from $\Delta \log Y$. The miraculous consensus of Proposition 1 fails because the agents do not have the same preferences. The second-order approximation shows that $\Delta \log A$ is a concave envelope of $\Delta \log Y$ around the status quo — amplifying negative shocks and mitigating positive shocks to services relative to real output. Intuitively, negative shocks to services are more costly because they cannot be perfectly shared across households. A negative shock to services in a region can only be compensated using goods, but those are imperfect substitutes for the loss of services.

Our next example uses Theorem 1 to derive a version of the influential Arkolakis et al. (2012) (ACR) formula to economies with heterogeneous (and non-homothetic) preferences.

Example 3 (Gains from Trade with Heterogeneous Preferences). Consider a country with different consumers, indexed by $h \in H$, with non-homothetic CES preferences over domestic consumption c_{hd} and consumption of a foreign composite good c_{hf} implicitly defined by:

$$u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = \left[(\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}} \left(u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)\right)^{\zeta_h} c_{hd}^{\frac{\theta_h - 1}{\theta_h}} + (1-\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}} c_{hf}^{\frac{\theta_h - 1}{\theta_h}} \right]^{\frac{\theta_h}{\theta_h - 1}},$$

The parameter α_h controls home bias, $\theta_h > 1$ is the compensated Armington elasticity, and ζ_h controls non-homotheticity for agent h. If $\zeta_h = 0$, we have standard homothetic CES preferences. The domestic good is produced linearly from a labor endowment and trade is balanced. The country trades with the rest of the world in the status quo. We consider the gains from trade relative to autarky by raising iceberg trade costs to infinity.

Let $s_{hd}(0)$ denote household h's budget share on the domestic good in the status quo and $\chi_h(0)$ the expenditures of household h relative to total spending by domestic households. Replicating the argument from ACR, for the compensated representative agent using Theorem 1, the change in aggregate productivity from moving to autarky is

$$\Delta \log A = -\log \mathbb{E}_{\chi(0)} \left[\left(s_{hd}(0)\right)^{\frac{1}{1-\theta_h}} \right] \leq 0, \tag{10}$$

where the expectation is across households h using status quo expenditures shares χ_h as weights. The loss, $-\Delta \log A$, is the increase in labor productivity needed in autarky to allow every household to be kept indifferent to the status quo using lump-sum transfers. Note that $(s_{hd})^{\frac{1}{1-\theta_h}}$ is the ACR formula for the gains from trade for a single agent. The equation above shows that aggregate losses are determined by an expenditure-weighted average of these individual ACR terms, with weights given by status-quo expenditure shares χ_h.[22,23] To get more intuition, consider a second-order approximation of $\Delta \log A$:[24]

$$\Delta \log A \approx \mathbb{E}_{\chi(0)}\left[\frac{\log s_{hd}(0)}{\theta_h - 1}\right] - \frac{1}{2} Var_{\chi(0)}\left[\frac{\log s_{hd}(0)}{\theta_h - 1}\right]. \tag{11}$$

The first term is just an "average" version of the ACR formula in logs — the log ACR formula is applied household-by-household and then averaged using households' share of aggregate income χ_h. The expression is weighted by household expenditures because it is more costly to compensate rich households that experience a reduction in welfare than poor households. The second term is the Jensen's inequality term, and it raises aggregate losses whenever there is dispersion in the household-level loss, $\log s_{hd}/(\theta_h - 1)$. In this sense, heterogeneity raises the costs of autarky since some households are more exposed to trade than average. Once again, since domestic and foreign goods are imperfect substitutes, heterogeneity makes compensating the worst-off households more expensive since those households can only be compensated via domestic goods and the marginal value of domestic goods relative to foreign goods declines as households are given more domestic goods.

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5 Distorted Economies

We now relax the assumption in the previous section that all wedges are equal to one. In Section 5.1, we characterize how aggregate productivity responds to counterfactual

[22] The losses from autarky implied by (10) are larger than the losses implied by the representative-agent ACR formula applied to the aggregate domestic expenditure share in an economy with heterogeneous import shares and common Armington elasticities, $\Delta \log A^{ACR} = \log \mathbb{E}_{\chi(0)}[s_{hd}]/(\theta - 1)$. For intuition, consider the case where some household h consumes no home goods, i.e., $s_{hd} = 0$ for some h. In this case, $\Delta \log A = -\infty < \Delta \log A^{ACR}$ because it is impossible to compensate h in autarky.

[23] Interestingly, the non-homotheticity parameter ζ_h does not enter the formula directly. For example, with a single agent with non-homothetic CES preferences, the ACR formula is unchanged as long as we use the compensated trade elasticity. With non-homothetic preferences, compensated and uncompensated trade elasticities differ; estimates of the latter must be converted into compensated elasticities using Slutsky's equation (see, e.g. Auer et al., 2024).

[24] This is an approximation in $\log s_{hd}/(\theta_h - 1)$ around $s_{hd} = 1$. To derive this, we follow the strategy in Theorem 3 of Baqaee and Farhi (2019a) who consider the gains from trade with a homothetic representative agent.

changes in microeconomic technologies and wedges. In Section 5.2, we focus on a specific counterfactual: the efficiency losses due to misallocation as measured by the distance from the Pareto efficient frontier. We develop a generalization of Harberger triangles to measure misallocation in general equilibrium with heterogeneous households.

5.1 Comparative Statics for Changes in Technologies and Wedges

We begin by using Theorem 1 to convert the result in Petrin and Levinsohn (2012) into a result about $A(t)$.

Proposition 5 (Changes in Aggregate Productivity with Wedges)**.** *In response to changes in wedges and productivities, the change in $A(t)$ is*

$$\Delta \log A = \int_0^t \sum_i \lambda_i^{comp}(s) \left[\left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i^{comp}(s)}\right) \frac{d \log y_i^{comp}}{ds} + \frac{1}{\mu_i^{comp}(s)} \frac{d \log z_i}{ds} \right] ds.$$

The wedges μ_i^{comp} are evaluated in the equilibrium with a compensated representative agent. If wedges are exogenous, then these are just the wedges in the original economy, so $\mu_i^{comp} = \mu_i$. In Appendix E.6, we characterize $\lambda_i^{comp}(s)$ and $d \log y_i^{comp}/ds$ explicitly as functions of changes in productivities and wedges, elasticities of substitution, and expenditure shares, using the results in Baqaee and Farhi (2020).

Note that if all wedges are equal to one, so that $\boldsymbol{\mu} = \boldsymbol{\mu}^{\text{comp}} \equiv \mathbf{1}$, then we recover the Hulten result in Proposition 3. Ceteris paribus, aggregate productivity rises if quantities rise, $d \log y_i^{\text{comp}} > 0$, for goods where price exceeds marginal cost, $\mu_i^{\text{comp}} > 1$. The appendix expresses $d \log y_i^{\text{comp}}$ in terms of microeconomic primitives, which allows us to use Proposition 5 to solve for counterfactuals along the lines of the representative-agent analysis in Baqaee and Farhi (2020).[25]

The following example illustrates that the first-order equivalence between aggregate productivity, $A(t)$, and real GDP/Kaldor-Hicks efficiency in Corollary 1 can break down in distorted economies. In particular, if prices are not equal to marginal costs, then real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency can rise, to a first order, in response to pure redistribution, even when the status quo allocation is Pareto efficient and aggregate productivity is constant. Once again, real GDP does not accurately measure changes in productive capacity, and Kaldor-Hicks does not correctly detect potential Pareto improvements.

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[25] In Appendix E, we relate Proposition 5 to the formula in Harberger (1964) for social waste.

Example 4 (First-Order Aggregate Productivity vs. Real GDP/Kaldor-Hicks). Consider an economy with two agents, $h \in \{1, 2\}$. Each agent h values a different good, denoted c_h. Both goods are produced linearly from a unit endowment of labor and sold at markup μ_h. Even though there are markups, the status quo allocation is Pareto efficient. A lump-sum transfer from 2 to 1 raises the spending on good 1 and lowers the spending on good 2. Holding constant technologies, aggregate productivity, measured using $A(t)$, is unchanged because the consumption possibility set is unchanged. The reason is that wedges in this economy do not move the allocation off the Pareto frontier — instead, they redistribute resources from agent 2 to agent 1 given their incomes.

It is easy to show that the effect on real GDP (and also Kaldor-Hicks efficiency) from a pure transfer is, to a first order,

$$\Delta \log Y \approx \Delta \log A^{KH} \approx \bar{\mu} \left[\frac{\mu_1 - \mu_2}{\mu_1 \mu_2} \right] \Delta\lambda_1 \neq 0, \tag{12}$$

where $\bar{\mu}$ is the harmonic sales-weighted average of markups and $\Delta\lambda_1$ is the change in household 1's share of income, including transfers. Hence, a pure redistribution from agent 2 to agent 1 raises real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency if the markup paid by agent 1 is higher than the one paid by agent 2. However, compensating agent 2 with lump-sum transfers requires returning to the status quo equilibrium, leaving nothing left over for agent 1. Since the status quo allocation of this economy is Pareto efficient, any gains to agent 1 come at the cost of agent 2. Accordingly, and in contrast to real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks, $\Delta \log A$ in this example is equal to zero.[26]

We now turn our attention to using $A(t)$ to measure the waste caused by distortions.

5.2 Misallocation and the Distance to the Pareto Frontier

We now focus on a particular counterfactual: let the status quo equilibrium feature wedges $\boldsymbol{\mu}(0) \neq \mathbf{1}$ and apply Proposition 5 to compute the economic waste caused by distortions. We do this by considering the counterfactual in which wedges are set to one, $\boldsymbol{\mu}(t) = \mathbf{1}$, and computing $A(t)$. This quantifies waste in terms of factor endowments — a fraction $1 - 1/A(t)$ of every factor can be saved in the absence of wedges while keeping everyone

[26] We can push this example even farther: suppose again that the transfer occurs at the same time as a decline in the productivity of labor by $\Delta \log z < 0$. In this case, aggregate productivity falls, $\Delta \log A = \Delta \log z$. However, the change in real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency is given by (12) plus $\Delta \log z$, which can be either positive or negative. That is, it is possible that real GDP and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency assign a strictly higher number to an economy with a strictly smaller consumption possibility frontier, even to a first order.

indifferent to the status quo. Equivalently, this is also the fraction $1 - 1/A(t)$ of every good that can be saved when all distortions are eliminated.

With a complete structural model, $A(t)$ can be computed using Proposition 5. However, below we derive an approximation that is more intuitive and requires less information to be applied.

Proposition 6 (Harberger Triangles)**.** *To a second-order approximation in* $\log \mu$*, the gain in aggregate productivity from eliminating wedges is*

$$\Delta \log A \approx -\frac{1}{2} \sum_i \lambda_i d \log y_i^{comp} \log \mu_i \geq 0, \tag{13}$$

where $d \log y_i^{comp} \equiv \sum_j \frac{\partial \log y_i^{comp}}{\partial \log \mu_j} \log \mu_j$ *is the change in the quantity of i caused by the wedges in the general equilibrium with the compensated representative agent. The approximation error is order* $(\log \mu)^3$*. The derivatives and expenditure shares in* (13) *may be evaluated at either the undistorted point or the distorted status quo without affecting the second-order approximation.*[27] *We provide an explicit formula for* $d \log y_i^{comp}$ *in terms of microeconomic primitives in Appendix E.6.*

This proposition generalizes deadweight loss triangles to measure aggregate productivity losses from wedges in general equilibrium economies with heterogeneous agents. The proof relies on translating results from Baqaee and Farhi (2024) using Theorem 1.

There are two advantages to using Proposition 6 over and above simply applying Proposition 5 using a fully specified structural model. First, the Harberger triangles formula can be used to get analytical intuition for misallocation costs through the use of loglinearized expressions, as demonstrated below. Second, it is possible to populate the terms in (13) with considerably fewer assumptions about the primitives of the economy, such as the forces generating wedges, productivity processes, and so on.

The intuition for (13) is familiar: a wedge on *i* is more costly when the Domar weight of *i* is larger and the quantity of *i* is more responsive to the wedge. However, compared to a representative-agent model with homothetic preferences, the relevant notion of responsiveness is the one in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent, not the decentralized one.

We provide some pen-and-paper examples to build intuition for Proposition 6.

[27] Quadratic welfare-loss formulas are often written with shares and derivatives evaluated at the undistorted point. Evaluating them at the distorted status quo instead does not affect the second-order approximation: the two evaluation points differ by first order in $\log \mu$, while $d \log y_i^{\text{comp}} \log \mu_i$ is already second order. Hence the difference enters only at third order.

Example 5 (Misallocation when Markups Vary by Household). Consider the misallocation problem studied by Hsieh and Klenow (2009), but suppose there are multiple agents. Each agent h has CES preferences over consumption goods with elasticity of substitution θ_h. We consider a situation in which each agent pays potentially a different markup μ_{hi} on each good i.[28] Suppose that all consumption goods are ultimately produced linearly from a single common primary factor called labor, which is inelastically supplied.

We can apply Proposition 6 to write the aggregate productivity gain from eliminating markups, up to a second-order approximation, as

$$\Delta \log A \approx \frac{1}{2}\mathbb{E}_{\chi}\left[\theta_h Var_{\boldsymbol{b}_h}\left[\log \boldsymbol{\mu}_h | h\right]\right], \tag{14}$$

where the expectation uses the vector of household income shares, $\boldsymbol{\chi}$, as weights and the variance uses household budget shares over goods, $\boldsymbol{b}_h$, as weights.[29] The larger is $\Delta \log A$, the larger are the efficiency losses in the status quo. If all agents have the same preferences and face the same wedges, then the expectation in (14) collapses, and the equation reduces to the single-agent case, equation (19), in Baqaee and Farhi (2020).

In words, the efficiency loss caused by the markups depends on the average variance in markups paid by each household multiplied by that household's elasticity of substitution. Intuitively, if θ_h is very high, then dispersion in markups faced by h causes a greater reduction in aggregate efficiency. Furthermore, aggregate efficiency falls by more if richer households (those with higher χ_h) are exposed to more markup dispersion. This is because any benefits to richer households from eliminating markup dispersion can be used to compensate other agents, so these agents get a greater weight. Importantly, this expression does not depend on the average markup paid by each household. A proportional scaling of all markups paid by household h would leave this expression unchanged because increasing all markups uniformly on a single household is equivalent to a lump-sum tax on that household, which has no effect on aggregate productivity.

The next example applies equation (13) to study efficiency losses due to imperfect insurance. Baqaee and Burstein (2025b) uses the same basic idea to quantify misallocation due to financial market incompleteness in closed and open economies.

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[28] Formally, we define wedges at the good level rather than the household-good level. To allow for household-good-specific wedges, we introduce an intermediary hi between good i and household h. This intermediary purchases good i and sells it to household h at markup μ_{hi} over marginal cost, where marginal cost is the price of good i.

[29] Formally written out, the right-hand side of (14) is $\frac{1}{2}\sum_h \chi_h \theta_h \sum_i b_{hi}\left[\log \mu_{hi} - \sum_{i'} b_{hi'} \log \mu_{hi'}\right]^2$.

Example 6 (Misallocation Due to Financial Market Incompleteness). Consider agents with expected utility

$$u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = \sum_s \frac{c_h(s)^{1-1/\theta}}{1-1/\theta}.$$

States of nature, indexed by s, are all equally likely so the probability of any state can be dropped. The coefficient of relative risk aversion is $1/\theta$ (or equivalently, the elasticity of substitution across states is θ).

Each agent h has income $y_h(s) = a_h + \epsilon_h(s)$, where $\epsilon_h(s)$ is an idiosyncratic shock that sums to zero across agents, $\sum_h \epsilon_h(s) = 0$ for every s, with mean zero for each agent $\mathbb{E}[\epsilon_h(s)|h] = 0$. The status quo allocation is financial autarky, so h's consumption in state s is $c_h^0(s) = y_h(s)$. The aggregate resource constraint for the economy is $\sum_h c_h(s) = \sum_h a_h$, because, by assumption, $\sum_h \epsilon_h(s) = 0$ for every s.

To apply our results, we first replicate this allocation using a Walrasian equilibrium with wedges. Suppose that there are complete state-contingent markets, together with household-by-state consumption wedges $\mu_h(s)$. The wedges that decentralize the status quo allocation must satisfy

$$\frac{c_h^0(s)/c_{h'}^0(s)}{c_h^0(s')/c_{h'}^0(s')} = \left[\frac{\mu_h(s)}{\mu_h(s')}\frac{\mu_{h'}(s')}{\mu_{h'}(s)}\right]^{-\theta}.$$

Substituting these wedges into the triangles formula, eq. (13), and calculating the change in quantities caused by wedges in the economy with the compensated representative agent (derivations in Appendix E), the gains from completing financial markets are:

$$\Delta \log A \approx \frac{1}{2}\theta \mathbb{E}_\chi \left[Var\left[\log \mu_h(s) \mid h\right]\right] = \frac{1}{2\theta}\mathbb{E}_\chi \left[Var\left[\log c_h(s) \mid h\right]\right],$$

where χ_h is household h's expected share of consumption in the status quo, equal to $a_h/\sum_{h'} a_{h'}$. This formula disregards inequality due to dispersion in the persistent component of income (dispersion in consumption caused by a_h) because the variance is conditional on household h. Instead, misallocation depends on the average conditional consumption variance, weighted by household income. Holding the consumption process fixed, the gains from completing financial markets are larger when risk aversion, $1/\theta$, is higher.

