

# Marlon SEROR

Last update: November 7, 2019

[marlonseror@gmail.com](mailto:marlonseror@gmail.com)  
<https://marlonseror.github.io>

## Contact information

Paris School of Economics  
48, boulevard Jourdan  
75014 Paris, France

University of Bristol, School of Economics  
12 Priory Road  
BS8 1UQ, Bristol, U.K.

## PSE placement officer

David Margolis  
[david.margolis@psemail.eu](mailto:david.margolis@psemail.eu)  
+33 (0)1 80 52 18 58

Assistant: Véronique Guillotin  
[veronique.guillotin@psemail.eu](mailto:veronique.guillotin@psemail.eu)  
+33 (0)1 80 52 17 13

## CURRENT POSITION

---

2017– Vice-Chancellor's Fellow, School of Economics, **University of Bristol**, U.K.

## RESEARCH FIELDS

---

**Primary:** Development economics, Urban economics

**Secondary:** Labour economics, Economic history, Economic geography

## REFERENCES

---

### Prof. Richard B. Freeman

Harvard University and NBER  
[freeman@nber.org](mailto:freeman@nber.org)  
Assistant: J. Amadeo-Holl, [jennifer@nber.org](mailto:jennifer@nber.org)

### Prof. Flore Gubert (advisor)

Director, Dépt. Société, IRD  
Affiliate Professor, PSE  
[gubert@diad.pr.fr](mailto:gubert@diad.pr.fr)

### Prof. Stephan Heblich

Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy  
University of Toronto  
[stephan.heblich@utoronto.ca](mailto:stephan.heblich@utoronto.ca)

### Prof. Clement Imbert

Department of Economics  
University of Warwick  
[c.imbert@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:c.imbert@warwick.ac.uk)

## PAPERS

---

JOB MARKET PAPER—[LATEST VERSION](#)

**Industrial clusters in the long run: Evidence from Million-Rouble plants in China**, joint with S. Heblich, H. Xu, and Y. Zylberberg.

## ONGOING RESEARCH

**Migrants and Firms: Evidence from China** (*submitted*; [Latest Version](#), [Working Paper](#)), joint with C. Imbert, Y. Zhang, and Y. Zylberberg.

**Random river: Trade and rent extraction in imperial China.**

**Cultural Persistence through Revolutions**, joint with A. Alesina, D. Yang, Y. You, and W. Zeng.

**Migrants' Beliefs and Investment** ([Working Paper](#)).

## EDUCATION

---

2013–2017	PhD in ECONOMICS, <b>Paris School of Economics</b> and <b>École Normale Supérieure</b> , Paris. Dissertation: “Three Essays on the Economics of Migration”   Supervisor: Flore GUBERT <i>Jury</i> : Sylvie Démurger (CNRS, Lyon), Richard B. Freeman (Harvard, NBER), Marc Gurgand (CNRS, PSE), Alice Mesnard (City U. of London)
2016–2017	Associate of the Department of Economics at <b>Harvard University</b> , U.S.A. Visiting Scholar at the <b>National Bureau of Economic Research</b> , U.S.A.
2012	Master's degree in ECONOMICS with distinction <i>magna cum laude</i> , <b>Paris School of Economics</b> , Paris Graduate student exchange, Department of Economics, <b>UC Berkeley</b> , U.S.A.
2010	Master's degree in ECONOMICS with <i>Distinction</i> , <b>SOAS, University of London</b> , U.K.
2008	Master's degree in PUBLIC POLICY, <b>Sciences Po</b> , Paris
2007	Admitted to <b>École Normale Supérieure</b> , Paris (through a national competitive exam)

## TEACHING AND WORK EXPERIENCE

---

2018–	Founder and organizer of <i>Flickonomics</i> , the economics film club of the <b>University of Bristol</b> , U.K. Financed by two grants from the Teaching Innovation Fund.
2014–2015	Mathematics and Statistics, <b>Sciences Po</b> , Paris Course director (design of syllabus, teaching materials, and exams)
2013–2015	Consultant, <b>World Bank</b> , Cambodia and Lao P.D.R. Research on productivity, the labor market, cross-border trade, gender
2013–2015	Consultant, <b>China Development Research Foundation</b> , China Research on city clusters, migration

## RESEARCH

---

### **Industrial clusters in the long run: Evidence from Million-Rouble plants in China**

(JOB MARKET PAPER—[Latest Version](#)), joint with Stephan Heblich (Toronto), Hao Xu (CCB) and Yanos Zylberberg (Bristol).

This paper exploits a short-lived cooperation program between the U.S.S.R. and China, which led to the construction of 156 “Million-Rouble plants” in the 1950s. We isolate exogenous variation in location decisions due to the relative position of allied and enemy airbases and study the long-run impact of these factories on local economic activity. While the “156” program accelerated industrialization in treated counties until the end of the command-economy era, this significant productivity advantage fully eroded in the subsequent period. We explore the nature of local spillovers responsible for this pattern, and provide evidence that treated counties are overspecialized and far less innovative. There is a large concentration of establishments along the production chain of the Million-Rouble plants, which limits technological spillovers across industries.

*Presented at the 2019 Conference on Urban and Regional Economics (CURE).*

**Migrants and Firms: Evidence from China** (*submitted*; [Latest Version](#), [Working Paper](#)), joint with Clément Imbert (Warwick), Yifan Zhang (CUHK) and Yanos Zylberberg (Bristol).

