

ASSESSMENT OF MODEL SPECIFICATION APPROPRIATENESS FOR THE ESTIMATION OF HEDONIC PRICE FUNCTION OF HOUSES

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I declare that this dissertation is my own work, and that where material is obtained from published or unpublished work, this has been fully acknowledged in the references.

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Introduction

This paper aims to further investigate the relationship of various environmental, mobility and socioeconomic parameters with house prices in the area of Boston through spatial-econometric tools and techniques. More specifically, the suggested model specification sheds light on the appropriate model and functional form of the parameters as to better determine the determinants of the Hedonic Price Function of houses with subsequent goal to enhance the existing literature. This research question was chosen as enhance the on-going research around modelling house prices and the implicit markets that determine the demand and supply of houses and their various attributes with a spatial focus, as well as to address some of the inhibitors that implicate the accuracy of such models. In this paper it was found that alongside conventional socioeconomic parameters, various environmental, geographical and mobility related factors were found to contribute substantially on median house prices in the Metropolitan area of Boston. Finally, it was found that spatial dependencies are present within the specified model that implies potential reconsideration of the model.

Existing literature has indicated that one of the most prominent approaches that aid in the analysis and assessment of Quality of Life is that of measuring both the individual and bundled contribution of various attributes and amenities, that are often non-marketable, of which an asset comprised of (Rosen, 1974). More specifically the above approach can take the form of market/residence approach which essentially measures individual preferences through market behavior and is known as hedonic strategy and is most often illustrated through the Hedonic Price Model (HPM) (Montero & Fernandez-Aviles, 2014).

The complexity of the above hedonic strategy is increased when attention is paid to spatial dependencies. Nevertheless, taking spatial dependencies into consideration is of great significance according to Tobler's first law of geography where everything is related to everything, but neighboring or adjacent entities and assets are even more related than others that are distant (Tobler, 2016).

The above intuition's validity in the case of hedonic strategies has been thoroughly researched, especially in the context of modelling house prices. More specifically, literature indicates that the omission of spatial parameters that potentially exhibit spatial effects and dependencies among a model's variables may lead to estimators being inconsistent, inefficient, and inaccurate regardless of the sophistication of the used method. (Anselin, 1988).

Economic Framework

Hedonic Price Model

Prior to describing our model specification that aims to address the above mentioned research question it is important to establish the economic framework on which this paper builds upon. The main economic framework our model will try to further develop is the Hedonic Price Model and more specifically its spatial variation the Spatial House Pricing Model. The HPM methodology is most often used in calculating and assessing the contribution of the individual attributes of which a heterogeneous asset is comprised of to the asset's bundled value. Moreover, under specific assumptions of perfect information and competition, this methodology's ability to estimate the implicit prices of characteristics or assets that are considered nonmarket goods has been proven extremely useful when it comes to assessing the economic value of heterogeneous goods such as houses (Montero & Fernandez-Aviles, 2014).

In our case additional value is generated through HPM methodology due to the flexibility it offers as there are no specific requirements when formulating the functional relation between the individual attributes of a house and its price. This enables researchers to experiment freely while simultaneously producing noteworthy results.

In this paper we aim to formulate a specification of the hedonic price function that accurately and efficiently captures median house price as well as illustrates potential spatial dependencies.

Dataset Description & Variable Selection

The data from which we will be evaluating and interpreting the results of our research question are obtained from the cross-sectional dataset named Boston House Prices Dataset with file name "Boston corrected" which contains 506 census tracts in the Boston Standard Metropolitan Area in the 1970's. The dataset contains cross-sectional data of 14 variables that are of structural, environmental, mobility/neighborhood and geographical nature. Nevertheless, the suggested model specification will only be containing 12 of them due to the inconsistency and uncertainty of the contribution of the two excluded variables. More specifically, our model will be comprised of CMEDV the median house prices, CRIM, ZN, INDUS, CHAS, NOX, RM, DIS, RAD, TAX, PTRATIO and LSTAT as seen in Table 1 (Table 1).

Table 1 - Variable Selection

Variables used in model specifications

Variable Selection

In this paper's suggested specification, the included variables will be the independent variable CMEDV, and the dependent variables DIS, RAD, CHAS, INDUS, NOX, ZN, RM, TAX, PTRATIO, LSTAT, CRIM, B whose descriptive statistics can be seen below (Table 2).

