

Devis Decet

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Fields Primary: Development Economics, Public Economics
Secondary: Environmental Economics

Education Ph.D. Economics, Northwestern University (expected) 2025
Committee: Christopher Udry (Chair), Seema Jayachandran,
Nancy Qian
M.A. Economics, Northwestern University 2020
M.A. Economics, University of Bologna 2018
B.A. Economics and Management, University of Trento 2016

Job Market Paper **"Organizing Fiscal Capacity"**
This paper evaluates a reform of the Brazilian tax authority that closed one-fourth of existing local offices, resulting in a more centralized structure with fewer but larger offices. Leveraging regional variation induced by the reform, I employ a matched difference-in-differences design to document how the reform impacts tax revenues. Tax revenues decline in areas previously served by a closed office but increase in areas served by an expanded office; the net effect is an increase in tax revenues. These effects arise because the reform affects both the ability to collect taxes in certain areas and how the tax authority chooses to allocate staff effort. First, increased distance between tax offices and the areas they monitor reduces tax revenues, particularly where local information on taxable activity is more valuable. Second, areas served by an expanded office see larger revenue increases when they have higher revenue potential compared to other areas newly assigned to the same office, supporting the hypothesis that centralization allows for improved targeting of enforcement resources. These findings underscore the importance of how bureaucracies are organized across the territory for their effectiveness.

Other papers **"Water Wars"** with Andrea Marcucci
We study the relationship between access to water resources and local violence in Africa. Due to limited irrigation, rural communities rely on rainfall, rivers, and lakes for their economic needs. Rainfall scarcity can make access to water from rivers and lakes more valuable, thereby generating conflicts. We explore this hypothesis by integrating granular data on the river network with high-resolution data on rainfall and violent conflict events in Africa from 1997 to 2021. We find that reduced rainfall in a location leads to more conflict in neighboring areas that are water-rich and located upstream along the river network. These are the sites that exert more control over the river flow. The effect is more pronounced in regions experiencing a long-term decline in water presence. Consistent with the proposed mechanism, conflicts concentrate in areas with higher returns to water access, as proxied by the presence of agricultural production. Additionally, the impact is more pronounced in regions with unequal water distribution among ethnic groups, highlighting how cooperation

costs are an important friction preventing peaceful sharing of water resources. In terms of policy responses, we find that the effects tend to be mitigated in countries with stronger democratic institutions, better rule of law, higher state capacity and less corruption.

“Child Labour, Human Capital and Beliefs” with Kaman Lyu

In contexts where child labour is pervasive, household decisions about allocating children’s time between school and work involve a trade-off: current returns from child labour versus future returns from education. This paper tests for the existence of a third factor: future returns from child labour, as parents view farm work as an investment in agricultural skills. We provide evidence on each component of this trade-off in the context of rural Ghana by leveraging four waves of survey data on 5,000 households, exogenous shocks to agricultural productivity, and a vignette survey design to elicit parental beliefs.

Work in Progress	<p>“State Capacity and Environmental Protection” with Marie-Louise Decamps</p> <p>“The Geography of State Capacity in Africa”</p>	
Relevant Past Position	<p>Research Assistant, Ameet Morjaria, Northwestern University, USA</p> <p>Research Assistant, GPRL, Northwestern University, Winneba, Ghana</p> <p>Research Assistant, Seema Jayachandran, Northwestern University, USA</p> <p>Research Fellow, University of Bologna, Italy</p> <p>Research Assistant, Matteo Cervellati, University of Bologna, Italy</p>	<p>2023</p> <p>2022</p> <p>2021-2022</p> <p>2018-2019</p> <p>2018</p>
Teaching Experience	<p>Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University</p> <p>Statistical Decision Analysis, Executive MBA (6X)</p> <p>Global Initiatives in Management: China-Africa, MBA</p> <p>Economic Development in Africa, U</p> <p>Introduction to Econometrics, U</p> <p>Teaching Assistant, University of Bologna</p> <p>Statistics, MA</p> <p>Applied Econometrics, MA</p> <p>Economic Growth, MA</p>	<p>2020-2024</p> <p>2018-2019</p>
Fellowships, Grants & Awards	<p>Dissertation Fellowship, Northwestern University</p> <p>University Fellowship, Northwestern University</p> <p>GPRL Travel Grant, Northwestern University</p> <p>Marco Fanno Scholarship, Unicredit Foundation</p> <p>BESAP scholarship, University of Bologna</p> <p>Merit Award, University of Trento</p>	<p>2024-2025</p> <p>2023-2024</p> <p>2022</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2017</p> <p>2016</p>
Presentations	<p>Novafrica Lisbon 2024, DEVPEC Stanford 2024, EGI Bari 2023</p>	
Professional Activities	<p>CEGA Fellow PhD Peer Mentor, Northwestern University</p> <p>Applied Microeconomics Lunch seminar organizer, Northwestern University</p> <p>Northwestern Graduate Mentorship Program Mentor</p>	<p>2023</p> <p>2021-2022</p> <p>2020-2023</p>
Languages	<p>English (fluent), Italian (native), Spanish (fluent), French (basic)</p>	

Programming

R (advanced), Stata (advanced), Python (intermediate)

References

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