In Appendix E.5, we use the example above to show that, as wedges are eliminated, $\Delta \log A$ need not equal either the changes in real GDP or the changes in the welfare of the normative representative agent.

6 Costly Redistribution

In this section, we extend the definition of $A(t)$ to allow for imperfect redistributive tools. This is another advantage of our approach relative to measures based on adding up willingness-to-pay across all households (e.g. Kaldor-Hicks). This is because when we add up willingness-to-pay, we implicitly assume that winners can costlessly compensate losers using unrestricted transfers. In this section, we allow for the possibility that, in defining aggregate productivity, some compensations may be infeasible because the required transfers are unavailable (we take the reasons why to be exogenous in our analysis, e.g. politics and incentives).

Section 6.1 generalizes the definition of $A(t)$ to allow for restricted redistributive tools. Section 6.2 extends Hulten's theorem and Harberger triangles to this environment. Section 6.3 extends the losses from autarky exercise of Arkolakis et al. (2012) to allow for heterogeneous agents and compensations that can only be achieved using distortionary taxes. Section 6.4 closes with an illustrative example, analyzing the aggregate effects of the rise of China on U.S. workers, under different extreme assumptions on factor mobility and available redistributive tools.

6.1 Definition with Limited Redistributive Tools

Suppose that there are ad valorem taxes $\boldsymbol{\tau}$ and lump-sum taxes and transfers $\boldsymbol{T}$ that can be used to compensate agents.[30] We denominate lump-sum taxes and transfers in units of total spending. Assume that the values of taxes and transfers, $(\boldsymbol{\tau}, \boldsymbol{T})$, are restricted to some exogenous set of allowable values $\mathcal{T}$. We assume that this set is a fixed primitive of the model (e.g. negative lump-sum taxes are disallowed or only linear taxes are allowed).

Define the feasible consumption set, given restrictions on redistributive tools, to be

$$\mathcal{C}^{\text{costly}}(t, Z) = \left\{ \boldsymbol{c} \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times N} : \begin{array}{l} \text{there exist taxes and transfers } (\boldsymbol{\tau}, \boldsymbol{T}) \in \mathcal{T} \\ \text{such that } \boldsymbol{c} \text{ is part of an equilibrium} \end{array} \right\}.$$

This is the set of consumption allocations that can be supported as equilibria given exogenous parameter values at t, aggregate factor-augmenting technology shifter Z, and tax-and-transfer values belonging to $\mathcal{T}$. We define aggregate productivity with costly redistribution, $A^{\text{costly}}(t)$, analogously as before, with $\mathcal{C}^{\text{costly}}(t, Z)$ in place of $\mathcal{C}(t, Z)$.

[30] These ad valorem taxes are similar to the wedges $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ — so that the price of i becomes $p_i = \mu_i \tau_i mc_i$ if there is an ad valorem tax on τ_i on good i. These taxes generate tax revenues, which can be rebated to households using the available transfers T.

Definition 5 (Aggregate Productivity with Costly Redistribution)**.** *Aggregate productivity* at t, given redistributive tools $\mathcal{T}$, is the largest scalar $Z > 0$ by which factor-augmenting productivity can be contracted while keeping every agent at least indifferent to the status quo allocation. Formally,

$$A^{\text{costly}}(t) \equiv \max\left\{Z > 0 : \text{there is } \boldsymbol{c} \in \mathcal{C}^{\text{costly}}(t, 1/Z) \text{ and } \boldsymbol{c}_h \succeq_h \boldsymbol{c}_h(0) \text{ for every } h\right\}. \quad (15)$$

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between $A^{\text{costly}}(t)$ and $A(t)$ using a simple two-agent example. The agents are indexed by h and h'. The status quo allocation, $\boldsymbol{c}(0)$, and decentralized allocation without transfers, $\boldsymbol{c}(t)$, are denoted by red circles. In the decentralized allocation, agent h' is better off and agent h is worse off compared to the status quo. The dashed blue line indicates the set of feasible consumption allocations at t given unrestricted lump-sum taxes, $\mathcal{C}(t, 1)$. The solid blue line shows $\mathcal{C}^{\text{costly}}(t, 1)$, the corresponding set given restricted and distorting redistributive tools. The two frontiers touch at the decentralized point, since reaching the decentralized point does not require any distortionary redistributive taxation. However, the solid blue set is strictly smaller than the dashed line since distortionary taxation limits the set of feasible redistributions. In this example, aggregate productivity is measured by the required contraction in factor-augmenting productivity until the frontier reaches the status quo allocation. The required contraction of $\mathcal{C}(t, 1)$ is larger than the one for $\mathcal{C}^{\text{costly}}(t, 1)$, and so aggregate productivity gains are smaller with distortionary redistributive tools.

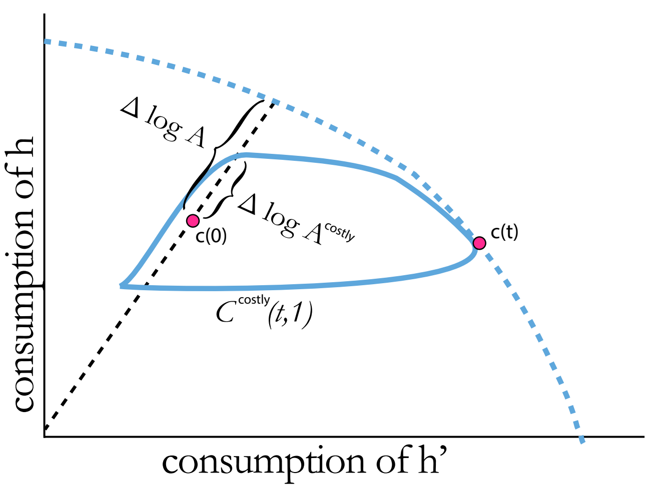

Figure 2: Aggregate productivity with lump-sum transfers and distortionary taxes.

With limited redistributive tools, Theorem 1 may no longer hold. In particular, if the available instruments do not allow all households to be made exactly indifferent to the status quo, then $A^{\text{costly}}(t)$ must be solved for directly. However, if the available instruments are rich enough to make every agent exactly indifferent to the status quo, then $A^{\text{costly}}(t)$ can still be computed through the compensated-agent equilibrium, as shown in Appendix F.

6.2 Hulten's Theorem with Costly Redistribution

If there are enough redistributive tools to make every household exactly indifferent to the status quo, then, starting from a perfectly competitive equilibrium, the change in aggregate productivity obeys Hulten's theorem to a first order even with costly redistribution. The reason is that the losses from distortionary redistributive taxes are second order.

To formalize this logic, suppose the following condition holds:

$(*)$ there exists $\boldsymbol{c}^*(t) \in \mathcal{C}^{\text{costly}}\big(t, 1/A^{\text{costly}}(t)\big)$ such that $u_h\big(\boldsymbol{c}_h^*(t)\big) = u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h(0))$ for all h.

This is the analogue of condition (i) in Theorem 1. It ensures that, at the value of Z that defines $A^{\text{costly}}(t)$, every agent can be made exactly indifferent to the status quo using the allowable redistributive tools.

Proposition 7 (Hulten's Theorem with Costly Redistribution)**.** *If the status quo is perfectly competitive, with all wedges equal to one, and condition $(*)$ holds, then, to a first order approximation in $\Delta \log \boldsymbol{z}$,*

$$\Delta \log A^{costly} = \sum_i \lambda_i(0) \Delta \log z_i.$$

Intuitively, the losses from costly redistribution are second-order, and hence to a first-order approximation, only the direct effects of the productivity shock matter (assuming we start at a competitive equilibrium).

Of course, the losses from distortionary taxation do matter to higher orders. Indeed, the following proposition shows that, to a second-order, $\Delta \log A^{\text{costly}}$ is lower than $\Delta \log A$ by exactly the deadweight loss triangles caused by distortionary compensations.

Proposition 8 (Productivity Shocks with Costly Redistribution)**.** *If the status quo is perfectly competitive and condition $(*)$ holds then, to a second-order approximation in $\Delta \log \boldsymbol{z}$,*

$$\Delta \log A^{costly} = \underbrace{\sum_i \left(\lambda_i + \frac{1}{2} \sum_j \frac{\partial \lambda_i^{comp}}{\partial \log z_j} \Delta \log z_j \right) \Delta \log z_i}_{\Delta \log A} + \frac{1}{2} \sum_i \lambda_i \left(\sum_j \frac{\partial \log y_i^{comp}}{\partial \log \tau_j} \Delta \log \tau_j^* \right) \Delta \log \tau_i^*, \tag{16}$$

where $\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t)$ maximizes (15).

The first set of summands are the same as for $\Delta \log A$. The last set of summands, which are new and non-positive, are the deadweight-loss triangles associated with the redistributive taxes $\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t)$. Thus, the response of aggregate productivity to technology shocks is the same as it would be if lump-sum transfers were possible minus the deadweight loss triangles associated with distortionary taxes needed to compensate households. The simplicity of Equation (16) follows from the fact that the status quo is undistorted. This ensures that there are no interactions between redistributive taxes and pre-existing distortions, and that cross terms between the productivity shocks and the compensating taxes do not enter the second-order expression.

6.3 Analytical Example: Losses from Autarky

To illustrate Proposition 8, we apply it to quantify losses from autarky when redistribution is limited.

Example 7 (Gains from Trade with Limited Redistribution). We revisit Example 3, which studied the gains from trade, but this time we incorporate limits to redistribution. We add a labor-leisure margin, and assume redistribution can only be done by taxing consumption, which distorts labor supply.

Suppose there are two households, and household h has nested-CES preferences over domestic consumption goods, c_{hd}, imported consumption goods, c_{hf}, and leisure l_h:

$$u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = \left[(1-\gamma_h)^{\frac{1}{\rho}} \left[\alpha_h^{\frac{1}{\theta}} c_{hd}^{\frac{\theta-1}{\theta}} + (1-\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta}} c_{hf}^{\frac{\theta-1}{\theta}} \right]^{\frac{\theta}{\theta-1}\frac{\rho-1}{\rho}} + \gamma_h^{\frac{1}{\rho}} l_h^{\frac{\rho-1}{\rho}} \right]^{\frac{\rho}{\rho-1}}.$$

The model in Example 3 did not feature the leisure good. The inner nest combines domestic and foreign consumption goods with Armington elasticity θ and home bias controlled by the parameter α_h. The outer nest combines the goods bundle with leisure with elasticity of substitution ρ and share parameter γ_h. The parameter ρ controls the Frisch elasticity of labor supply.

Household h is endowed with one unit of time and z_h efficiency units of labor and faces a budget constraint:

$$\tau p_d c_{hd} + \tau p_f c_{hf} = w z_h (1 - l_h) + T_h,$$

where p_d and p_f denote the price of each consumption good, w is the wage per efficiency unit, τ is the gross-tax rate on consumption, and T_h is a lump sum transfer. Budget balance requires $(\tau - 1)\sum(p_d c_{hd} + p_f c_{hf}) = \sum T_h$. The domestic consumption good is produced linearly with labor, so $p_d = w$ and, in autarky, the resource constraint for domestic consumption is $\sum_h c_{hd} = \sum_h z_h(1 - l_h)$. The resource constraint for leisure is $l_h \leq 1$.

Let

$$\Omega_{hd} = \frac{p_d(0)c_{hd}(0) + p_f(0)c_{hf}(0)}{w(0)z_h}$$

denote household h's budget share on consumption in the status quo as a share of the value of h's total time endowment (the remainder is implicit expenditures on leisure). For simplicity of exposition, and since it is fairly realistic, we assume that both households work the same number of hours in the status quo, which implies that $\Omega_{hd} = \Omega_d$ does not vary by household h. As before, let s_{hd} denote household h's share of expenditures on the domestic consumption good relative to all consumption goods:

$$s_{hd} = \frac{p_d(0)c_{hd}(0)}{p_d(0)c_{hd}(0) + p_f(0)c_{hf}(0)}.$$

The status quo is a competitive equilibrium without taxes in which the country trades with the rest of the world. We consider the aggregate productivity loss from closing the economy to autarky in two cases: (1) unrestricted lump-sum transfers are available, and (2) lump-sum transfers must be positive and revenues can only be raised using ad valorem consumption taxes.

Lump-Sum Taxation. With lump-sum taxation, using Corollary 2, we can write the losses from autarky, to a second-order approximation as

$$\Delta \log A \approx \underbrace{\Omega_d \mathbb{E}_\chi \left[\frac{\log s_{hd}}{\theta - 1}\right]}_{\text{1st order}} \underbrace{- \frac{1}{2}\Omega_d^2 Var_\chi \left[\frac{\log s_{hd}}{\theta - 1}\right] + \frac{1}{2}(\rho - 1)\Omega_d(1 - \Omega_d)\mathbb{E}_\chi \left[\left(\frac{\log s_{hd}}{\theta - 1}\right)^2\right]}_{\text{2nd order with lump-sum taxation}}.$$

This expression is identical to Equation (11) in Example 3 when there is no leisure, $\Omega_d = 1$. The first and second summands are the analogues of those in (11), now scaled by Ω_d to account for the fact that households also consume leisure. The final summand, which is absent in (11), accounts for complementarities/substitutabilities between consumption and leisure. If consumption and leisure are complements, $\rho < 1$, then the reduction to consumption caused by autarky reduces the value of leisure through complementarity, raising losses from autarky further.

Linear Taxation. Now consider the case where lump-sum taxes are unavailable, so lump-sum transfers must be non-negative, $\boldsymbol{T} \geq 0$, and financed by a uniform consumption tax. Proposition 8 now implies that, to a second-order approximation,

$$\Delta \log A^{\text{costly}} \approx \Delta \log A - \underbrace{\frac{1}{2}\rho\Omega_d(1-\Omega_d)(d\log\tau^*)^2}_{\text{2nd order losses from distorting taxes}},$$

where τ^* is the consumption tax needed to compensate the household that loses more from autarky. A given tax is more distorting the higher is ρ, which controls substitution between consumption and leisure, and the closer is Ω_d to $1/2$. If Ω_d is equal to either one (households do not value leisure) or zero (households do not value consumption), then there is no distortion from taxing consumption.

Index the two households by h and h' and suppose that h is more exposed to foreign goods: $s_{hd} < s_{h'd}$. This means that, in the decentralized equilibrium, household h is more negatively affected by autarky than h'. In this case, the optimal compensation raises a consumption tax and sends all collected tax revenues to h. The tax required for the compensation is $d\log\tau^* = \frac{\chi_h}{\theta-1}\left[\log s_{h'd} - \log s_{hd}\right] > 0$, to a first-order, where χ_h is the status quo share of aggregate income of h. The required consumption tax is higher the larger is the heterogeneity in exposure to the trade shock, and the larger is the income share of household h. Appendix F provides numerical examples and shows that the second-order approximation is very accurate even for very open economies.

In the example above, heterogeneity arises because households are differentially exposed to the shock through their consumption baskets. In Appendix F, we provide another example where households are differentially exposed through income: skill-biased technical change affects different workers differently.

6.4 Illustrative Quantitative Example: the China Shock

Our final example illustrates the aggregate effects for U.S. households from the rise of China under different extreme assumptions about factor mobility and the availability of compensatory tools. We use the general equilibrium model in Baqaee and Farhi (2024) for this exercise. In the model, each country has different factor endowments, and we treat owners of different factor endowments as different agents.

The rise of China, which we model as an improvement in Chinese technologies, changes relative wages among U.S. factors and therefore has different consequences for different agents. We quantify the factor-productivity-equivalent value of the shock for the U.S. Specifically, the compensability criterion is applied only to U.S. households, and only U.S. factor endowments are scaled. Foreign households in the world general equilibrium are not required to be kept at their status-quo utility levels. (See the remark after Definition 2, which describes how our measure of aggregate productivity can be applied to a subset of agents). We show how the gains depend on assumptions about factor mobility across sectors and on the availability of tax and transfer tools in the U.S.

Summary of calibration. The model has 9 regions (Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Mexico, U.S., and the rest of the world) and 30 industries in each country. Production in each industry is a nested CES aggregator combining four domestic primary factor endowments (low-, medium-, high-skill labor, and capital) with intermediate inputs. The intermediate input bundle used by each industry is a nested CES aggregator over all industries and origin countries. All households in the same country consume the same domestic consumption bundle, which is a homothetic nested CES aggregator over all industries and origin countries. (We abstract from heterogeneity in preferences within countries). The initial expenditure shares are calibrated according to the World Input-Output Database in 2008. Since tariffs in 2008 were quite low, the model is calibrated assuming there are no import tariffs.[31]

Shock. In 2008, the calibration year, China's GDP was roughly 5% of world GDP. By 2023, this number had risen to roughly 18%. We model the rise of China through an increase in Chinese factor-augmenting productivity growth (roughly tripling the efficiency units of all Chinese factor endowments) to ensure that China's share of world GDP rises to 18%. We consider how this shock affects the U.S. under four different scenarios.

Restrictions on redistribution. To illustrate the qualitative point that redistributive tools matter, we consider four simple and starkly different scenarios:

i. *Tariffs with lump-sum transfers:* the government can raise a uniform tariff on imports, and also has access to unrestricted lump-sum transfers (i.e. lump-sum transfers can be positive or negative).