<i>Variable</i>	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
logCMEDV	506	1.317892	.1773115
ZN	506	11.36364	23.32245
INDUS	506	11.13678	6.860353
CHAS	506	0.06917	0.253994
NOX^2	506	0.3210877	0.1392125
$\overline{RM^2}$	506	39.98932	9.079531
LogDIS	506	0.5159559	0.2343221
LogRAD	506	0.8111149	0.3799353
TAX	506	408.2372	168.5371
PTRATIO	506	18.45553	2.164946
LSTAT	506	12.65306	7.141062
\boldsymbol{B}	506	356.674	91.29486

Table 2 - Descriptive Statistics of Selected Variables

Econometric Analysis

This section of the dissertation is comprised of (i) the investigation of the model specification (ii) benefits and implications arising from this specification, (iii) analysis and interpretation of results and finally (iv) the investigation of the existence of spatial correlations and dependencies.

OLS Regression Model

The suggested model or housing price equation is constructed through OLS multiple linear regression methodology. Moreover, some of the abovementioned variables may need to be transformed as to contribute for a better fit of our model. Prior to the transformation a Shapiro-Wilks (Table 3) test was conducted to evaluate the normality of the above specified variables. This test indicated that all variables were not normally distributed and needed potential transformation. Nevertheless, it can be observed from the comparison of the two OLS models (Table 3) that the model was subject to a slight increase of the R squared when the variables CMEDV, DIS, RAD, NOX and RM were transformed into logCMEDV, logDIS, logRAD, NOX^2 and RM^2 (equation 1).

OLS specification:

CMEDV=a0+a1*INDUS+a2*ZN+a3*CHAS+a4*NOX+a5*RM+a6*DIS+a7*RAD+a8*TAX+a9 **PTRATIO+a10*LSTAT+a11*B+ε* (equation 1)

Before interpreting the coefficients and the contribution of each variable to the median house price (CMEDV) it is of great significance to take into consideration both the benefits of the chosen methodology and specification as well as their limitations. The selection of OLS multiple linear regression model as the appropriate methodology can be derived by addressing whether Gauss Markov's assumptions of OLS hold for our data (Hallin, 2006). However, the OLS specification has its limitations in terms of addressing misspecifications, endogeneity, normality of variables and omitted variable bias, some of which could potentially be addresses by the box-cox transformation (Osborne, 2010).

$log{\textit{CMEDV}} = a0 + a1 * \textit{INDUS} + a2 * \textit{ZN} + a3 * \textit{CHAS} + a4 * \textit{NOX2} + a5 * \textit{RM2}$

Spatial Regression Models

In this sub-section of our model's econometric analysis, we will be investigating the hypothesis that spatial dependencies are existent withing our model. Intuitively due to the nature neighborhood, geographic, accessibility and environmental nature of various specified variables some spatial correlations are expected to be present.

In order to verify the presence of spatial correlations two spatial regression models will be used, the spatial lag model that considers dependence in the explanatory variable CMEDV of a spatial unit, a house in our case, and its corresponding neighboring units (equation 2). The second model is the spatial error model that takes into considerations the spatial dependence in the error term of a house and its corresponding neighboring houses (equation 3). Additionally, Moran's I will be initially calculated as to measure the spatial autocorrelation of our model according to the given Spatial Weights Matrix (Saputro, 2019). While negative values will indicate that neighboring houses' attributes will have increasingly dissimilar values compared to ones further away (Anselin, 2002)*.*

> spatial lag model: $y = \rho * Wy + X * \beta + \varepsilon$ (equation 2) spatial error model: $y = X * \beta + u$, where $u = \lambda * W u + \varepsilon$ (equation 3)

