

CLARE BALBONI

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GENDER: Female

CITIZENSHIP: UK

PRE-DOCTORAL STUDIES:

MRes in Economics, London School of Economics, 2012 - 2014 (Distinction)
MA in International & Development Economics, Yale University, 2008 - 2009 (Honours)
BA (Hons) in Natural Sciences, Cambridge University, 2004 - 2007 (1st Class)

DOCTORAL STUDIES:

London School of Economics

DATES: 2014 - present

THESIS TITLE: "Essays in Environment, Trade and Development"

EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE: May 2019

THESIS ADVISOR AND REFERENCES:

Professor Robin Burgess
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DESIRED TEACHING AND RESEARCH:

Primary Fields: Environmental Economics, Trade, Development Economics

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Graduate/ Undergraduate Teaching

2016-2017 Teaching Fellow in Development Economics (MPA Course)
2015-2016 Development Economics (Summer School Course)
2014-2015 Principles of Econometrics (Undergraduate Course)

Executive MPA/MPP Teaching

2017-2018 Development Economics
2016-2017 Development Economics
Mathematics & Statistics
2015-2016 Empirical Methods for Public Policy

Teaching Awards

Awarded 2015 LSE Class Teacher Award
Nominated for 2015 LSE Students' Union Student-Led Teaching Excellence Award

RELEVANT POSITIONS HELD:

2014-present Research Assistant to Professor Robin Burgess
2016-2017 Teaching Fellow, London School of Economics
2015 Research Assistant to Professor Lord Nicholas Stern
2015 Research Assistant to Professor Balazs Szentes
2009-2012 Economist, Development Finance, Climate & Energy Team, HM Treasury
2009 Research Intern, UK National Commission for UNESCO
2008-2009 Research Intern, United Nations Development Programme
2007-2008 Strategy Consultant, Accenture Development Partnerships & Strategy Practice

HONORS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS:

2018 Conservation International PhD Student Grant for Impact Evaluations in Climate Change and Tropical Conservation, "Strategic Fire Setting: Evidence From 100,000 Forest Fires in Indonesia"
2017 Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Countries (Co-PI), "Evaluating the Impacts of the Dar es Salaam BRT System", with G. Bryan, M. Morten & B. Siddiqi
2016 3ie Development Priority Window (Co-PI), "Evaluating the Impacts of the Dar es Salaam BRT System", with G. Bryan, M. Morten & B. Siddiqi
2012-2016 Economic & Social Research Council PhD Studentship
2016 Research funding from the Global Research Program on Spatial Development of Cities, funded by the World Bank Multi Donor Trust Fund on Sustainable Urbanization and supported by the UK Department for International Development

PRESENTATIONS

- 2018 CREDIT Development Seminar Series, University of Nottingham
Centre for Evaluation of Development Policy Seminar, Institute for Fiscal Studies
North Eastern Universities Development Conference, Cornell University
Oxford Development Economics Workshop, Oxford University
- 2017 TCD/LSE/CEPR Development Workshop, Trinity College Dublin
European Association for Southeast Asian Studies, Oxford University
World Bank Transport and ICT Impact Evaluation Workshop, Lisbon
Spatial Economics Research Centre Annual Conference, LSE
- 2016 Conference on Urban and Regional Economics, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia
3ie Grantee Inception Workshop, New Delhi
European Development Research Network PhD Workshop, Université libre de Bruxelles
North Eastern Universities Development Conference, MIT

REFEREE SERVICE

Journal of Urban Economics, American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, Economica

LANGUAGES

English (native), Italian (intermediate)

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS:

“In Harm's Way? Infrastructure Investments and the Persistence of Coastal Cities” (Job Market Paper)

Coasts contain a disproportionate share of the world's population, reflecting historical advantages, but environmental change threatens a reversal of coastal fortune in the coming decades as natural disasters intensify and sea levels rise. This paper considers whether large infrastructure investments should continue to favour coastal areas. I use a dynamic spatial equilibrium framework and detailed georeferenced data from Vietnam to examine this issue and find evidence that coastal favouritism has significant costs. Road investments concentrated in coastal regions between 2000 and 2010 had positive returns but would have been outperformed by allocations concentrated further inland even in the absence of sea level rise. Future inundation renders the status quo significantly less efficient. Under a central sea level rise scenario, welfare gains 72% higher could have been achieved by a foresighted allocation avoiding the most vulnerable regions. The results highlight the importance of accounting for the dynamic effects of environmental change in deciding where to allocate infrastructure today.