[31] The elasticity of substitution between primary factors is set to one. The elasticity of substitution between value-added and intermediates is 0.5. Each country-industry pair has a unique bundle of intermediate inputs sourced from different industries with elasticity of substitution across industries of 0.2. Each country also has a unique consumption bundle, with elasticity of substitution across industries of 0.9. Every destination country-industry pair purchases from each industry a unique mix of inputs sourced from different origin countries (e.g. U.S. mining purchases a unique mix of machinery from different origin countries). The Armington trade elasticity is equal to 5.

ii. *Tariffs with targeted rebates:* the government can raise a uniform tariff on imports and has full discretion over how to rebate any additional tariff revenues, measured in units of world GDP.

iii. *Tariffs with non-targeted rebates:* the government can raise a uniform tariff on all imports but any additional tariff revenues are rebated back to domestic households in proportion to their pre-shock initial share of aggregate income.

iv. *No redistributive tools:* the tariff level and the distribution revenues it generates are fixed at their status quo values, and there are no lump-sum taxes. In this case, the consumption possibility set after the shock is the single point corresponding to the decentralized equilibrium.

Status quo. We assume that the 2008 data correspond to an equilibrium without redistribution and where all taxes are zero. If we were to treat this as the status quo, then even without the China shock aggregate productivity would rise in scenarios (i), (ii), and (iii), reflecting the gains from optimal tariffs (since the status quo has no tariffs and unilateral tariffs can raise A). Our focus is not on quantifying the gains from optimal tariffs, but to illustrate how an imperfect redistributive tool influences the aggregate productivity value of the China shock to the U.S.

We therefore assume that an initial import tariff is set to maximize the quantity of U.S. aggregate consumption prior to the China shock. This ensures that the status quo allocation is not Pareto dominated by other allocations in the feasible status quo consumption possibility set (i.e. in the absence of the China shock, aggregate productivity is 1 by construction in every scenario). We do this so that we do not conflate the effects of the China shock with the effects of establishing optimal tariffs. Nevertheless, to keep the status quo allocation similar to the data in 2008 — where tariffs were small — we assume that U.S. tariffs provoke symmetric retaliation from the rest of the world. As a result, the optimal U.S. tariff in the status quo is small anyhow (2.3% in the case without factor mobility and 1.0% in the case with factor mobility), ensuring that expenditure shares in the status quo are close to the 2008 data prior to the shock. Appendix F.4 summarizes the computational details.

Results. The aggregate productivity change for the U.S. due to the China shock is shown in Table 1. In this table, we compute A exactly using the nonlinear model, and do not rely on the approximation formulas. We consider two specifications of the model, labelled "immobile" and "mobile" factors. When factors are "immobile", primary factors (labor and capital) in each country-industry pair cannot move across industries. When factors are mobile, there is one national market for each factor type (low-, medium-, high-skill labor and capital) and all industries in a country hire from the national market. Comparing these two specifications reveals the importance of reallocation for determining the aggregate effect of a shock.

Table 1: Effect of China Shock on the United States

Scenario	Immobile Factors	Mobile Factors
	$\Delta\log A$	$\Delta\log A$
Tariffs & lump-sum transfers	0.009	0.010
Tariffs & targeted rebates	-0.010	0.010
Tariffs & non-targeted rebates	-0.173	0.008
No redistributive tools	-0.205	0.008

Note: Each entry uses the feasible set implied by the redistributive tools in that row.

The first row shows the change in aggregate productivity for the U.S. when lump-sum transfers are available. In this case, aggregate productivity rises by around 1 log point in response to the China shock. This means that, after the rise of China, U.S. factor-augmenting productivity can be reduced by about 1% while still leaving every U.S. household at least as well off as in the status quo. Since lump-sum transfers are available, the change in aggregate productivity is very similar with or without factor mobility.

The second row considers the case where import tariffs are available, but compensation can only draw on excess tariff revenues. In this case, aggregate productivity falls by 1 log point when factors cannot move across sectors. The reason is that the China shock lowers real wages in some sectors. To compensate these households, U.S. tariff rates must rise, which triggers retaliation from the rest of the world, and factor-augmenting productivity must be increased by about 1 log point. The picture is very different when factors are mobile: real wage losses are attenuated, so large tariff changes are not needed to compensate losing households.

The third row considers the case where tariff revenues can only be distributed according to pre-shock income shares. Because redistributive tools are much more severely restricted, compensating losers becomes much harder. Aggregate productivity falls by 17.3 log points when factors are immobile: U.S. factor-augmenting productivity would have to rise by that amount to keep every U.S. household indifferent to the status quo. Once again, these restrictions are much less important when factors are mobile across sectors, and the aggregate productivity gain remains close to the full-redistribution benchmark.

The final row considers the case without redistributive tools. In the absence of factor mobility, aggregate productivity falls by 20.5 log points. This means that, after the China shock, factor-augmenting productivity in the U.S. must rise by that amount to ensure that the workers whose real wage declines the most—those in the *Textile and Leather Products* sector—are just indifferent to the status quo. The contrast with the mobile-factor case is stark: with factor mobility, workers can flee badly affected industries, so heterogeneity across factors is substantially attenuated and the value of the shock without redistribution closely approximates that under full redistribution.

The results in Table 1 show that the change in aggregate productivity depends strongly on (a) the extent to which the shock has asymmetric effects across households, and (b) the redistributive tools available to compensate losers. Therefore, the aggregate gains to the U.S. from the rise of China hinge on correctly modeling not just terms-of-trade effects, but also the social safety net in the U.S., which determines both the unevenness of outcomes and how costly it is for winners to compensate the losers.

Note that although redistributive tools are important for quantifying the change in aggregate productivity reported in Table 1, we do not take a stance on how these tools should be used in practice. For example, if lump-sum transfers are available, U.S. factor-augmenting productivity can be contracted by 1% and everyone can be kept at least as well off; hence, after the shock and compensation, there is a 1% surplus in U.S. factors. We measure this surplus without specifying how it should be distributed among U.S. households.

7 Conclusion

We generalize cost-benefit analysis to environments with heterogeneous agents, general equilibrium, and potentially limited redistributive tools. Our measure, which converts shocks into a welfare-equivalent change in total factor productivity, collapses to the Solow residual and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency when there are lump-sum transfers available, households have the same homothetic preferences, and face the same relative prices.

We show that, under some assumptions, this can be computed by solving the equilibrium of an economy with a fictional representative agent. This provides a method to translate theorems and tools about representative-agent economies to study our measure in economies with heterogeneous agents. Some examples include Hulten (1978), Harberger (1964), Hsieh and Klenow (2009), Arkolakis et al. (2012), Baqaee and Farhi (2019c), and Baqaee and Farhi (2020). This also allows us to calculate aggregate productivity using only information on observables like expenditure shares and price elasticities of supply and demand curves, without any free parameters like Pareto weights or cardinal utility functions.

This framework is tractable and applicable to many different parts of economics, as shown by stand-alone applications pursued in Baqaee and Burstein (2025a,b) and Baqaee et al. (2026a,b).

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Online Appendix

Appendix A Appendix to Section 1

A.1 Relation to Decompositions of Social Welfare Functions

Here we further discuss how our measure of aggregate productivity relates to recent decompositions of social welfare functions.

Donald et al. (2023) decompose changes in a social welfare function into several components in a discrete choice spatial economy. Their framework is quite different from the environment in this paper, where we assume continuous choice and no mobility choice. However, in Baqaee and Burstein (2025a) we apply our definition of aggregate productivity to a spatial general equilibrium model with discrete choice. See that paper for a discussion of how our measure of aggregate productivity can be applied in discrete choice settings.

Bhandari et al. (2021) decompose changes in a social welfare function into efficiency and redistribution components. However, as they point out, their efficiency component depends on the social welfare function under consideration. In contrast, our measure of aggregate productivity does not depend on the choice of a social welfare function. Therefore, their efficiency component in their decomposition is not equal to the change in aggregate productivity as we defined it.

Dávila and Schaab (2022, 2023) also decompose changes in a social welfare function into an efficiency and a redistribution component. We now show, using an economy similar to that in Example 4, that the efficiency component defined in these papers is generically not equal to aggregate productivity as we define it. Specifically, the Dávila and Schaab (2022, 2023) measure can be positive or negative in response to a pure redistribution that moves the economy along the surface of the Pareto frontier. In contrast, by construction, $\log A$ is zero in response to movements along the feasible frontier.

There are H agents, each buying a single consumption good, c_h, produced linearly from a unit endowment of labor with productivity z_h. Importantly, the set of goods consumed by agents is mutually exclusive — the good consumed by h is not the same as the good consumed by h'. Since all goods are produced linearly from labor, the aggregate resource constraint is

$$\sum l_h = \sum_h \frac{c_h}{z_h} = 1,$$

where the right-hand side is the aggregate endowment of labor.

Now, consider a pure redistribution that moves the economy along the surface of the Pareto frontier. Consumption by household h changes by Δc_h. The unchanged resource constraint implies that $\{\Delta c_h\}_h$ must satisfy

$$\sum_h \Delta l_h = \sum_h \frac{\Delta c_h}{z_h} = 0.$$

To define the Dávila and Schaab (2022, 2023) measure, we need to introduce a welfare numeraire that all individuals intrinsically value. Since each household consumes a different good, we let the welfare numeraire be a bundle of all consumption goods. This is analogous to the construction in Barcons et al. (2026). The welfare numeraire bundle places weight $\omega_h > 0$ on the good consumed by household h, with $\sum_h \omega_h = 1$. Since the bundle includes the good valued by each household, the marginal utility from the welfare numeraire is positive for all agents, satisfying the restriction in Dávila and Schaab (2022, 2023).

The numeraire-equivalent welfare gain for agent h, as defined by Dávila and Schaab (2023), is

$$\frac{u_h' \Delta c_h}{u_h' \omega_h} = \frac{\Delta c_h}{\omega_h},$$

where u_h' is the marginal utility of consumption for agent h. Summing across households, the efficiency change measure of Dávila and Schaab (2023) is

$$\Xi^E = \sum_h \frac{u_h' \Delta c_h}{u_h' \omega_h} = \sum_h \frac{\Delta c_h}{\omega_h}.$$

Generically, $\Xi^E \neq 0$, even though the redistribution satisfies $\sum_h \Delta c_h / z_h = 0$. The sign of Ξ^E can be positive or negative depending on the numeraire weights ω_h relative to productivities z_h. Hence, Ξ^E differs both from $\log A^{KH}$ (see Example 4) and from $\log A$, which in this example is equal to zero because the allocation remains Pareto efficient. A similar argument appears in Barcons et al. (2026) in the context of an overlapping generation model. They show that in "demographically disconnected" economies, where temporally distant cohorts consume non-overlapping goods, Ξ^E can differ from zero in response to redistributions even when the allocation is Pareto efficient. Here, we use the same logic in a static multi-good economy.

Here, we use an extreme example to illustrate the difference between the efficiency component of Davila-Schaab, Ξ^E, and our measure. Namely, the set of goods consumed by each household is mutually exclusive (although all goods are linearly made from the same labor endowment). However, even in economies where all households consume positive quantities of every good and face the same relative prices, changes in our measure, $d \log A$, do not coincide with Ξ^E even to a first-order. We do not provide a worked-out example for brevity.

Appendix B Appendix to Section 2

B.1 Aggregate Productivity with Altruism

We discuss how our definition of aggregate productivity can be applied to economies where agents are altruistic towards each other. In such economies, our definition of aggregate productivity automatically incorporates agents' altruism and concerns for equity into its definition. In particular, if agents are altruistic, then a highly unequal distribution of income is inefficient. Furthermore, if all agents have the same economy-wide ranking of allocations, our measure of aggregate productivity becomes a TFP-equivalent variation for the common SWF.

To make these points, consider the following simple example. There are two agents, 1 and 2. Agent i has preferences:

$$u_i(\boldsymbol{c}) = c_i^{1-\beta} c_{-i}^{\beta}$$

and budget constraint

$$c_i = w z_i + T_i,$$

where $\beta \in [0, 1/2]$ parameterizes altruism towards the other agent, w is the real wage, and z_i is the productivity of i's labor endowment. The consumption good is the numeraire. Production is done by a perfectly competitive firm with linear technology that converts labor into consumption goods one for one. Hence, the real wage in equilibrium is one. The aggregate resource constraint is

$$c_1 + c_2 = z_1 + z_2.$$

The laissez faire equilibrium is defined to be one where transfers are zero $T_1 = T_2 = 0$. The laissez faire equilibrium is Pareto efficient as long as $c_1/(c_1 + c_2) \in [\beta, 1 - \beta]$. In other words, in this economy, both agents prefer that the other agent receive at least a share β of aggregate consumption. If the other agent's consumption falls below β, then both agents prefer to raise the poorer agent's consumption.[32]

[32]The fact that agents do not make voluntary transfers to one another in the laissez faire equilibrium can

Aggregate productivity is defined exactly as in Definition 2:

$$A(t) = \max\left\{Z : c_1^{1-\beta} c_2^{\beta} \geq z_1(0)^{1-\beta} z_2(0)^{\beta},\ c_1^{\beta} c_2^{1-\beta} \geq z_1(0)^{\beta} z_2(0)^{1-\beta},\ c_1 + c_2 = \frac{z_1(t) + z_2(t)}{Z}\right\}.$$

The first two constraints ensure that each agent is kept indifferent to the status quo and the last is the resource constraint. Note that if both agents have the same ranking over economy-wide allocations, i.e. $\beta = 1/2$, then both indifference conditions are the same and $A(t)$ collapses to the TFP-equivalent variation of the utilitarian social welfare function: $(1/2)\log c_1 + (1/2)\log c_2$.

We use this basic environment to illustrate two things: (1) the response of aggregate productivity to a microeconomic productivity shock; (2) misallocation measured as the distance to the frontier.

Productivity shocks. Suppose that in the status quo, indexed by $t = 0$, both agents have the same productivity $z_i(0) = 1/2$ and there are no lump-sum transfers $T_i = 0$. The equilibrium consumption allocation is $c_i(0) = 1/2$ and since $c_1(0)/(c_1(0) + c_2(0)) \in [\beta, 1-\beta]$, the status quo allocation is Pareto-efficient. Now consider a change in the productivity of agent 1 to $z_1(t)$. The change in aggregate productivity is

$$A(t) = \max\left\{Z > 0 : c_1^{1-\beta} c_2^{\beta} \geq \frac{1}{2}, c_1^{\beta} c_2^{1-\beta} \geq \frac{1}{2}, \text{ and } c_1 + c_2 = \frac{z_1(t) + \frac{1}{2}}{Z}\right\}. \tag{17}$$

The first two constraints are indifference conditions and the last is the resource constraint.

Solving the problem in (17), it is straightforward to show

$$A(t) = \frac{z_1(t) + z_2(t)}{z_1(0) + z_2(0)} = \frac{z_1(t) + \frac{1}{2}}{\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}}.$$

The increase in aggregate productivity is just the increase in total production.

Misallocation. We now suppose that the status quo, indexed by $t = 0$, is inefficient and use A to measure distance to the frontier. To do so, suppose that in the laissez faire status quo equilibrium the productivity of agent 1 is $z_1(0) = z_1$ and agent 2 is $z_2(0) = 1 - z_1$. Since $c_i(0) = z_i(0)$, if $z_1 \notin [\beta, 1-\beta]$, then the laissez faire equilibrium is Pareto inefficient.

be justified on the grounds that each agent is representative of a population of symmetric agents. In this case, a single agent cannot deviate by voluntarily sending resources to poorer agents because each agent is infinitesimal.

We can measure inefficiency using aggregate productivity by:

$$A = \max \left\{ Z > 0 : c_1^{1-\beta} c_2^{\beta} \geq z_1^{1-\beta} (1 - z_1)^{\beta}, c_2^{1-\beta} c_1^{\beta} \geq z_1^{\beta} (1 - z_1)^{1-\beta}, \text{ and } c_1 + c_2 = \frac{1}{Z} \right\}. \tag{18}$$

Note that if both agents have the same ranking over economy-wide allocations, i.e. $\beta = 1/2$, then the two indifference conditions are the same and A just measures misallocation according to a utilitarian social welfare function.

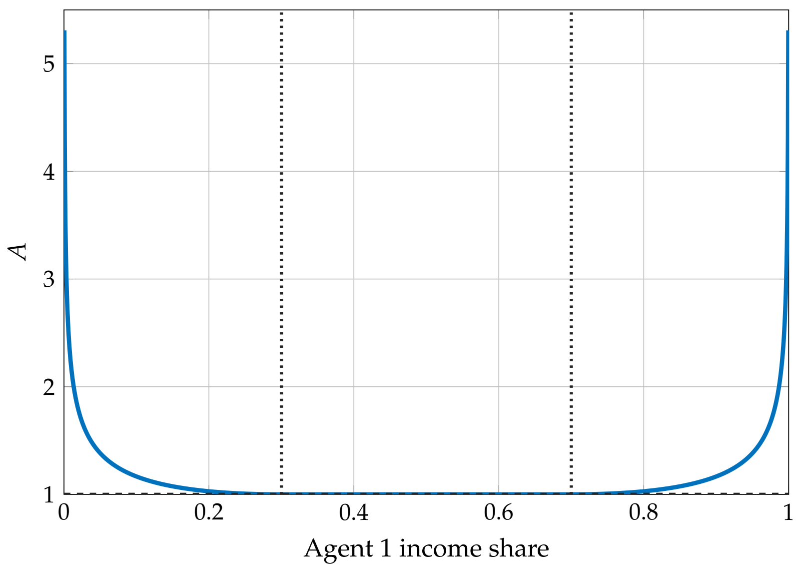


Figure 3: Misallocation as a function of agent 1's income share.