Results

OLS regression

From the figures below that have been produced through the OLS regression of the specified model evaluation and interpretation of the variables' contribution to the median house price can be conducted (Table 4). It can be observed that all coefficients are highly statistically significant at 99% confidence level except for ZN whose coefficient is statistically significant at 90% confidence level and INDUS that is statistically significant. More specifically, an increase of 1 unit of INDUS does not contribute towards the CMEDV, an increase of 1 unit of ZN will increase CMEDV by 0.03044% , an increase of 1 unit of CHAS will increase logCMEDV by 5.12%, an increase of 1 unit of NOX² will decrease logCMEDV by 27.2%, an increase of 1 unit of RM2 will increase logCMEDV by 0.37% , an increase of 1% of logDIS will decrease logCMEDV by 0.19%, an increase of 1% of logRAD will increase logCMEDV by 0.069%, an increase of TAX by 1 unit will decrease log CMEDV by 0.03%, an increase of PTRATIO by 1 unit will decrease logCMEDV by 1.43%, an increase of LSTAT by 1 unit will decrease logCMEDV by 1.36,

an increase of 1 unit of B will increase logCMEDV by 0.021% and finally the constant has a fixed contribution f o1.744 towards logCMEDV(Table 4). From the above it can be deduced that most the variables in our specification model contribute towards the median house price and can be considered some of its determinants. As to reinforce the validity of the above specification, studies such as that of Rubinfeld & Harrison have found similar evidence with slight variations in their variable selection (Harrison & Rubinfeld , 1978).

Table 4 - OLS and Spatial Model Regression Results

Spatial Regression Models

Through calculating Global Moran's I in STATA for each of the specified variables the results were positive and highly statistically significant, alongside with their positive z-scores (Table 5). Meaning that the null hypothesis of the test that each investigated variable is randomly distributed among the spatial units or houses in Boston is rejected and that the spatial distribution of both the high and low values are spatially clustered (Kondo, 2021). Thus, spatial dependencies are present and spatial regressions are appropriate to be conducted (Lee, 2017).

From conducting a spatial lag model on the same variables as in the previous OLS econometric specifications a positive and highly statistically significant rho value of 0.0001777 was derived (Table 4). Additionally, all the variables' coefficients are highly statistically significant at 99% confidence level besides LogDIS that is statistically significant at 95% confidence level and ZN and INDUS that are statistically insignificant similarly to the OLS model. The positive rho value indicates the rejection of the null hypothesis that there is no spatial correlation and subsequently that high prices of houses can be observed among neighboring houses and similarly for lower price houses. Furthermore, a value of rho other than zero also implies that OLS is biased, and inconsistent, thus spatial regression models are more appropriate to address this research question (Yamagata & Seya, 2020). Finally, from conducting a spatial error model of the chosen specification a lambda value of 0.0000878 was produced that is statistically significant at 95% confidence level. Similarly, all of the predictors were highly statistically significant at 99% confidence level except for ZN and INDUS that are statistically insignificant in all three regression models that have been formulated (Table 4). The positive lambda value verifies the presence of spatial correlation between the errors and implies that OLS is unbiased and consistent however its standard errors and coefficients are inefficient (Dubin, 1992).

Conclusion

Overall, from the abovementioned findings it has become evident that the usage of model methodologies and the construction of a model specification to estimate the Hedonic Price Function of houses is extremely complex and sophisticated, due to phenomena such as Multicollinearity, Endogeneity, Heteroskedasticity, model misspecification, omitted variable bias and the presence of spatial dependencies. Nevertheless, through this research paper light was shed on some of the above and issues by conducting substantial econometric analysis of both the OLS specifications as well as through two Spatial Regression Models. Moreover, this paper contributed significantly to assessing various model's appropriateness that aimed to accurately evaluate the contribution of various socioeconomic, structural, and environmental house attributes towards the median house price. More specifically, it was found that while the OLS estimation is much simpler and easy to interpret it was biased and didn't accurately reflect the contributions to the median house prices due to the presence of spatial correlation. Consequently, it can be deduced that Spatial Regression Models can pose potentially a better fit to address the research question by accurately decomposing one of the main determinants of growth and quality of life, Real Estate, and house prices into various heterogeneous attributes that have unobserved economic value.

