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Nonparametric Testing for Smooth Structural Changes in Panel Data Models

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Abstract: Detecting and modeling structural changes in time series models have attracted great attention. However, relatively little effort has been paid to the testing of structural changes in panel data models despite their increasing importance in economics and finance. In this paper, we propose a new approach to testing structural changes in panel data models. Unlike the bulk of the literature on structural changes, which focuses on detection of abrupt structural changes, we consider smooth structural changes for which model parameters are unknown deterministic smooth functions of time except for a finite number of time points. We use nonparametric local smoothing method to consistently estimate the smooth changing parameters and develop two consistent tests for smooth structural changes in panel data models. The first test is to check whether all model parameters are stable over time. The second test is to check potential time-varying interaction while allowing for a common trend. Both tests have an asymptotic N(0, 1) distribution under the null hypothesis of parameter constancy and are consistent against a vast class of smooth structural changes as well as abrupt structural breaks with possibly unknown break points alternatives. Simulation studies show that the tests provide reliable inference in finite samples and two empirical examples with respect to a cross-country growth model and a capital structure model are discussed.

JEL Classifications: C12, C14, C23

Key words: Local smoothing, Panel data, Parameter constancy, Smooth structural changes

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