Notes: The figure sets $\beta = 0.3$, so each agent places weight 0.3 on the other agent's consumption and weight 0.7 on own consumption. Agent 1's income share varies from 0 to 1. There is no misallocation, $A = 1$, when agent 1's income share lies between β and $1 - \beta$. Misallocation rises when the income distribution is sufficiently unequal. This collapses to the losses suffered by a utilitarian social welfare if $\beta = 1/2$ — which imposes that both households have the same ranking over economy-wide allocations.

The solution to the problem in (18) is the following:

$$A(z_1) = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{\beta}{z_1}\right)^{\beta} \left(\frac{1-\beta}{1-z_1}\right)^{1-\beta}, & 0 < z_1 < \beta, \\ 1, & \beta \leq z_1 \leq 1 - \beta, \\ \left(\frac{\beta}{1-z_1}\right)^{\beta} \left(\frac{1-\beta}{z_1}\right)^{1-\beta}, & 1 - \beta < z_1 < 1. \end{cases}$$

So, as long as $z_1/(z_1 + z_2) \in [\beta, 1 - \beta]$, the status quo is efficient and $A = 1$. Outside of this range, the status quo is inefficient so $A > 1$. Intuitively, the rich agent would prefer to increase the consumption of the poor agent somewhat. However, if inequality is sufficiently low, then the equilibrium is efficient because any additional redistribution from rich to poor makes the rich agent worse off. Note that if $\beta = 1 - \beta = 1/2$, so that each agent cares about the other as much as themselves, then $A(z_1)$ is greater than one for every value of z_1 except $z_1 = 1/2$. In this case, we recover the TFP-equivalent gain for a utilitarian social welfare function of implementing egalitarian outcomes.

Figure 3 plots misallocation, as measured by A, as a function of the income share of agent 1. When the income share of agent 1 goes below β or above $1 - \beta$, misallocation rises. As the figure shows, there is a region of inaction where the equilibrium is efficient as long as there is not too much inequality.

B.2 Aggregate Productivity Defined Using Technologically Feasible Allocations

Here we show that our definition of aggregate productivity in Definition 2 coincides with that of Debreu (1951) if the second welfare theorem holds.

Define the set of technologically feasible allocations, $\mathcal{C}^F(t, Z)$, as the set of consumption allocations that are feasible given production technologies and resource constraints at (t, Z):

$$\mathcal{C}^F(t,Z) \equiv \left\{ \boldsymbol{c} \in \mathbb{R}^{H\times N} : \begin{array}{l} \text{there exist } (y_i, y_{ij}, l_{if}) \text{ such that} \\ y_i = z_i(t)\, G_i\big(\{y_{ij}\}_j,\ Z\{l_{if}\}_f\big) \text{ for all } i, \\ \sum_j y_{ji} + \sum_h c_{hi} \leq y_i \text{ for all } i, \\ \sum_i l_{if} \leq z_f(t)\, L_f \text{ for all } f \end{array} \right\}.$$

Using this set, we can define a measure of aggregate productivity that expands or contracts $\mathcal{C}^F(t, Z)$:[33]

$$A^F(t) \equiv \max \left\{ Z \in \mathbb{R} : \text{there is } \boldsymbol{c} \in \mathcal{C}^F(t, 1/Z) \text{ with } \boldsymbol{c}_h \succeq_h \boldsymbol{c}_h(0) \text{ for every } h \right\}.$$

The following proposition shows that, in the absence of distortions at $t > 0$, $A^F(t)$ coincides with the measure $A(t)$ defined over allocations that can be supported as equilibria with lump-sum transfers.

[33] Because each G_i has constant returns to scale and the resource constraints are linear, the technologically feasible set scales linearly with the factor-augmenting shifter: for any $Z > 0$, $\mathcal{C}^F(t, Z) = Z\,\mathcal{C}^F(t, 1)$. Hence scaling Z in the definition of $A^F(t)$ is equivalent to radially scaling the feasible set $\mathcal{C}^F(t, 1)$ in consumption space.

Proposition 9 (Equivalence of A using Feasible and Equilibrium Allocations)**.** *If all wedges are identically equal to one, then $A(t) = A^F(t)$.*

Proof. First, any decentralized equilibrium allocation is technologically feasible, so $\mathcal{C}(t, Z) \subseteq \mathcal{C}^F(t, Z)$ for all Z. Hence any Z feasible in the definition of $A(t)$ is also feasible for $A^F(t)$, and therefore $A^F(t) \geq A(t)$.

For the reverse inequality, let $Z = A^F(t)$ and let $\boldsymbol{c} \in \mathcal{C}^F(t, 1/Z)$ be an allocation such that $\boldsymbol{c}_h \succeq_h \boldsymbol{c}_h(0)$ for all h. Under the maintained regularity assumptions, there exists a Pareto-efficient allocation $\bar{\boldsymbol{c}} \in \mathcal{C}^F(t, 1/Z)$ that weakly Pareto dominates $\boldsymbol{c}$. Thus $\bar{\boldsymbol{c}}_h \succeq_h \boldsymbol{c}_h(0)$ for all h. Since all wedges are equal to one and transfers are lump sum, the second welfare theorem implies that any Pareto-efficient allocation in $\mathcal{C}^F(t, 1/Z)$ can be decentralized as a Walrasian equilibrium with some prices and transfers. In particular, $\bar{\boldsymbol{c}}$ can be decentralized in this way, so $\bar{\boldsymbol{c}} \in \mathcal{C}(t, 1/Z)$ and $\bar{\boldsymbol{c}}_h \succeq_h \boldsymbol{c}_h(0)$ for all h. Therefore Z is also feasible in the definition of $A(t)$, implying $A(t) \geq A^F(t)$.

Combining $A^F(t) \geq A(t)$ and $A(t) \geq A^F(t)$ yields $A(t) = A^F(t)$. □

Appendix C Appendix to Section 3

C.1 Individual Consumption-Equivalent for Non-Homothetic Preferences.

If $\succeq_h$ is non-homothetic, then $\tilde{u}_h$ is *not* a cardinalization of $\succeq_h$ (i.e. $\tilde{u}_h$ does not rank consumption allocations according to $\succeq_h$). Figure 4 graphically depicts indifference curves of $\tilde{u}_h$ — they are radial expansions of the status quo indifference curve defined by $u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h(0))$. When $\succeq_h$ is homothetic, all indifference curves are radial expansions, so that the ranking produced by $\tilde{u}_h$ coincides with the one produced by $\succeq_h$.

Consider a household with non-homothetic CES preferences, as in Comin et al. (2021),

$$u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = \left(\sum_i (c_{hi})^{\frac{\eta-1}{\eta}} (u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h))^{\xi_i} \right)^{\frac{\eta}{\eta-1}},$$

where η is the compensated elasticity of substitution and ξ_i controls income effects. Then $\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)$ is homothetic CES given by

$$\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = \frac{1}{u_h(0)} \left(\sum_i (c_{hi})^{\frac{\eta-1}{\eta}} (u_h(0))^{\xi_i} \right)^{\frac{\eta}{\eta-1}},$$

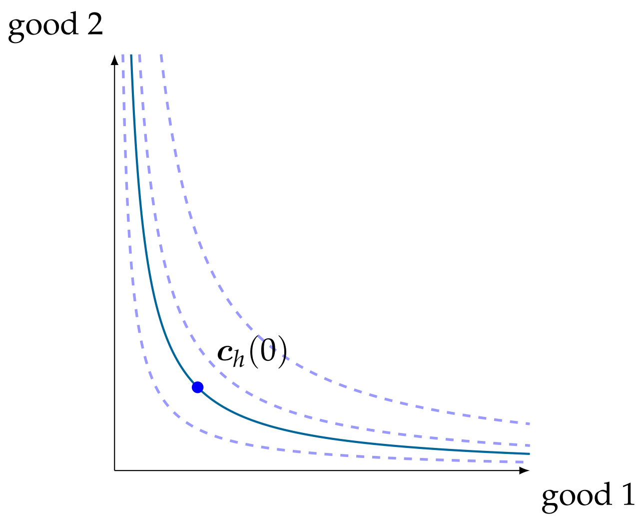


Figure 4: The solid blue line is the indifference curve $u_h(c_h) = u_h(c_h(0))$ and the dashed lines are the indifference curves of $\tilde{u}_h$.

where $u_h(0) \equiv u_h(c_h(0))$ is treated as a constant. If ξ_i are the same for every i, then $\tilde{u}_h$ and u_h are both cardinalizations of the same preference rankings.

C.2 Expenditure Function of Compensated Agent

The following proposition characterizes the expenditure function of the compensated agent.

Proposition 10 (Dual Representation of Compensated Representative Agent)**.** *The expenditure function associated with $U(\boldsymbol{c})$, in Theorem 1, denoted by $E(p, \bar{U})$ is*

$$E(\boldsymbol{p}, \bar{U}) = \left(\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}; u_h^0) \right) \bar{U},$$

where $u_h^0 \equiv u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h(0))$. By Shephard's lemma, the budget share of the compensated representative agent on good i, denoted b_i^{comp}, is

$$b_i^{comp}(\boldsymbol{p}) = \frac{\partial \log E(\boldsymbol{p}, \bar{U})}{\partial \log p_i} = \sum_h \frac{e_h(\boldsymbol{p}, u_h^0)}{\sum_{h'} e_{h'}(\boldsymbol{p}, u_{h'}^0)} b_{hi}(\boldsymbol{p}, u_h^0),$$

where $b_{hi}(\boldsymbol{p}, u_h^0)$ is the compensated budget share on good i of household h at the status quo indifference curve u_h^0.

The result follows because attaining $U(\boldsymbol{c}) \geq \bar{U}$ requires attaining $\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) \geq \bar{U}$ for every household h, whose minimum cost is $\bar{U}e_h(\boldsymbol{p}, u_h^0)$ by homogeneity of $\tilde{u}_h$.

In words, the compensated representative agent's budget share on each good i is a weighted average of households' compensated budget shares, where each household is weighted according to its compensating income, $e_h(\boldsymbol{p}, u_h^0)$.

Given compensated aggregate budget shares, $b_i^{\text{comp}}(\boldsymbol{p})$, we can solve for the equilibrium with a compensated representative agent, including prices $\boldsymbol{p}^{\text{comp}}$. Setting aggregate spending to be the numeraire in this equilibrium, and using Theorem 1, we know that

$$A(t) = U(t) = \frac{1}{\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}^{\text{comp}}(t), u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h^0))} = A^{KH,comp}(t).$$

C.3 Definition of Positive & Normative Representative Agent

We follow the definitions in Mas-Colell et al. (1995). We say that $u^{RA} : \mathbb{R}^N \to \mathbb{R}$ is a *positive representative agent* if the Marshallian demand curves generated by u^{RA}, given prices and total income, coincide with equilibrium allocations given the same prices and aggregate income:

$$\arg\max_{\boldsymbol{c}}\{u^{RA}(\boldsymbol{c}) : \sum_i p_i(t)c_i \leq I(t)\} = \sum_h \arg\max_{\boldsymbol{c}_h}\{u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) : \sum_i p_i(t)c_{hi} \leq I_h(t)\}.$$

The positive representative agent, $u^{RA} : \mathbb{R}^N \to \mathbb{R}$, is a *normative representative agent* relative to the social welfare function W if for every $(\boldsymbol{p}(t), I(t))$, the distribution of wealth across households, denoted by $\{I_h(t)\}$, also maximizes

$$W(v_1(\boldsymbol{p}(t), I_1(t)), \dots, v_H(\boldsymbol{p}(t), I_H(t)))$$

subject to $\sum_{h=1}^H I_h(t) = I(t)$, where v_h is the indirect utility function of agent h.

Appendix D Appendix to Section 4

D.1 Path-dependence of Real GDP

Consider an economy with two Cobb-Douglas households and two goods. Each good is produced using a fixed, good-specific primary factor. Each household owns the same fraction of both factors; denote this fraction by χ_h for household h. Let b_{hi} be household h's budget share on good i. Let $b_i = \chi_1 b_{1i} + \chi_2 b_{2i}$ be the aggregate budget share on good i.

Consider technology shocks to each good and shocks to the distribution of income between $t_0 = 0$ and $t_1 = 1$. Specifically, let the income shares follow

$$(\chi_1(t), \chi_2(t)) = \begin{cases} (2t, 1-2t), & t \in [0, 1/2], \\ (2-2t, 2t-1), & t \in (1/2, 1], \end{cases}$$

and let technologies follow

$$(\log z_1(t), \log z_2(t)) = \begin{cases} (1-2t^2, 1-t), & t \in [0, 1/2], \\ (t, t), & t \in (1/2, 1]. \end{cases}$$

The first half of the path shifts income from household 2 to household 1, while the second half shifts it back. Technologies move continuously: at both $t = 0$ and $t = 1$, $(\log z_1, \log z_2) = (1, 1)$, and at $t = 1/2$, both pieces give $(\log z_1, \log z_2) = (1/2, 1/2)$. Hence, the economy starts and ends at the same point. Since the initial and final economies are identical and there are no distortions, $A(1) = A(0) = 1$.

However, real GDP at t_1 changes relative to t_0. To see this, recall that

$$\Delta \log Y = \int_{t_0}^{t_1} (b_1 d \log c_1 + b_2 d \log c_2) = \int_{t_0}^{t_1} \left(b_1(t) \frac{d \log z_1}{dt} + b_2(t) \frac{d \log z_2}{dt} \right) dt.$$

Since households have Cobb-Douglas preferences, household budget shares are constant. Hence, on the first half of the path,

$$b_1(t) = 2t b_{11} + (1-2t) b_{21}, \qquad b_2(t) = 1 - b_1(t),$$

and

$$\frac{d \log z_1}{dt} = -4t, \qquad \frac{d \log z_2}{dt} = -1.$$

Therefore,

$$\int_0^{1/2} \left(b_1(t) \frac{d \log z_1}{dt} + b_2(t) \frac{d \log z_2}{dt} \right) dt = \int_0^{1/2} [-4t b_1(t) - b_2(t)]\, dt = \frac{b_{21} - b_{11}}{12} - \frac{1}{2}.$$

On the second half of the path, $d \log z_1 / dt = d \log z_2 / dt = 1$, so

$$\int_{1/2}^{1} \left(b_1(t) \frac{d \log z_1}{dt} + b_2(t) \frac{d \log z_2}{dt} \right) dt = \int_{1/2}^{1} (b_1(t) + b_2(t))\, dt = \frac{1}{2}.$$

Combining the two pieces gives

$$\Delta \log Y = \left(\frac{b_{21}-b_{11}}{12} - \frac{1}{2}\right) + \frac{1}{2} = \frac{b_{21}-b_{11}}{12}.$$

Hence, as long as $b_{11} \neq b_{21}$, i.e. preferences are not the same, the change in log real GDP is non-zero. It can be made arbitrarily high by running the loop in one direction multiple times and arbitrarily negative by running the loop in reverse. This means that if we add a small positive productivity shock after running these loops, then $Y(1)$ can be lower than $Y(0)$ even though there is more of every consumption good and every household is strictly better off.

D.2 Derivations in Example 2

The individual consumption-equivalent function associated to

$$u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = c_{hg}^{\alpha} c_{hs}^{1-\alpha},$$

is

$$\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = \frac{c_{hg}^{\alpha} c_{hs}^{1-\alpha}}{\left(c_{hg}^0\right)^{\alpha} \left(c_{hs}^0\right)^{1-\alpha}}.$$

The compensated representative agent assuming interior outcomes sets

$$A = \tilde{u}_h = \tilde{u}_{h'}$$

for all h' subject to

$$\sum_h c_{hg} = z_g, \qquad c_{hs} = z_{hs}.$$

Hence, $\{c_{hg}\}_{h=1}^{H}$ solves

$$A = \frac{c_{hg}^{\alpha} z_{hs}^{1-\alpha}}{\left(c_{hg}^0\right)^{\alpha} \left(c_{hs}^0\right)^{1-\alpha}} = \frac{c_{h'g}^{\alpha} z_{h's}^{1-\alpha}}{\left(c_{h'g}^0\right)^{\alpha} \left(c_{h's}^0\right)^{1-\alpha}}, \qquad \text{for all } h'$$

subject to $\sum_h c_{hg} = z_g$. The solution is

$$A = \left(\frac{z_g}{\sum_h z_{hs}^{\frac{\alpha-1}{\alpha}} c_{hg}^0 \left(z_{hs}^0\right)^{\frac{1-\alpha}{\alpha}}}\right)^{\alpha}.$$

In status quo, $c^0_{hg} = \chi^0_h z^0_g$,[34] so

$$A = \left(\frac{z_g / z^0_g}{\sum_h \chi^0_h \left(z_{hs}/z^0_{hs}\right)^{\frac{\alpha-1}{\alpha}}} \right)^{\alpha}.$$

A second-order approximation yields the expression in the text.