Appendix

STATA commands

OLS models

● *Step 1: general model*

Line 1: reg CMEDV INDUS ZN CHAS NOX RM DIS RAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B

• *Step 2: hettest option after step 1 that* performs various versions of the Breusch-Pagan (1979) **and Cook-Weisberg (1983) tests to measure linear heteroskedasticity.**

Line 1: *Line 1: reg CMEDV INDUS ZN CHAS NOX RM DIS RAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B*

Line 2: hettest

● *Step 3: general model with robust option to address heteroskedasticity:*

Line 3: reg CMEDV INDUS ZN CHAS NOX RM DIS RAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, robust

● *Step 4: specification model:*

Line 4: reg logCMEDV INDUS ZN CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B

• *Step 5: hettest option after step 4 that performs various versions of the Breusch-Pagan (1979)* **and Cook-Weisberg (1983) tests to measure linear heteroskedasticity.**

Line 4: reg logCMEDV INDUS ZN CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B

Line 5: hettest

● *Step 6: specification model with robust option to address heteroskedasticity:*

Line 6: reg logCMEDV INDUS ZN CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, robust

● *Step 7: vif command after step 6 as to calculate the variance inflation factors for the independent variables as to address multicollinearity*

Line 6: reg logCMEDV INDUS ZN CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, robust

Line 7: vif

Spatial Regression Models:

● *Step 1: import Spatial Weights Matrix after being normalised manually on excel*

Line 9: spatwmat using "C:\normalised_wmatrix_stata.dta", name(aweights)

● *Step 2: calculate Global Moran's I to find potential autocorrelation or spatial dependency of variables*

Line 10: spatgsa logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, weights(aweights) moran

● *Step 3: perform a spatial lag model*

Line 10: spatreg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, weights(aweights) eigenval(aweights) model(lag)

● *Step 3: use robust option after step 3 to address heteroskedasticity*

Line 11: spatreg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, weights(aweights) eigenval(aweights) model(lag) robust

● *Step 4: perform a spatial error model*

Line 12: spatreg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B,

weights(aweights) eigenval(aweights) model(error)

● *Step 5: se robust option after step 4 to address heteroskedasticity*

Line 13: spatreg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B,

weights(aweights) eigenval(aweights) model(error) robust

Stata Output

. SU logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B

. reg CMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX RM DIS RAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B

. hettest

3reusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity Ho: Constant variance
Variables: fitted values of CMEDV

chi2(1) = 12.71
Prob > chi2 = 0.0004

. reg CMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX RM DIS RAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, robust

Linear regression

. reg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B

. hettest

 $\overline{1}$

Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity Ho: Constant variance Variables: fitted values of logCMEDV

> 97.17 $chi2(1)$ $\alpha = 1$ Prob > chi2 = 0.0000

. reg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, robust

 $. vif$

. spatwmat using "C:\normalised_wmatrix_stata.dta", name(aweights)

The following matrix has been created:

1. Imported non-binary weights matrix aweights Dimension: 506x506

. spatgsa logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, weights (aweights) moran

Measures of global spatial autocorrelation

Weights matrix

Name: aweights
Type: Imported (non-binary) Row-standardized: No

Moran's I

*1-tail test

. spatreg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, weights(aweights) eigenval(aweights) model(lag)

Spatial lag model

 \log likelihood = 542.65379

 \top

Acceptable range for rho: $-2.868 <$ rho < 0.075

. spatreg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B, weights(aweights) eigenval(aweights) model(lag) robust


```
Weights matrix<br>Name: aweights<br>Type: Imported (non-binary)<br>Row-standardized: No
```
Spatial lag model

Log likelihood = 542.65379

. spatreg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B , weights (aweights) eigenval (aweights) model (error)

Weights matrix
Name: **aweights**
Type: **Imported (non-binary)** Row-standardized: No

Spatial error model

Log likelihood = 540.87601

Acceptable range for lambda: $-2.868 <$ lambda < 0.075

. spatreg logCMEDV ZN INDUS CHAS NOX2 RM2 LOGDIS LOGRAD TAX PTRATIO LSTAT B , weights(aweights) eigenval(aweights) model(error) robust

Weights matrix

Name: aweights
Name: aweights
Type: Imported (non-binary) Row-standardized: No

Spatial error model

Log likelihood = 540.87601

Lagrange multiplier test of lambda=0: $\text{chi}(1) = 96.894 (0.000)$

Acceptable range for lambda: $-2.868 <$ lambda < 0.075

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