

Devis Decet

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Evanston, IL 60208

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"**
Which tax administration reforms can improve fiscal capacity in developing countries? This paper evaluates a reform of the Brazilian tax authority that centralized the structure of local tax offices, closing some offices and expanding others. Leveraging regional variation in the reform, I employ a matched difference-in-differences strategy to document how a more centralized structure affects fiscal capacity. I obtain three main findings. First, tax revenues decline in areas previously served by an office that was shut down but increase in areas served by an expanded office; the net effect is an increase in revenues in centralized regions. Second, one reason for the decline in revenues is that increased distance between tax offices and the areas they oversee reduces tax agents' ability to visit these places and gather local information. Third, one reason for the rise in revenues is that the reform has improved the allocation of resources by enabling the tax authority to focus staff effort on high-revenue potential areas and to give talented managers a larger span of control. These findings suggest that centralization can increase overall revenues but exacerbate regional inequality in tax enforcement.

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

“State Capacity and Environmental Protection” with Marie-Louise Decamps

Policies against deforestation are crucial for fighting climate change. This paper examines how the governance of environmental agencies affects the effectiveness of these policies. In the context of Brazil, we compile a novel dataset that integrates satellite land use data, administrative data on the environmental agency organization and on agents’ career, and enforcement activities. With the findings of this paper, we aim to uncover how governance reforms influence enforcement capacity and shape farmers’ land use decisions, contributing to our understanding of how state capacity affects environmental conservation.

Relevant Past Position

Research Assistant, Ameet Morjaria, Northwestern University, USA	2023
Research Assistant, GPRL, Northwestern University, Winneba, Ghana	2022
Research Assistant, Seema Jayachandran, Northwestern University, USA	2021-2022
Research Fellow, University of Bologna, Italy	2018-2019
Research Assistant, Matteo Cervellati, University of Bologna, Italy	2018

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University	2020-2024
Statistical Decision Analysis, Executive MBA (6X)	
Global Initiatives in Management: China-Africa, MBA	
Economic Development in Africa, U	
Introduction to Econometrics, U	
Teaching Assistant, University of Bologna	2018-2019
Statistics, MA	
Applied Econometrics, MA	
Economic Growth, MA	

Fellowships, Grants & Awards

Dissertation Fellowship, Northwestern University	2024-2025
University Fellowship, Northwestern University	2023-2024
GPRL Travel Grant, Northwestern University	2022
Marco Fanno Scholarship, Unicredit Foundation	2018
BESAP scholarship, University of Bologna	2017
Merit Award, University of Trento	2016

Presentations

Novafrica Lisbon 2024, DEVPEC Stanford 2024, EGI Bari 2023

Professional Activities	CEGA Fellow PhD Peer Mentor, Northwestern University	2023	
	Applied Microeconomics Lunch seminar organizer, Northwestern University	2021-2022	
	Northwestern Graduate Mentorship Program Mentor	2020-2023	
Languages	English (fluent), Italian (native), Spanish (fluent), French (basic)		
Programming	R (advanced), Stata (advanced), Python (intermediate)		
References	Professor Christopher Udry Department of Economics Northwestern University 2211 Campus Drive Evanston, IL 60208 christopher.udry@northwestern.edu	Professor Seema Jayachandran Department of Economics Princeton University 126 Julis Romo Rabinowitz Building Princeton, NJ 08544 jayachandran@princeton.edu	
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	Professor Silvia Vannutelli Department of Economics Northwestern University 2211 Campus Drive Evanston, IL 60208 silvia.vannutelli@northwestern.edu		
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