D.3 Derivations in Example 3

The individual consumption-equivalent function associated to the utility function

$$u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = \left[(\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}} \left(u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)\right)^{\zeta_h} c_{hd}^{\frac{\theta_h-1}{\theta_h}} + (1-\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}} c_{hf}^{\frac{\theta_h-1}{\theta_h}} \right]^{\frac{\theta_h}{\theta_h-1}},$$

is

$$\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) = \frac{1}{u^0_h} \left[(\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}} (u^0_h)^{\zeta_h} c_{hd}^{\frac{\theta_h-1}{\theta_h}} + (1-\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}} c_{hf}^{\frac{\theta_h-1}{\theta_h}} \right]^{\frac{\theta_h}{\theta_h-1}},$$

In autarky, $c_{hf} = 0$, so

$$\tilde{u}_h\left([c_{hd}, 0]\right) = \frac{1}{u^0_h} c_{hd} \left[(\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}} (u^0_h)^{\zeta_h} \right]^{\frac{\theta_h}{\theta_h-1}}$$

The domestic expenditure share of household h in the status quo is

$$s_{hd}(0) \equiv \frac{p_d(0) c_{hd}(0)}{p_d(0) c_{hd}(0) + p_f(0) c_{hf}(0)} = \frac{p_d(0) c_{hd}(0)}{p_h(0) c_h(0)} = \frac{(\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}} \left(u_h(0)\right)^{\zeta_h} \left(c_{hd}(0)\right)^{\frac{\theta_h-1}{\theta_h}}}{\left(u_h(0)\right)^{\frac{\theta_h-1}{\theta_h}}}$$

[34] To see that χ^0_h is also region h's share in total income, note that (under the Cobb-Douglas specification of this example) the first-order condition for c_{hg} and c_{hs} is $p^0_{hs} z^0_{hs} = \frac{1-\alpha}{\alpha} \chi^0_h z^0_g$, where we normalize the price of the tradable good to 1. Therefore, $\chi^0_h z^0_g + p^0_{hs} z^0_{hs} = \frac{1}{\alpha} \chi^0_h z^0_g$ and $\frac{\chi^0_h z^0_g + p^0_{hs} z^0_{hs}}{\sum_{h'} \chi^0_{h'} z^0_g + p^0_{h's} z^0_{h's}} = \frac{\chi^0_h}{\sum \chi^0_{h'}} = \chi^0_h$.

Solving for $\left[(\alpha_h)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h}}\,(u_h(0))^{\zeta_h}\right]$ and substituting into the individual consumption-equivalent function yields

$$\begin{aligned}
\tilde{u}_h\left([c_{hd},0]\right) &= \frac{c_{hd}}{c_{hd}(0)}\left(s_{hd}(0)\right)^{\frac{\theta_h}{\theta_h-1}} \\
&= \frac{p_d(0)}{p_h(0)c_h(0)}\frac{p_h(0)c_h(0)}{p_d(0)c_{hd}(0)}c_{hd}\left(s_{hd}(0)\right)^{\frac{\theta_h}{\theta_h-1}} \\
&= \frac{p_d(0)}{p_h(0)c_h(0)}c_{hd}\left(s_{hd}(0)\right)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h-1}} \\
&= \frac{p_d(0)y_d(0)}{p_h(0)c_h(0)}\frac{c_{hd}}{y_d(0)}\left(s_{hd}(0)\right)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h-1}} \\
&= \frac{1}{\chi_h(0)}\frac{c_{hd}}{y_d(0)}\left(s_{hd}(0)\right)^{\frac{1}{\theta_h-1}},
\end{aligned}$$

where $\chi_h(0) = p_h(0)c_h(0)/(p_d(0)y_d(0))$ is the share of $h's$ expenditures in total income (assuming balanced trade), and $y_d(0)$ is the aggregate quantity of the home produced good in the status quo (which is consumed and exported).

The compensated representative agent, assuming interior outcomes, sets

$$\tilde{u}_h = \tilde{u}_{h'}$$

for all h' subject to

$$\sum c_{hd} = y_d = y_d(0),$$

where y_d is the total output of domestic good in autarky (which is equal to that in status quo). Combining, we obtain

$$\Delta \log A = \log \tilde{u}_h = \log \frac{1}{\sum \chi_h(0)\left(s_{hd}(0)\right)^{-\frac{1}{\theta_h-1}}},$$

which is the expression in the text.

Appendix E Appendix to Section 5

E.1 Contrasting Proposition 5 with Harberger's Formula

In his classic paper, Harberger (1971) argued that the welfare effect of a policy that changes wedges can be computed as

$$\Delta \log Y(t) = \int_0^t \sum_i [p_i(s) - mc_i(s)] \frac{dy_i}{ds}\, ds.$$

This formula can be rewritten as

$$\int_0^t \sum_i [p_i(s) - mc_i(s)] \frac{dy_i}{ds}\, ds = \int_0^t \sum_i \lambda_i(s) \left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i(s)}\right) \frac{d \log y_i}{ds}\, ds, \tag{19}$$

where the equality uses the fact that final expenditure is the numeraire ($\sum_i p_i(s) c_i(s) = 1$ for every s). In words, he argued that whenever a good's marginal benefit, $p_i(s)$, exceeds its marginal cost, $mc_i(s)$, then expanding its quantity (holding others fixed) raises aggregate output. Note that, since $\Delta \log Y(t) \approx \Delta \log A^{KH}$ to a first-order approximation (see the proof in 1), Equation (19) also applies to $\Delta \log A^{KH}$ to a first order.

Comparing (19) to Proposition 5 shows that if variables in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent do not coincide with those in the equilibrium of the original economy, e.g. $\Delta \log y_i \neq \Delta \log y_i^{\text{comp}}$, then real GDP and $A(t)$ differ even to a first-order if $\boldsymbol{\mu} \neq \mathbf{1}$. Note that, if agents have the same homothetic preferences and face the same relative prices, then real GDP and aggregate productivity A coincide, consistent with the miraculous consensus in Proposition 1.

E.2 Derivations in Example 4

We derive equation (12). The first-order change in real GDP, by (19), is

$$\Delta \log Y = \sum_i \lambda_i \left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i}\right) \Delta \log y_i.$$

With production functions $y_i = z_i l_i$ and fixed z_i,

$$\Delta \log y_i = \Delta \log l_i.$$

Domar weights are (setting nominal GDP as the numeraire)

$$\lambda_i = p_i y_i = p_i z_i l_i.$$

The pricing equation $p_i z_i = w\mu_i$ implies

$$\lambda_i = w\mu_i l_i.$$

Therefore,

$$\Delta \log Y = \sum_i w\mu_i l_i \left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i}\right) \Delta \log l_i = w \sum_i (\mu_i - 1)\Delta l_i.$$

With fixed aggregate labor, $\Delta l_1 + \Delta l_2 = 0$, so

$$\Delta \log Y = w(\mu_1 - \mu_2)\Delta l_1.$$

Define the revenue-weighted harmonic mean markup by

$$\bar{\mu} \equiv \left(\sum_i \frac{\lambda_i}{\mu_i}\right)^{-1}.$$

Since $\lambda_i = w\mu_i l_i$,

$$\sum_i \frac{\lambda_i}{\mu_i} = wL, \qquad w = \frac{1}{\bar{\mu}L}.$$

Thus,

$$\Delta \log Y = \frac{\mu_1 - \mu_2}{\bar{\mu}} \frac{\Delta l_1}{L}.$$

To express this in terms of $\Delta\lambda_1$,

$$\frac{l_1}{L} = \frac{\lambda_1/\mu_1}{\lambda_1/\mu_1 + \lambda_2/\mu_2} = \frac{\lambda_1/\mu_1}{\lambda_1/\mu_1 + (1-\lambda_1)/\mu_2}.$$

Differentiating,

$$\frac{\Delta l_1}{L} = \frac{\bar{\mu}^2}{\mu_1\mu_2}\Delta\lambda_1.$$

Substituting into the previous expression gives

$$\Delta \log Y = \bar{\mu}\left(\frac{\mu_1 - \mu_2}{\mu_1\mu_2}\right)\Delta\lambda_1,$$

which is equation (12). The result that, to a first order, real GDP coincides with Kaldor-Hicks efficiency, $\log A^{KH}$, even if the initial equilibrium is distorted appears in the proof of Corollary 1.

E.3 Derivations in Example 5

Equation (14) follows directly from Proposition 12. Here, we provide a self-contained derivation using Proposition 6. To apply this proposition, we must calculate $d\log c_{hi}^{\text{comp}}$, the first-order change in $\log c_{hi}^{\text{comp}}$ induced by $\Delta \log \boldsymbol{\mu}$. Since the approximation is around $\boldsymbol{\mu} = \mathbf{1}$, we have $\Delta \log \boldsymbol{\mu} = \log \boldsymbol{\mu}$. Demand by the compensated representative agent is

$$d\log c_{hi}^{\text{comp}} = d\log c_h^{\text{comp}} + \theta_h \Big(\sum_{i'} b_{hi'} d\log \mu_{hi'} - d\log \mu_{hi}\Big),$$

where $d\log c_h^{\text{comp}} = d\log c^{\text{comp}}$. Using the resource constraint over the single factor, approximated around $\boldsymbol{\mu} = \mathbf{1}$,

$$\sum_h \sum_i \chi_h b_{hi} d\log c_{hi}^{\text{comp}} = 0,$$

we obtain

$$0 = \sum_h \chi_h \left[d\log c_h^{\text{comp}} + \theta_h \sum_i b_{hi} \Big(\sum_{i'} b_{hi'} d\log \mu_{hi'} - d\log \mu_{hi}\Big) \right] = d\log c^{\text{comp}},$$

where we used $\sum_i b_{hi}(d\log \mu_{hi} - \sum_{i'} b_{hi'} d\log \mu_{hi'}) = 0$. Thus,

$$d\log c_{hi}^{\text{comp}} = -\theta_h \Big(d\log \mu_{hi} - \sum_{i'} b_{hi'} d\log \mu_{hi'}\Big).$$

Using Proposition 6,

$$\log A \equiv -\frac{1}{2} \sum_h \sum_i \chi_h b_{hi} d\log c_{hi}^{\text{comp}} \log \mu_{hi}.$$

Substituting the expression above and using $d\log \mu_{hi} = \log \mu_{hi}$ gives

$$\begin{aligned}
\Delta \log A &\approx \frac{1}{2} \sum_h \chi_h \theta_h \sum_i b_{hi} \left(\log \mu_{hi} - \sum_{i'} b_{hi'} \log \mu_{hi'} \right) \log \mu_{hi} \\
&= \frac{1}{2} \sum_h \chi_h \theta_h \sum_i b_{hi} \left(\log \mu_{hi} - \sum_{i'} b_{hi'} \log \mu_{hi'} \right)^2,
\end{aligned}$$

which is the right-hand side of (14).

E.4 Derivations in Example 6

In these derivations, we follow the strategy used in Baqaee and Burstein (2025b) to prove Propositions 3 and 4. Without loss of generality, we normalize aggregate output in every state to one: $\sum_h a_h = 1$. We first show that the allocations under financial autarky can be decentralized as a complete-markets equilibrium with household-by-state wedges $\mu_h(s)$ given by

$$\mu_h(s) = \left[\frac{c_h(s)}{c_h(s_0)}\right]^{-1/\theta} = \left[\frac{y_h(s)}{y_h(s_0)}\right]^{-1/\theta}, \tag{20}$$

where s_0 is some fixed state. A decentralized equilibrium with wedges solves

$$\max_{\{c_h(s)\}_s} \frac{1}{1-\frac{1}{\theta}} \sum_s c_h(s)^{1-\frac{1}{\theta}}$$

subject to

$$\sum_s p(s)\mu_h(s)c_h(s) \leq I_h.$$

The first order condition is

$$c_h(s)^{-1/\theta} = \lambda_h p(s)\mu_h(s),$$

where λ_h is the Lagrange multiplier. The resource constraint is

$$\sum_h c_h(s) = \sum_h y_h(s) = 1,$$

and setting aggregate income as the numeraire, $\sum_h I_h = 1$. We need to show that if $\mu_h(s)$ is given by (20), then the consumption allocation in the primitive economy,

$$c_h(s) = c_h^0(s) = y_h(s),$$

is an equilibrium in the economy with wedges. This requires showing that there exist λ_h, $p(s)$, and I_h such that all equilibrium conditions are satisfied. Substituting the wedges and the allocation into the first-order condition yields

$$\lambda_h p(s) = y_h(s_0)^{-1/\theta}.$$

Dividing this equation for household h' by the corresponding equation for some fixed household H gives

$$\lambda_{h'} = \lambda_H \left(\frac{y_H(s_0)}{y_{h'}(s_0)} \right)^{1/\theta}.$$

The resource constraint is satisfied automatically. Substituting the first-order condition into the budget constraint yields

$$\sum_s \frac{y_h(s)^{1-\frac{1}{\theta}}}{\lambda_h} = I_h.$$

Finally, the numeraire condition requires

$$1 = \sum_{h'} \sum_s \frac{y_{h'}(s)^{1-\frac{1}{\theta}}}{\lambda_{h'}} = \sum_{h'} \sum_s \frac{y_{h'}(s)^{1-\frac{1}{\theta}}}{\lambda_H \left(\frac{y_H(s_0)}{y_{h'}(s_0)} \right)^{1/\theta}}.$$

Thus, we require

$$\lambda_H = \sum_{h'} \sum_s \frac{y_{h'}(s)^{1-\frac{1}{\theta}}}{\left(\frac{y_H(s_0)}{y_{h'}(s_0)} \right)^{1/\theta}}.$$

Therefore, we can construct a collection of λ_h, $p(s)$, and I_h such that all equilibrium conditions are satisfied.

We now apply Proposition 6. Index the standard deviation of idiosyncratic income shocks by σ. For each σ, there is a realization of idiosyncratic income $y_h(s)$ and an endogenous set of wedges $\boldsymbol{\mu}(\sigma)$ that rationalizes the status quo allocation. If $\sigma = 0$, then $\boldsymbol{\mu}(0) = \mathbf{1}$. To a second-order approximation in σ, misallocation is given by

$$\log A \approx -\frac{1}{2} \sum_h \sum_s p(s) c_h(s) \left[\frac{d \log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s)}{d \log \boldsymbol{\mu}} \cdot \frac{d \log \boldsymbol{\mu}}{d\sigma} \right] \frac{d \log \mu_h(s)}{d\sigma} \Delta\sigma^2,$$

which we re-write as

$$\log A \approx -\frac{1}{2} \sum_h \sum_s p(s) c_h(s) d \log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s) d \log \mu_h(s), \tag{21}$$

where $d \log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s)$ is short-hand for $\frac{d \log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s)}{d \log \boldsymbol{\mu}} \cdot \frac{d \log \boldsymbol{\mu}}{d\sigma} \Delta\sigma$, and $d \log \mu_h(s)$ is short-hand for $\frac{d \log \boldsymbol{\mu}}{d\sigma} \Delta\sigma$, evaluated in the equilibrium with a compensated representative agent at $\sigma = 0$. By Theorem 1, we can use expenditures in the decentralized economy in place of expenditures in the equilibrium with a compensated representative agent with the same wedges that rationalize that allocation. The first order condition for the compensated representative agent is

$$c_h^{\text{comp}}(s) = (\mu_h(s)p(s))^{-\theta}\left[\sum_{s'}\left(\mu_h(s')p(s')\right)^{1-\theta}\right]^{\frac{\theta}{1-\theta}} c_h^{\text{comp}} = (\mu_h(s)p(s))^{-\theta}\, p_h^{\theta} c_h^{\text{comp}},$$

where $c_h^{\text{comp}} = \left[\sum_s c_h^{\text{comp}}(s)^{\frac{\theta-1}{\theta}}\right]^{\frac{\theta}{\theta-1}}$, and $p_h = \left[\sum_s (\mu_h(s)p(s))^{1-\theta}\right]^{\frac{1}{1-\theta}}$. Therefore,

$$\frac{c_h^{\text{comp}}(s)}{c_H^{\text{comp}}(s)} = \left(\frac{\mu_h(s)}{\mu_H(s)}\right)^{-\theta}\left[\frac{\sum_{s'}(\mu_h(s')p(s'))^{1-\theta}}{\sum_{s'}(\mu_H(s')p(s'))^{1-\theta}}\right]^{\frac{\theta}{1-\theta}} \frac{c_h^{\text{comp}}}{c_H^{\text{comp}}}.$$

Log-linearizing and using the fact that the compensated representative agent sets $d\log c_h^{\text{comp}} = d\log c_H^{\text{comp}}$, we obtain

$$d\log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s) - d\log c_H^{\text{comp}}(s) = -\theta\left(d\log\mu_h(s) - d\log\mu_H(s)\right) + \theta\left(d\log p_h - d\log p_H\right).$$

The condition $d\log c_h^{\text{comp}} = d\log c_H^{\text{comp}}$ evaluated at $\sigma = 0$ implies $\sum_s d\log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s) = \sum_s d\log c_H^{\text{comp}}(s)$. Hence,

$$0 = \sum_s d\log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s) - \sum_s d\log c_H^{\text{comp}}(s) = -\theta\sum_s\left(d\log\mu_h(s) - d\log\mu_H(s) - d\log p_h + d\log p_H\right),$$

which implies

$$d\log p_h - d\log p_H = \frac{1}{S}\sum_s\left(d\log\mu_h(s) - d\log\mu_H(s)\right),$$

where S denotes the number of states. Hence,

$$d\log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s) - d\log c_H^{\text{comp}}(s) = -\theta\left[d\log\mu_h(s) - d\log\mu_H(s) - \frac{1}{S}\sum_{s'}\left(d\log\mu_h(s') - d\log\mu_H(s')\right)\right].$$