“Strategic Fire Setting: Evidence from 100,000 Forest Fires in Indonesia”, with Robin Burgess & Benjamin Olken

Fire is often used for land clearing in the developing world, but once set fires may burn out of control. This creates a local environmental externality: if others own the area burned by a spreading fire, those who set the fires may not internalize the full damage risk. We explore how failing to internalize this risk drives the extensive forest fires in Indonesia, which burned over 2.5 million hectares in 2015 alone. We merge 15 years of daily satellite data over time and space to construct, for over 100,000 unique fires, the point of ignition and the extent to which each fire spread. We exploit the fact that fires are more likely to spread on windy days, combined with maps of property boundaries in the entire Indonesian forest system, to identify

areas where fires are more likely to spread to others' property, to identify strategic fire setting behavior. We estimate that fires would be reduced by between 22 and 48 percent if the full local damage risk was internalized. Fire setters do distinguish among whose land they would burn: for example, fire setters seem to avoid the risk of burning national parks, which is most likely to lead to government sanctions. Voluntary certification systems, in particular the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), reduce the overall use of fires but do not affect the degree to which owners internalize the costs of fires on neighbors. Similarly, we find much less use of fire in local election years, but this affects the level of fires, not the degree to which property owners internalize the fire externality. The results suggest penalizing owners for the damage spreading fires cause to others, for example through an effective tort system or enforcement regime, could considerably reduce forest fires.

“Why do People Stay Poor?”, with Oriana Bandiera, Robin Burgess, Maitreesh Ghatak & Anton Heil

There are two views as to why poverty persists. The poverty traps view emphasizes how individuals with identical underlying parameters can end up with different standards of living because they face unequal access to opportunities. The convergence view emphasizes how individuals end up with different standards of living because they have the same opportunities but different underlying parameters. We use data collected for a randomized control trial of an asset transfer program on 23,000 individuals from across the village wealth distribution and across four waves between 2007 and 2011 in Bangladesh to differentiate between these two views. We find evidence that is consistent with the poverty traps view. We identify a threshold level of capital such that individuals with initial capital below the threshold remain trapped in poverty whereas those above move beyond the poverty threshold and escape poverty. For individuals close to the poverty threshold the asset transfer is sufficient for them to successfully take on a new and more remunerative occupational activity (livestock rearing) whereas for those further away they fail to do this and fall back into poverty where they remain reliant on itinerant wage labor. We use data from control villages to show that (i) there is a missing mass around the threshold, and (ii) differences in individual productivity or random shocks to productive assets cannot explain the response to the program. We test three possible mechanisms underlying the trap - nutritional, behavioural and technological, and find evidence only for the last. We discuss the implications of having to cross a poverty threshold to escape poverty for anti-poverty policies.

“Economic Conditions in Early Childhood and the Inter-Generational Transmission of Poverty”, with Oriana Bandiera, Robin Burgess, Mushtaque Chowdhury & Imran Rasul

The economic conditions children experience during their early years can have permanent impacts on cognitive and non-cognitive traits that shape their outcomes later in life. This might be key to explaining the persistence of poverty across generations. The aim of this project is to establish whether this chain can be broken. This will be achieved via a large-scale RCT designed to evaluate an innovative anti-poverty program targeting women in the poorest areas of Bangladesh. We build on our existing work demonstrating that this program transformed the economic lives of the beneficiaries from 2007-2014, in order to determine whether these benefits carried over to the next generation. We aim to track all the children of the beneficiaries who were aged 0-10 at treatment date, test their outcomes against those of their counterparts in control villages and assess how the effect of treatment depends on their age at exposure to the program. The findings will shed light on the dynamics of poverty and inform cost-benefit analyses of anti-poverty programs. *Endline survey in progress (June - October 2018)*

“Evaluating the Dar es Salaam Bus Rapid Transit System”, with Gharad Bryan, Melanie Morten & Bilal Siddiqi

Midline survey complete (October 2017)