Differentiating the resource constraint in state s gives $\sum_h c_h d\log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s) = 0$, where c_h denotes the value of $c_h(s)$ at $\sigma = 0$, i.e. $c_h = a_h/\sum_{h'} a_{h'}$. Substituting into the expression above,

$$d\log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s) = -\theta d\log\mu_h(s) + \theta\mathbb{E}[d\log\mu_h(s)\mid h] + \theta\sum_{h'} c_{h'}\left[d\log\mu_{h'}(s) - \mathbb{E}\left[d\log\mu_{h'}(s)\mid h'\right]\right],$$

where $\mathbb{E}[d\log\mu_h(s) \mid h] = \sum_{s'} d\log\mu_h(s')/S$. Populating the terms in expression (21) gives

$$
\begin{aligned}
\log A &\approx -\frac{1}{2}\sum_{h,s} p(s)c_h(s)d\log c_h^{\text{comp}}(s)d\log\mu_h(s) \\
&= -\frac{\theta}{2}\sum_{h,s} p(s)c_h\Bigg[-d\log\mu_h(s) + \mathbb{E}[d\log\mu_h(s) \mid h] \\
&\qquad\qquad + \sum_{h'} c_{h'}\left(d\log\mu_{h'}(s) - \mathbb{E}\left[d\log\mu_{h'}(s) \mid h'\right]\right)\Bigg]d\log\mu_h(s) \\
&= \frac{\theta}{2}\sum_{h,s} p(s)c_h\left(d\log\mu_h(s) - \mathbb{E}[d\log\mu_h(s) \mid h]\right)d\log\mu_h(s) \\
&= \frac{\theta}{2}\sum_{h} \chi_h \operatorname{Var}[d\log\mu_h(s) \mid h]\,.
\end{aligned}
$$

Here, $\operatorname{Var}[d\log\mu_h(s) \mid h]$ is the variance of $d\log\mu_h(s)$ across states for household h. To get the third equality, we use $\sum_{h'} c_{h'}d\log\mu_{h'}(s) = 0$ for every state s, which follows from (20) and constant total output across states. Averaging this condition over states gives $\sum_{h'} c_{h'}\mathbb{E}[d\log\mu_{h'}(s) \mid h'] = 0$, so $\sum_{h'} c_{h'}\left(d\log\mu_{h'}(s) - \mathbb{E}[d\log\mu_{h'}(s) \mid h']\right) = 0$ for every state s. The last equality uses that $p(s)c_h(s)$, evaluated at $\sigma = 0$, is proportional to h's expenditure share, $\chi_h = a_h/\sum_{h'} a_{h'}$. Finally, using (20), $\operatorname{Var}[d\log\mu_h(s) \mid h] = \operatorname{Var}[(-1/\theta)d\log c_h(s) \mid h]$, so

$$
\log A \approx \frac{1}{2\theta}\sum_{h} \chi_h \operatorname{Var}[d\log c_h(s) \mid h]\,.
$$

E.5 Distance to Frontier: Real GDP and Positive Representative Agent

In this example we show that, even when a normative representative agent exists, the distance to the frontier using $A(t)$ does not coincide with the losses suffered by the normative representative agent due to distortions. To see this, suppose each agent h has CES preferences over consumption goods with elasticity of substitution θ_h. Suppose each agent consumes a different selection of goods but all goods are produced linearly from the labor endowment. The markup on the ith good consumed by household h is denoted by μ_{hi}. Suppose that when we eliminate markups, each household's share of income, χ_h, stays constant. Since the distribution of income is constant, there is a positive (and in this case, also normative) representative agent with Cobb-Douglas preferences across each household's consumption bundle (i.e. an agent whose utility is maximized by observed allocations). The change in the welfare of this representative agent, in consumption-equivalent terms, is equal to the change in chain-weighted real GDP, and both are equal to a second-order approximation to

$$\Delta \log Y = \Delta \log A^{RA} \approx \underbrace{\frac{1}{2}\mathbb{E}_{\chi}\left[\theta_h Var_{\boldsymbol{b}_h}\left[\log \boldsymbol{\mu}_h | h\right]\right]}_{\approx \Delta \log A} + \frac{1}{2} Var_{\boldsymbol{\chi}}\left[\mathbb{E}_{\boldsymbol{b}_h}\left[\log \boldsymbol{\mu}_h | h\right]\right],$$

where we used (14). The change in real GDP and the welfare of the representative agent are weakly larger than the change in aggregate productivity A. Consider the limiting case where all markup variation is between households rather than within households. Then $\Delta \log A = 0$, because the economy is already on the efficient frontier and eliminating markups is purely redistributive. Nevertheless, $\Delta \log Y = \Delta \log A^{RA} > 0$ whenever markups differ across households.

E.6 Explicit Characterization of Equilibrium with Compensated Representative Agent

Theorem 1 shows that calculating changes in aggregate productivity can be boiled down to solving for the equilibrium of an economy with a compensated representative agent. This section provides some formulas for calculating variables in the equilibrium with a compensated representative agent. To do so, we rely on the differential hat algebra approach in Baqaee and Farhi (2020), which characterizes equilibria of representative agent economies with wedges using differential equations. Alternatively, one could also use exact-hat algebra methods, as in Dekle et al. (2008). For concreteness, assume that all production and utility functions are nested-CES. (Non-CES economies can be analyzed in a similar way following the non-CES extensions in Baqaee and Farhi (2019c)). To make the notation more compact, represent the economy in such a way that each producer, i, is associated with a single elasticity of substitution θ_i (by treating each sub-nest as a separate producer). In this appendix, we take changes in wedges as given. If wedges are endogenous, we do not specify explicitly how changes in wedges are related to changes in productivities and in endogenous variables.

Input-Output Notation Stack the expenditure shares of the representative household, all producers, and all factors into the $(H+N+F) \times (H+N+F)$ input-output matrix Ω. The first H rows correspond to the households' consumption baskets. The next N rows correspond to the expenditure of each producer on every other producer and factor as a share of its sales (where the sales price is always inclusive of the wedge and tax). The last F rows correspond to the expenditure shares of the primary factors (which are all zeros, since primary factors do not require any inputs). With some abuse of notation, the heterogeneous agent input-output matrix can be written as

$$\Omega = \left[\begin{array}{ccc|ccc|ccc} 0 & \cdots & 0 & b_{11} & \cdots & b_{1N} & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ \vdots & \cdots & \vdots & & \cdots & & & \cdots & \\ 0 & \cdots & 0 & b_{H1} & \cdots & b_{HN} & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ \hline 0 & \cdots & 0 & \Omega_{11} & \cdots & \Omega_{1N} & \Omega_{1N+1} & \cdots & \Omega_{1N+F} \\ \vdots & \cdots & \vdots & & \ddots & & & & \\ 0 & \cdots & 0 & \Omega_{N1} & & \Omega_{NN} & \Omega_{NN+1} & \cdots & \Omega_{NN+F} \\ \hline 0 & \cdots & 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ \vdots & \cdots & \vdots & \vdots & \cdots & \vdots & \vdots & \cdots & \vdots \\ 0 & \cdots & 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \end{array}\right].$$

Note that our convention is that rows (not columns) record costs relative to revenues inclusive of wedges and taxes. If wedges and taxes are greater than one, then the rows of this matrix will generally sum to a number less than one. The Leontief inverse matrix is the $(H + N + F) \times (H + N + F)$ matrix defined as

$$\Psi \equiv (I - \Omega)^{-1} = I + \Omega + \Omega^2 + \ldots,$$

where I is the identity matrix. The Leontief inverse matrix $\Psi \geq I$ records the *direct and indirect* exposures through the supply chains in the production network.

Denote the distribution of expenditures by each household by χ, which is an $(H + N + F) \times 1$ vector. The first H elements are equal to each household's share of aggregate consumption expenditures, and the remaining $N + F$ elements are all zeros. As a matter of accounting identities, the vector of Domar weights satisfies:

$$\lambda' = \chi'\Psi.$$

In this equation λ is a $(H + N + F) \times 1$ vector. The first H elements are equal the expenditures of each household relative to aggregate consumption expenditures, χ, the next $N + F$ elements are equal to the sales of each good and factor relative to aggregate consumption expenditures.

Let μ denote the diagonal matrices whose *ii*th element is equal to μ_i. Define the cost-based Leontief inverse to be

$$\tilde{\Psi} = (I - \mu\Omega)^{-1}.$$

Note that the cost-based Leontief inverse coincides with Ψ in the absence of wedges. Intuitively, $\tilde{\Psi}$ is a version of the Leontief inverse that calculates exposures of i to j in terms of cost shares rather than revenue shares (revenues exceed costs if wedges and taxes are greater than one).

For any non-negative vector a, define

$$Cov_a(b,c) = \mathbb{E}_a[bc] - \mathbb{E}_a[b]\mathbb{E}_a[c] = \sum_i \frac{a_i}{\sum_{i'} a_{i'}} b_i c_i - \sum_i \frac{a_i}{\sum_{i'} a_{i'}} b_i \sum_i \frac{a_i}{\sum_{i'} a_{i'}} c_i,$$

where $\mathbb{E}_a[\cdot]$ denotes averages of vectors weighted by the elements of a. For any matrix X, denote its ith row and column by $X_{(i,:)}$ and $X_{(:,i)}$.

Differential Hat-Algebra The next proposition characterizes compensated variables in terms of initial expenditure shares, wedges, and shocks.

Proposition 11 (Differential Equations for Equilibrium with Compensated Agent)**.** *Let aggregate spending be the numeraire. Then, assuming the conditions of Theorem 1 hold, the equilibrium with a compensated agent satisfies the following system of differential equations. For each $i \in H+N+F$, the compensated price satisfies*

$$d\log p_i^{comp} = \sum_j \tilde{\Psi}_{ij}^{comp}[d\log \mu_j^{comp} - d\log z_j] + \sum_{f\in F} \tilde{\Psi}_{if}^{comp} d\log \lambda_f^{comp}. \tag{22}$$

Compensated Domar weights for goods and factors satisfy

$$d\lambda_l^{comp} = \sum_{j\in H+N} \lambda_j^{comp}(1-\theta_j)/\mu_j^{comp} Cov_{\Omega_{(j,:)}^{comp}}\left(d\log p^{comp}, \Psi_{(:,l)}^{comp}\right) + Cov_{\chi^{comp}}\left(d\log \chi^{comp}, \Psi_{(:,l)}^{comp}\right) - \sum_j \lambda_j^{comp}\left(\Psi_{jl}^{comp} - \mathbf{1}[j=l]\right) d\log \mu_j^{comp}. \tag{23}$$

Changes in compensated expenditure shares for household h satisfy

$$d\log \chi_h^{comp} = d\log p_h^{comp} - \sum_{h'} \chi_{h'}^{comp} d\log p_{h'}^{comp}, \tag{24}$$

where $d\log p_h^{comp}$ is the price of the consumption bundle for household h. The compensated input-output matrix satisfies

$$d\log \Omega_{ij}^{comp} = (1-\theta_i)\left(d\log p_j^{comp} - \mathbb{E}_{\Omega_{(i,:)}^{comp}}[d\log p^{comp}]\right) - d\log \mu_i^{comp}. \tag{25}$$

Finally, $d\log y_i^{comp}$ is given by $d\log\lambda_i^{comp} - d\log p_i^{comp}$. The initial conditions are that all prices and expenditures are equal to the ones in the status quo decentralized equilibrium for $t = 0$.

Equation (22), (23), and (25) are standard and identical to expressions in Baqaee and Farhi (2020). They are loglinearizations of marginal cost-functions, market clearing conditions, and demand curves respectively. The key equation, which distinguishes the equilibrium with a compensated agent from the decentralized equilibrium is (24). Whereas in the decentralized equilibrium changes in household expenditures are determined by changes in the income of each household, in the equilibrium with a compensated agent, they are determined by the choices of the compensated agent (who tries to equate individual consumption-equivalents across agents). The term $d\log p_h^{\text{comp}}$, which is pinned down by (22), is the change in the compensated price index of household h.

If the wedges are endogenous and change in response to changes in equilibrium variables, then the system in Proposition 11 needs to be supplemented with one more equation: the loglinearized mapping from changes in equilibrium variables into changes in wedges. Since we do not specify the exact details of the wedge function, we do not provide this loglinearized equation.

Generally, solving the system of linear equations in Proposition 11 requires inverting a system of equations. When there is a single primary factor of production and we evaluate these derivatives at a perfectly competitive point, then the change in aggregate productivity can be solved out easily up to a second-order, as shown in the following proposition.

Proposition 12 (Aggregate Efficiency with One Factor)**.** *Consider a competitive economy with a single primary factor of production. The change in aggregate efficiency in response to a vector of productivity shocks, $\Delta\log\boldsymbol{z}$ and changes in wedges $\Delta\log\boldsymbol{\mu}^{comp}$ is*

$$\Delta\log A \approx \sum_i \lambda_i \Delta\log z_i + \frac{1}{2}\sum_{i\in N+H}\lambda_i(\theta_i - 1)Var_{\Omega(i,:)}\left(\sum_k \Psi_{(:,k)}\Delta\log z_k\right)$$
$$-\frac{1}{2}\sum_{i\in N+H}\lambda_i\theta_i Var_{\Omega(i,:)}\left(\sum_k \Psi_{(:,k)}\Delta\log\mu_k^{comp}\right).$$

to a second-order approximation in $\Delta\log z$ and $\Delta\log\mu^{comp}$.

There are three summands. The first one is just Hulten's theorem. The second summand is a nonlinear adjustment due to changes in Domar weights. The second summand is also equal to: $1/2\sum_k\left[\sum_j \partial\lambda_k^{\text{comp}}/\partial\log z_j\Delta\log z_j\right]\Delta\log z_k$. If the compensated Domar weight for k rises due to productivity shocks, then the shock to k is more important. This happens if exposure to k is heterogeneous, captured by the variance term, and if elasticities of substitution, θ_i, are far from unity. The final summands are the Harberger triangles caused by the wedges. The triangles are larger the higher are elasticities of substitution, θ_i, and the more heterogeneous are exposures to the wedges, captured by the variance terms.

Appendix F Appendix to Section 6

F.1 Compensated Representative Agent with Limited Redistributive Tools

Here, we provide a version of Theorem 1 that applies without lump-sum transfers. Suppose the feasible set of instruments consists of linear taxes and some restricted transfers. Let $\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t)$ and $\boldsymbol{T}^*(t)$ be the linear taxes and transfers that attain the maximum in (15). Given $\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t)$, we provide a slightly more general definition of the compensated equilibrium.

Definition 6 (Equilibrium with Compensated Agent with Costly Redistribution)**.** An *equilibrium with a compensated representative agent* is the general equilibrium of an economy with the same technologies, resource constraints, wedges, and linear taxes $\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t)$ as the original economy but where there is a representative agent with preferences $U(\boldsymbol{c})$.

The following generalizes Theorem 1 to allow for limited redistribution.

Proposition 13 ($A^{\text{costly}}(t)$ Using Compensated Equilibrium)**.** *For $t \geq 0$, suppose that condition $(*)$ holds, and wedges $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ are invariant to Z in the equilibrium with a compensated representative agent. Then aggregate productivity can be calculated using the equilibrium with a compensated agent:*

$$A^{costly}(t) = U(\boldsymbol{c}^{comp}(t)).$$

Moreover, if $A^{costly}(0) = 1$, then prices and quantities in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent coincide with those in the decentralized equilibrium.

Proof. To prove this, we treat taxes $\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t)$ as part of the exogenous wedge vector, and apply the logic in the proof of Theorem 1. We sketch the key steps.

Let $(\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t), \boldsymbol{T}^*(t)) \in \mathcal{T}$ and $\boldsymbol{c}^*(t) \in \mathcal{C}^{\text{costly}}(t, 1/A^{\text{costly}}(t))$ attain the maximum in (15) and satisfy condition $(*)$. By definition of $\mathcal{C}^{\text{costly}}$, the allocation $\boldsymbol{c}^*(t)$ is supported as an equilibrium at aggregate factor-augmenting productivity $1/A^{\text{costly}}(t)$ using the allowable instruments $(\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t), \boldsymbol{T}^*(t))$. We can show, following the same steps as in the proof of Theorem 1, that the prices $\boldsymbol{p}^*$ and quantities $\boldsymbol{c}^*$ are also part of an equilibrium in the compensated representative-agent economy at $(t, Z = 1/A^{\text{costly}}(t))$. Specifically, given the price vector $\boldsymbol{p}^*$ and income I^*, the consumption allocation $\boldsymbol{c}^*(t)$ is a solution to the utility maximization of the compensated representative agent,

$$\max_{\boldsymbol{c}} \min_h \tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) \quad \text{s.t.} \quad \boldsymbol{p}^* \cdot (\sum_h \boldsymbol{c}_h) \leq I^*.$$

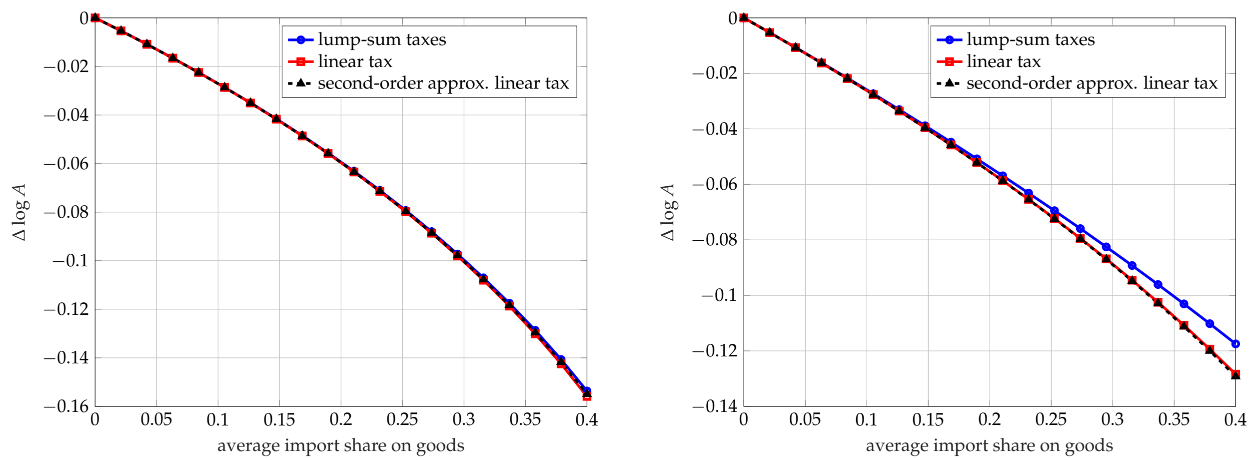
Here we use the fact that condition $(*)$ ensures that $\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h^*) = 1$ (we use the same argument that follows (29) in the proof of Theorem 1.) Together with the same producer choices, prices, wedges (including taxes), and resource constraints that support $\boldsymbol{c}^*$ in the original decentralized economy at $(t, 1/A^{\text{costly}}(t))$, $\boldsymbol{c}^*(t)$ is the equilibrium consumption allocation of the compensated representative-agent economy at $(t, 1/A^{\text{costly}}(t))$. Given that wedges (including taxes $\boldsymbol{\tau}^*(t)$, which are fixed solutions to (15)) are invariant to changes in Z, the compensated representative-agent equilibrium is homogeneous of degree one in Z. Therefore,

$$1 = U(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1/A^{\text{costly}}(t))) = U(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t,1)/A^{\text{costly}}(t)) = U(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t,1))/A^{\text{costly}}(t),$$

so $A^{\text{costly}}(t) = U\big(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t)\big)$. Finally, consider $t = 0$. The status quo allocation $\boldsymbol{c}(0)$ is feasible in the compensated-agent economy at $(0,1)$ and satisfies $U(\boldsymbol{c}(0)) = 1$. Given the assumption $A^{\text{costly}}(0) = 1$, the equality just proved gives $U(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(0,1)) = 1$. Given the maintained equilibrium selection, $\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(0,1) = \boldsymbol{c}(0)$, and the associated prices and quantities coincide with those in the decentralized status quo. This proves the last statement of the theorem. □

F.2 Numerical Results on Example 7

Figure 5 numerically illustrates the performance of the second-order approximation to the exact solution with distortionary linear taxes, and compares them both to the solution with lump-sum taxes. The second-order approximation performs well even for large shocks. Panel (a) uses $\rho = 0.5$, so consumption and leisure are complements and the Frisch elasticity of labor supply is a reasonable 0.5. Since ρ is low, distortionary taxes are able to achieve an outcome that is roughly as good as lump-sum taxes. Panel (b) uses a much higher $\rho = 3$. In this case, the gap between the lump-sum and linear taxation scenarios is larger since consumption taxes reduce labor and increase leisure, which causes efficiency to fall.



(a) $\rho = 0.5$

(b) $\rho = 3.0$

Figure 5: A numerical example of the losses from autarky with and without distortionary redistribution. The other parameter values are $\Omega_d = 0.5$, $\chi_h = 0.5$, $\theta_h = 3$, $s_{hd} = 3s_{h'd}$.

F.3 Example with Skill-Biased Technical Change and Costly Redistribution.

We now consider a simple example with skill-biased technical change that raises the real wage of high-skill workers but lowers the real-wage for low-skill workers. We compare how the response of aggregate efficiency changes depending on the redistributive tools available. Suppose that output (and consumption) are a CES aggregate of the output of manufacturing and services:

$$c = y = \left[\gamma_1^{\frac{1}{\rho}} y_m^{\frac{\rho-1}{\rho}} + (1-\gamma_1)^{\frac{1}{\rho}} y_s^{\frac{\rho-1}{\rho}} \right]^{\frac{\rho}{\rho-1}},$$

where each sector's output is a CES aggregate of low- and high-skill labor

$$y_o = \left[\alpha_o^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} \left(z_{o1} l_{o1}\right)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} + (1-\alpha_o)^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} \left(z_{o2} l_{o2}\right)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right]^{\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}},$$

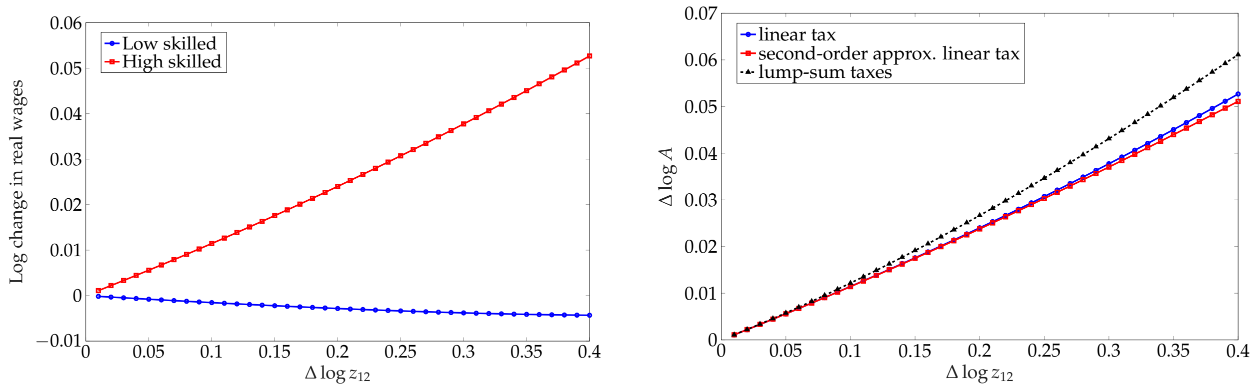
where l_{o1} is low- and l_{o2} is high-skill labor. The resource constraints are that

$$\sum_h c_h = c, \qquad \sum_{o=\{m,s\}} l_{o1} = l_1, \qquad \sum_{o=\{m,s\}} l_{o2} = l_2.$$

We assume that workers are much more substitutable than sectors: $\rho \ll \sigma$. We also assume that manufacturing is more intensive in low-skill labor use than services.

Consider an increase in automation or the productivity of capital, which we capture via an increase in the productivity of high-skill labor in manufacturing: $\Delta \log z_{m2} > 0$. This is a reduced-form representation for the idea that high-skill labor in manufacturing is equipped by capital, and hence an increase in the quality of capital makes high-skill labor more productive.[35]

Again, we contrast two scenarios: (1) lump-sum taxation is available, (2) lump-sum transfers must be non-negative and the government can only levy a linear tax on machine use in manufacturing, which we capture as a linear tax, τ, on manufacturing's use of high-skill labor. Figure 6 illustrates the results in a numerical example. Panel 6a shows that



(a) real wages

(b) aggregate efficiency

Figure 6: A numerical example of skill-biased technical change. The parameter values are $\rho = 1$, $\sigma = 8$, $\gamma = 0.5$, $\alpha_{m1} = 0.9$, and $\alpha_{s1} = 0.5$. We normalize steady-state quantities so that the CES share parameters are equal to expenditure shares in the status quo.

skill-biased technical change raises the real wage for high-skill workers and lowers it for low-skill workers in the decentralized equilibrium. The fact that low-skill wages decline means that low-skill workers need to be compensated via transfers financed by either lump-sum or distortionary taxes. Panel 6b shows the increase in productivity depending on which taxes are used. As expected, the increase in aggregate efficiency is lower if only distortionary redistributive tools are available. Panel 6b also shows that the second-order approximation is very accurate. In the absence of any redistributive tools whatsoever, aggregate productivity in this example actually declines because the low-skill workers are worst off and there is no feasible way to compensate them.

[35] For example, high-skill labor and capital are combined in a Leontief nest together called equipped labor, and then equipped labor is substitutable with low-skill labor. We can then think of altering the productivity of equipped labor by varying the productivity of capital.

F.4 Computing $A^{\text{costly}}(t)$ for China Shock Example

In the China shock example, aggregate productivity is calculated for a subset of agents: U.S. households. The status quo indifference conditions are imposed only on U.S. households, identified with owners of U.S. factors, and the productivity scaling is applied only to U.S. primary factors. We do not apply Proposition 13 because condition $(*)$ does not hold for all U.S. households in all of our counterfactuals. We therefore compute $A^{\text{costly}}(t)$ directly from its definition.

Let Z denote the factor by which U.S. factor-augmenting productivity is scaled in the post-shock economy. For each value of Z and each policy scenario, define $W(Z)$ as the maximum, over the policy instruments available in that scenario, of the minimum log change in real income relative to the status quo across all U.S. households. Thus, $W(Z) \geq 0$ means that all U.S. households can be kept at least as well off as in the status quo, while $W(Z) < 0$ means that at least one U.S. household remains worse off. We search for the value of Z such that $W(Z) = 0$ and set

$$\Delta \log A^{\text{costly}} = -\log Z.$$

We proceed as follows.

Step 0: Calibrate the 9-region, 30-industry, 4-factor model to the 2008 trade data assuming no tariffs, and set elasticities to the values described in the text.

Step 1: Construct the status quo. To do, starting from the calibrated 2008 economy, increase the uniform U.S. tariff, together with the retaliatory tariffs imposed by the rest of the world, until the total quantity of the U.S. consumption good is maximized. Let the resulting allocation be the status quo. The status-quo U.S. tariff is 1.0% with factor mobility and 2.3% without factor mobility.

Step 2: Impose the China shock by increasing Chinese factor-augmenting productivity so that China's share of world GDP in the decentralized equilibrium, where tariffs remain unchanged relative to the status quo, rises to 17.5%.

Step 3: For each scenario, and separately with and without factor mobility, compute $A^{\text{costly}}(t)$ by searching over Z. Initialize $Z = 1$ and compute $W(Z)$ as described below. If $W(Z) > 0$, productivity can be scaled down, so reduce Z; if $W(Z) < 0$, productivity must be scaled up, so increase Z. Repeat until $W(Z)$ is close to zero, and set $\Delta \log A^{\text{costly}} = -\log Z$.

- **No redistributive tools.** Solve the post-shock world-trade equilibrium with no transfers and tariffs at the status quo rate. For each U.S. factor, compute the log change in real income relative to the status quo, where nominal payments are deflated by the U.S. consumption price index. Set $W(Z)$ equal to the minimum of these changes across U.S. factors.
- **Tariffs & non-targeted rebates.** For each value of the uniform U.S. tariff, together with the associated retaliatory tariffs from the rest of the world, rebate changes in tariff revenues (relative to status quo) to U.S. factors in proportion to their status-quo shares of total U.S. factor payments. Compute the minimum log change in real income across U.S. factors, where real income equals factor payments plus tariff rebates, deflated by the U.S. consumption price index. Set $W(Z)$ equal to the maximum of this minimum across tariff choices.
- **Tariffs & targeted rebates.** For each value of the uniform U.S. tariff, together with the associated retaliatory tariffs, choose the allocation of changes in tariff revenues (relative to status quo) across U.S. factors to maximize the minimum log change in real income across U.S. factors. Conditional on the tariff, this is a linear programming problem. Set $W(Z)$ equal to the resulting maximum minimum real-income gain.
- **Tariffs & lump-sum transfers.** For each value of Z, increase the uniform U.S. tariff, together with retaliatory tariffs from the rest of the world, until the total quantity of the U.S. consumption good is maximized. Use lump-sum transfers to equalize the log change in real income across U.S. factors. This common log change, which equals the log change in the total quantity of the U.S. consumption good, is $W(Z)$.

Appendix G Proofs

Proof of Theorem 1. By (i), there exists an equilibrium allocation

$$\boldsymbol{c}^* \in \mathcal{C}\big(t, 1/A(t)\big) \quad \text{with} \quad \tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h^*) = 1 \text{ for all } h.$$

By the definition of $U(\boldsymbol{c}) = \min_h \tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h)$, this implies $U(\boldsymbol{c}^*) = 1$. Let $\boldsymbol{p}^*$ be an equilibrium price vector supporting $\boldsymbol{c}^*$ at $Z = 1/A(t)$.

Before considering the equilibrium in the compensated-agent economy, we show that the allocation $\boldsymbol{c}^*$ satisfies expenditure minimization for each agent,

$$\boldsymbol{c}_h^* \in \operatorname{argmin}_{\boldsymbol{c}_h}\{\boldsymbol{p}^* \cdot \boldsymbol{c}_h : \tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) \geq 1\}, \tag{26}$$

so that expenditures can be expressed as

$$\boldsymbol{p}^* \cdot \boldsymbol{c}_h^* = p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p}^*), \tag{27}$$

where $p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p})$ is the price index associated with the homothetic aggregator $\tilde{u}_h$,

$$p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p}) \equiv \min_{\boldsymbol{c}_h}\{\boldsymbol{p} \cdot \boldsymbol{c}_h : \tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) \geq 1\}.$$

We prove this by contradiction. Suppose that there exists $\hat{\boldsymbol{c}}_h$ such that $\tilde{u}_h(\hat{\boldsymbol{c}}_h) \geq 1$ and $\boldsymbol{p}^* \cdot \hat{\boldsymbol{c}}_h < \boldsymbol{p}^* \cdot \boldsymbol{c}_h^*$. By the definition of $\tilde{u}_h$, this implies

$$u_h(\hat{\boldsymbol{c}}_h) \geq u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h(0)) = u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h^*).$$

Thus $\hat{\boldsymbol{c}}_h$ is weakly preferred to $\boldsymbol{c}_h^*$ and strictly cheaper. By local nonsatiation, there exists a bundle affordable at income $\boldsymbol{p}^* \cdot \boldsymbol{c}_h^*$ that is strictly preferred to $\boldsymbol{c}_h^*$, contradicting household optimality.

We now show that the prices $\boldsymbol{p}^*$ and quantities $\boldsymbol{c}^*$ are part of an equilibrium of the compensated representative-agent economy at $(t, Z = 1/A(t))$. Define aggregate income $I^* \equiv \boldsymbol{p}^* \cdot \sum_h \boldsymbol{c}_h^*$ which, by (27), is

$$I^* = \sum_h p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p}^*). \tag{28}$$

Given the price vector $\boldsymbol{p}^*$ and income I^*, the compensated representative agent solves

$$\max_{\boldsymbol{c}} \min_h \tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) \quad \text{s.t.} \quad \boldsymbol{p}^* \cdot (\sum_h \boldsymbol{c}_h) \leq I^*.$$

Since each $\tilde{u}_h$ is homogeneous of degree one, the minimum expenditure required to deliver consumption-equivalent level γ_h to household h is $\gamma_h p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p}^*)$. Hence, the compensated representative agent's problem can be written as

$$\max_{\boldsymbol{\gamma} \geq 0} \min_h \gamma_h \quad \text{s.t.} \quad \sum_h \gamma_h p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p}^*) \leq I^*. \tag{29}$$

For any feasible $\boldsymbol{\gamma}$,

$$(\min_h \gamma_h) \sum_h p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p}^*) \leq \sum_h \gamma_h p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p}^*) \leq I^*.$$

Using (28), this implies $\min_h \gamma_h \leq 1$. The choice $\gamma_h = 1$ for all h attains this upper bound and exhausts the budget, so it solves (29). Since each $\boldsymbol{c}_h^*$ attains $\tilde{u}_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h^*) = 1$ at minimum cost $p_h^{CPI}(\boldsymbol{p}^*)$, the allocation $\boldsymbol{c}^*$ implements this optimal choice. Therefore, $\boldsymbol{c}^*$ is an optimal choice for the compensated representative agent given prices $\boldsymbol{p}^*$ and income I^*. Together with the same producer choices, prices, wedges, and resource constraints that support $\boldsymbol{c}^*$ in the original decentralized economy at $(t, 1/A(t))$, this establishes an equilibrium of the compensated representative-agent economy at $(t, 1/A(t))$. Hence, there is an equilibrium with a compensated agent at $(t, Z = 1/A(t))$ with

$$\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1/A(t)) = \boldsymbol{c}^* \quad \text{and} \quad U\big(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1/A(t))\big) = 1.$$

In this equilibrium there is a single representative agent with homothetic preferences U, constant-returns technologies, and wedges $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ which, by condition (ii), are invariant to changes in the factor-augmenting productivity level. Hence, the equilibrium with a compensated representative-agent is homogeneous of degree one in aggregate factor-augmenting productivity. Changing the factor-augmenting productivity level from 1 to $1/A(t)$ scales equilibrium quantities by $1/A(t)$ while leaving relative prices unchanged: $\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1/A(t)) = \boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1)/A(t)$. Therefore,

$$1 = U(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1/A(t))) = U(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1)/A(t)) = U(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1))/A(t),$$

where the last equality follows from the homogeneity of U. By definition, $\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t) \equiv \boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t, 1)$, so

$$A(t) = U\big(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(t)\big),$$

which proves the equality of the Theorem. Consider now $t = 0$. The status quo allocation $\boldsymbol{c}(0)$ is feasible in the compensated-agent economy at $(0, 1)$ and satisfies $U(\boldsymbol{c}(0)) = 1$. Given the assumption $A(0) = 1$, the equality just proved gives $U(\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(0, 1)) = 1$. Under the maintained equilibrium selection, the compensated-agent equilibrium at $(0, 1)$ selects the status quo allocation. Hence $\boldsymbol{c}^{\text{comp}}(0, 1) = \boldsymbol{c}(0)$, and the associated prices and quantities coincide with those in the decentralized status quo. This proves the last statement of the theorem.

$\square$

Corollary 3. *Under the conditions of Theorem 1,*

$$A(t) = Y^{comp}(t) = A^{KH,comp}(t).$$

Proof. The first equality is an immediate consequence of Theorem 1 and the fact that the compensated representative agent has homothetic preferences. To see the second equality, let $E(\boldsymbol{p}, U)$ be the expenditure function of the compensated representative agent. Then,

$$A^{KH,comp}(t) = E(\boldsymbol{p}^{\text{comp}}(t), U(t))/E(\boldsymbol{p}^{\text{comp}}(t), U(0)) = U(t)/U(0) = A(t).$$

It is important to note that $A^{KH,comp}(t)$ is not the same as $A^{KH}(t)$.

□

Proof of Proposition 1. By Corollary 3, we know that

$$A(t) = Y^{comp}(t).$$

If preferences are identical, homothetic, and all households face the same relative prices, then the distribution of spending across households has no effect on equilibrium relative prices. Hence, the price and quantity of each good in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent coincides with those in the decentralized equilibrium. That is, $\boldsymbol{p}^{comp}(t) = \boldsymbol{p}(t)$ and

$$\sum_h \boldsymbol{c}_h^{comp}(t) = \sum_h \boldsymbol{c}_h(t).$$

From this, it follows that

$$A(t) = Y^{comp}(t) = Y(t).$$

Since there is a positive representative agent with homothetic preferences, it follows from standard results (see, e.g., Baqaee and Burstein, 2023) that

$$Y(t) = A^{RA}(t).$$

Finally, letting $u(\boldsymbol{c})$ be the homogeneous of degree one representation of the utility function of every agent (since all agents have the same preferences), we have that

$$\begin{aligned} A^{KH}(t) &= \frac{\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(t))}{\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(0))} = \frac{\sum_h u_h(t)}{\sum_h u_h(0)} = \frac{\sum_h u(\boldsymbol{c}_h(t))}{\sum_h u(\boldsymbol{c}_h(0))}, \\ &= \frac{\sum_h u(\boldsymbol{c}(t)\chi_h(t))}{\sum_h u(\boldsymbol{c}(0)\chi_h(0))}, \end{aligned}$$

where $\chi_h(t)$ is household h's share of aggregate expenditures at t,

$$= \frac{u(\boldsymbol{c}(t)) \sum_h \chi_h(t)}{u(\boldsymbol{c}(0) \sum_h \chi_h(0)},$$
$$= \frac{u(\boldsymbol{c}(t))}{u(\boldsymbol{c}(0))} = A^{RA}(t).$$

□

Related to Proposition 1, the following proposition provides other conditions where $A^{KH}(t)$ and $A(t)$ also coincide.

Proposition 14 (Equivalence of Kaldor-Hicks and $A(t)$)**.** *If there is one primary factor, so that relative prices are independent of demand, then $A(t) = A^{KH}(t)$.*

Proof. With one primary factor of production and constant-returns technologies, it is well-known that relative prices do not depend on final demand. Hence, the vector of equilibrium prices and aggregate income in the decentralized (multi-agent) economy $\boldsymbol{p}(t)$ and $I(t)$ are also equilibrium prices and aggregate income in the economy with a compensated representative agent. Theorem 1 implies that $A(t) = A^{KH,comp}(t)$. Since relative prices and aggregate income are the same, it follows that $A^{KH,comp}(t) = A^{KH}(t)$. □

Proof of Proposition 2. This follows from Hulten (1978). For any t, production functions are given by

$$y_i(t) = z_i(t) G_i(\{y_{ij}(t)\}_{j \in N}, \{l_{if}(t)\}_{f \in F}),$$

where F is the set of primary factors and N is the set of commodities. Resource constraints are

$$y_i(t) = c_i(t) + \sum_{j \in N} y_{ji}(t)$$
$$z_f(t) L_f(t) = \sum_{i \in N} l_{if}(t).$$

By definition, the instantaneous change in real GDP for any $t > 0$ is given by:

$$d \log Y = \sum_{i \in N} \frac{p_i(t) c_i(t)}{\sum_j p_j(t) c_j(t)} d \log c_i.$$

Using the resource constraint

$$d\log c_i = \frac{y_i}{c_i} d\log y_i - \sum_j \frac{y_{ji}}{c_i} d\log y_{ji}$$

and the total derivative of the production function

$$d\log y_i = d\log z_i + \sum_j \frac{\partial \log G_i}{\partial \log y_{ij}} d\log y_{ij} + \sum_f \frac{\partial \log G_i}{\partial \log l_{if}} d\log l_{if},$$

we can write

$$d\log c_i = \frac{y_i}{c_i}\left[d\log z_i + \sum_j \frac{\partial \log G_i}{\partial \log y_{ij}} d\log y_{ij} + \sum_f \frac{\partial \log G_i}{\partial \log l_{if}} d\log l_{if}\right] - \sum_j \frac{y_{ji}}{c_i} d\log y_{ji}$$

Perfect competition implies that

$$\frac{\partial \log G_i}{\partial \log y_{ij}} = \frac{p_j y_{ij}}{p_i y_i}.$$

Hence,

$$d\log c_i = \frac{y_i}{c_i}\left[d\log z_i + \sum_j \frac{p_j y_{ij}}{p_i y_i} d\log y_{ij} + \sum_f \frac{w_f l_{if}}{p_i y_i} d\log l_{if}\right] - \sum_j \frac{y_{ji}}{c_i} d\log y_{ji}$$

Next, substitute this back into the definition of real GDP:

$$\begin{aligned} d\log Y &= \sum_{i\in N} \frac{p_i c_i}{\sum_j p_j c_j}\left[\frac{y_i}{c_i}\left[d\log z_i + \sum_j \frac{p_j y_{ij}}{p_i y_i} d\log y_{ij} + \sum_f \frac{w_f l_{if}}{p_i y_i} d\log l_{if}\right] - \sum_j \frac{y_{ji}}{c_i} d\log y_{ji}\right] \\ &= \sum_{i\in N} \frac{p_i y_i}{\sum_j p_j c_j} d\log z_i + \sum_{f\in F} \frac{w_f z_f L_f}{\sum_j p_j c_j} d\log z_f, \end{aligned}$$

where the variables are all evaluated at t. The result is obtained by integrating. □

Proof of Proposition 3. This follows from combining Theorem 1 with Proposition 2. □

Proof of Corollary 1. The fact that $\Delta\log A \approx \sum_i \lambda_i(0)\Delta\log z_i$ is a consequence of Theorem 1 and Proposition 2. The fact that $\Delta\log A \approx \Delta\log Y$ is a consequence of Proposition 2.

Finally, the fact that $\Delta \log Y \approx \Delta \log A^{KH}$ can be seen as follows.

$$
\begin{aligned}
\log A^{KH}(t) &= \log \frac{\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(t))}{\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(0))}, \\
&= \log \sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(t)) - \log \sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(0)), \\
&= \log \sum_i p_i(t) \left[\sum_h c_{hi}(t) \right] - \log \sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(0)), \\
d \log A^{KH}\Big|_{t=0} &= d \log \sum_i p_i(t) \left[\sum_h c_{hi}(t) \right] - d \log \sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(0)), \\
&= d \log \sum_i p_i(t) \left[\sum_h c_{hi}(t) \right] - \sum_i \sum_h \frac{e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(0), u_h(0))}{\sum_{h'} e_{h'}(\boldsymbol{p}(0), u_{h'}(0))} \frac{\partial \log e_h}{\partial \log p_i} d \log p_i, \\
&= \sum_i \frac{p_i(0) \left[\sum_h c_{hi}(0)\right]}{\sum_{h'} e_{h'}(\boldsymbol{p}(0), u_{h'}(0))} d \log p_i(t) + \sum_i \frac{p_i(0) \left[\sum_h c_{hi}(0)\right]}{\sum_{h'} e_{h'}(\boldsymbol{p}(0), u_{h'}(0))} d \log \left[\sum_{h'} c_{hi}(t) \right] \\
&- \sum_i \frac{p_i(0) \left[\sum_h c_{hi}(0)\right]}{\sum_{h'} e_{h'}(\boldsymbol{p}(0), u_{h'}(0))} d \log p_i, \\
&= \sum_i \frac{p_i(0) \left[\sum_h c_{hi}(0)\right]}{\sum_j p_j(0) \left[\sum_{h''} c_{hj}(0)\right]} d \log \left[\sum_{h'} c_{hi}(t) \right], \\
&= d \log Y,
\end{aligned}
$$

where we use the fact that $\sum_h e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(t), u_h(t)) = \sum_i p_i(t) \sum_h c_{hi}(t)$ for every $t \geq 0$ and we use Shephard's lemma to replace $\partial \log e_h / \partial \log p_i$ with $p_i(0) c_{hi}(0) / e_h(\boldsymbol{p}(0), u_h(0))$. Note that $\Delta \log Y \approx \Delta \log A^{KH}$ even if the initial equilibrium is distorted.

□

Proof of Corollary 2. This follows from combining Theorem 1 with Proposition 3 from Baqaee and Farhi (2019c). □

Proof of Proposition 4. Kaldor-Hicks efficiency $A^{KH}(t)$ can be defined analogously to $A(t)$ where we scale aggregate income instead of aggregate factor productivity. Specifically,

$$
A^{KH}(t) = \max \left\{ \phi \in \mathbb{R} : \text{there is } \boldsymbol{c} \in \mathcal{B}(\boldsymbol{p}(t), \phi^{-1} I(t)) \text{ and } u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h) \geq u_h(\boldsymbol{c}_h^0) \text{ for every } h \right\},
$$

where $\mathcal{B}(\boldsymbol{p}(t), I(t)) = \{\boldsymbol{c} : \boldsymbol{p}(t) \cdot \sum_h \boldsymbol{c_h} \leq I(t)\}$ and $I(t) = \sum_h I_h(t)$. In the absence of distortions ($\boldsymbol{\mu} = 1$), $\boldsymbol{p}(t)$ and $I(t)$ are prices and income in the competitive equilibrium.

We first show that $\mathcal{C}(\boldsymbol{z}(t), 1)$ is contained in the aggregate budget set $\mathcal{B}(\boldsymbol{p}(t), I(t))$. Suppose that there is a feasible consumption allocation $\boldsymbol{c}' \in \mathcal{C}(\boldsymbol{z}(t), 1)$ that violates the aggregate budget constraint at equilibrium prices. That is, $\boldsymbol{p}(t)\cdot\boldsymbol{c}' > I(t)$, where $I(t) = \boldsymbol{w}(t)\cdot\boldsymbol{L}+\Pi(t)$, and $\Pi(t)$ denotes aggregate profits which are equal to zero in equilibrium. Hence, $\Pi(t) < \boldsymbol{p}(t)\cdot\boldsymbol{c}' - \boldsymbol{w}(t)\cdot\boldsymbol{L}$. Aggregate profits Π' under any feasible allocation $\boldsymbol{c}'$ are given by $\Pi' = \boldsymbol{p}(t)\cdot\boldsymbol{c}' - \boldsymbol{w}(t)\cdot\boldsymbol{L}$. By the inequality above, $\Pi(t) < \Pi'$. This is a contradiction, since aggregate profits are maximized in a competitive equilibrium given prices (see Proposition 5.E.1 in Mas-Colell et al. (1995)).

By the second welfare theorem, the set $\mathcal{C}(\boldsymbol{z}(t),1)$ is the Pareto frontier, which is contained in the set of all technologically feasible allocations, denoted $\mathcal{X}(t,1)$. Furthermore, the feasible set $\mathcal{X}(t,1)$ is contained in the aggregate budget set $\mathcal{B}(\boldsymbol{p}(t),I(t))$ as shown above. It follows that $A(t) \leq A^{KH}(t)$ because any choice $\boldsymbol{c}^*(t) \in \mathcal{C}(\boldsymbol{z}(t),1/A(t)) \in \mathcal{X}(t,1/A(t))$ that keeps every h at least indifferent to the status quo is also available by scaling $\mathcal{B}(\boldsymbol{p}(t),I(t)/A(t)$. Finally, pure redistributions leave the Pareto frontier unchanged, so $\mathcal{C}(t,1)$ is unchanged with t and $A(t)=1$. □

Proof of Proposition 5. This is a consequence of Theorem 1 and Petrin and Levinsohn (2012). Specifically, we can follow the derivation in Baqaee and Farhi (2019b). Suppressing the "comp" superscripts, we can write the following total differentials for any $t>0$:

$$d\log c_i = \frac{y_i}{c_i} d\log y_i - \sum_{j\in N}\frac{y_{ji}}{c_i} d\log y_{ji},$$

and

$$\mu_j^{-1}(d\log y_j - d\log z_j - \sum_f \frac{w_f l_{jf}}{p_j y_j}\mu_j d\log l_{jf}) = \sum_{i\in N}\frac{p_i y_{ji}}{p_j y_j} d\log y_{ji}.$$

The first is an accounting identity and the second follows from cost-minimization. These two equations can be combined to obtain the desired result:

$$\begin{aligned}
d\log Y &= \sum_{i\in N}\frac{p_i c_i}{\sum_j p_j c_j} d\log c_i,\\
&= \sum_{i\in N}\frac{p_i y_i}{\sum_j p_j c_j} d\log y_i - \sum_{i\in N}\sum_{j\in N}\frac{p_i y_{ji}}{\sum_j p_j c_j} d\log y_{ji},\\
&= \sum_{i\in N}\frac{p_i y_i}{\sum_j p_j c_j} d\log y_i - \sum_{j\in N}\frac{p_j y_j}{\sum_j p_j c_j}\mu_j^{-1}(d\log y_j - d\log z_j - \sum_f \frac{w_f l_{jf}}{p_j y_j}\mu_j d\log l_{jf}),\\
&= \sum_{i\in N}\lambda_i\mu_i^{-1} d\log z_i + \sum_{i\in N}\lambda_i(1-\mu_i^{-1}) d\log y_i + \sum_{f\in F}\lambda_f d\log z_f.
\end{aligned}$$

Integrating this equation in the equilibrium with the compensated representative agent yields the desired result. □

Proof of Proposition 6. Index wedges by t, and denote the status quo with wedges by $\boldsymbol{c}^0(t)$. Let $t = 0$ denote the point where $\boldsymbol{\mu}(0) = \mathbf{1}$. The set $\mathcal{C}(0,1)$ is then the Pareto efficient frontier. From Proposition 5, we have that

$$\log A(t) = -\int_0^t \sum_i \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(s)\left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i^{\text{comp}}(s)}\right)\frac{d\log y_i^{\text{comp}}}{ds}ds.$$

Differentiate the expression above to get

$$\frac{d}{dt}[\log A] = -\sum_i \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(t)\left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i^{\text{comp}}(t)}\right)\frac{d\log y_i^{\text{comp}}}{dt}.$$

Differentiate a second time to get

$$\frac{d^2}{dt^2}[\log A] = -\sum_i d\lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(t)\left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i^{\text{comp}}(t)}\right)\frac{d\log y_i^{\text{comp}}}{dt} - \sum_i \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(t)\frac{1}{\mu_i(t)}\frac{d\log \mu_i^{\text{comp}}}{dt}\frac{d\log y_i^{\text{comp}}}{dt}$$
$$- \sum_i \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(t)\left(1 - \frac{1}{\mu_i^{\text{comp}}(t)}\right)\frac{d^2\log y_i^{\text{comp}}}{dt^2}.$$

Evaluate these derivatives at $t = 0$ and write the second-order Taylor approximation:

$$\log A \approx 0 - \frac{1}{2}\sum_i \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(0)\frac{1}{\mu_i^{\text{comp}}(0)}\frac{d\log \mu_i^{\text{comp}}}{dt}dt\frac{d\log y_i^{\text{comp}}(0)}{dt}dt.$$

To a second-order, this can also be written as

$$\Delta\log A \approx 0 - \frac{1}{2}\sum_i \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(t)\frac{d\log \mu_i^{\text{comp}}}{dt}dt\frac{d\log y_i^{\text{comp}}(t)}{dt}dt \approx -\frac{1}{2}\sum_i \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(t)\Delta\log \mu_i^{\text{comp}}\Delta\log y_i^{\text{comp}},$$

since the differences are higher-order. □

Proof of Proposition 7. To obtain the first-order change in $\Delta\log A^{\text{costly}}(t)$, set the second order terms in Proposition 8 to zero. □

Proof of Proposition 8. Set $\boldsymbol{\mu}(t) = 1$, apply Proposition 13, and use Proposition 4 from Baqaee and Rubbo (2023) to obtain Equation (16).

□