This paper provides causal evidence on the effect of rural-urban migration on urban production patterns. We use longitudinal data on Chinese manufacturing firms between 2001 and 2006, and exploit exogenous variation in rural-urban migration due to agricultural price shocks for identification. We find that following a migrant inflow, labor productivity decreases sharply and remains low in the longer run; firms adopt labor-intensive products and innovate less. Within industry and location, low-productivity firms expand the most, so that aggregate labor productivity falls even faster. We quantify the contribution of migration on productivity within a location and its dispersion across urban destinations.

*Presented at: Harvard Cities and Development Workshop (2019), NBER Summer Institute (2019), Yale Agri-Devo Conference (2017), Harvard China Economy Seminar (2016).*

### **Random river: Trade and rent extraction in imperial China.** (Ongoing research)

This paper exploits exogenous changes in the course of the Yellow River in China as shocks to transportation costs. I assess the effect of market access, which I instrument with a measure based on exogenous course changes, on population from dynastic histories and local gazetteers spanning 2,000 years. A theoretical model allows me to characterize the relationship between trade, economic activity, and population. I find that lower transportation costs spur economic growth in the short run, but this significant productivity advantage fully dissipates in the long run. I explore the mechanisms behind this pattern and provide evidence that a large share of the decline is due to an increase in taxation. Rent extraction concentrates, with a delay, on highly productive areas, which stifles growth in the long run.

**Cultural Persistence through Revolutions.** (Ongoing research), joint with Alberto Alesina (Harvard), David Yang (Harvard), Yang You (Harvard) and Weihong Zeng (Xi'an Jiaotong).

Does intergenerational cultural transmission hinder social mobility? We investigate the interaction between cultural transmission and social mobility in the contexts of China’s Land Reform in the 1950s and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. These two revolutions represent two of the most extreme episodes in human history that aim to eradicate inequality in wealth and education, to shut off formal channels of intergenerational transmission such as inheritance and schooling, and to eliminate cultural differences among the population. Using newly digitized archival data and linked contemporary household surveys and census, we show that the revolutions were effective in homogenizing the population in one generation. However, despite the extraordinary effort to foster mobility, the intergenerational transmission of cul-

tural values occurred anyway, and two generations later, the descendants of the pre-revolution economic elites are significantly richer and much better off today than the descendants of the pre-revolution poor.

#### **Migrants' Beliefs and Investment.** ([Working Paper](#))

Migration increases sending households' capacity to invest but introduces additional information asymmetry between household members. In this paper, I establish a new stylized fact: Migrants systematically overestimate assets that they typically invest in and that are held by their households. This is shown using novel data with matched reports from Senegalese migrants and their own households of origin. I find empirical support for a self-selection mechanism: migrants are more likely to sort into investment, the more optimistic they are about their households' trustworthiness, and reject alternative interpretations based on behavioral biases. I finally assess the extent of missing investments: Selection out of investment is large and severely reduces the developmental impact of migration.

*An earlier version was awarded the Grand Prix (first prize) of the International Competition of Master's Degree Theses in Economics and Finance.*

## POLICY REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

---

- |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2018 | <b>Glass Barriers: Constraints to Women's Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade Publications in Cambodia and Lao PDR.</b> In P. Brenton and M. Bartley Johns (Eds.), <i>How Trade Helps Reduce Poverty, and What More Can Be Done</i> . World Bank and World Trade Organization. Joint with Julian Clarke (World Bank) and Richard Record (World Bank). |
| 2017 | <b>Glass Barriers: Constraints to Women's Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade in Cambodia and Lao PDR,</b> <i>World Bank Policy Research Working Paper WPS8249</i> . Joint with Julian Clarke (World Bank) and Richard Record (World Bank).                                                                                                           |
| 2014 | <b>Lao PDR Investment Climate Assessment 2014: Policy uncertainty in the midst of a natural resources boom.</b> Joint with Richard Record (World Bank), Konesawang Nghardsaysone (World Bank) and George Clarke (Texas A&M).                                                                                                                     |
| 2014 | Background paper for the <b>Lao Development Report 2014: Expanding Productive Employment for Broad-Based Growth</b> . World Bank.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

---

2018	Research grant	BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant Archival research and collection of data from county gazetteers, for “Industrial clusters in the long run: Evidence from Million-Rouble plants in China
2018	Teaching grant	Teaching Innovation Fund for creating and organizing <i>Flickonomics</i> , the economics film club of the University of Bristol
2017	Research grant	Two <i>Ouvrir la Science Économique</i> grants, PSE for the “Million-Rouble plants” project for “Revolution or Persistence? Evidence from China’s Land Reform and Cultural Revolution
2016	Fellowship	Arthur Sachs (Harvard University), managed by the Fulbright Commission grant to visit Harvard University for one year
2015	Research grant	DGEF, Ministère de l’Intérieur for the “Migrant Remittances, Information Asymmetry, and Development (MIRIAD)” randomized control trial project, joint with Flore Gubert (IRD, PSE) and Jean-Noë Senne (Paris-Sud)
2015	Research grant	CEPREMAP for the “MIRIAD” project
2015	Scholarship	International Ph.D. Student Attachment Programme, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University grant to visit the Hong Kong Polytechnic University for 6 months
2013	Award	<i>Grand Prix</i> (first prize) of the International Competition of Master’s Degree Theses in Economics and Finance
2012	Scholarship	Fellowship for international study at UC Berkeley graduate student exchange program with the Department of Economics

## INVITED SEMINARS

---

2020	GREThA, Université de Bordeaux, France
2019	Université de Cergy-Pontoise, France CERDI, Université Clermont Auvergne, France ENS Lyon (GATE), France Institut Convergences Migrations, Paris School of Economics and CEPIL, France School of Geography, University of Bristol, U.K. Paris School of Economics, France
2017	Université Paris-Dauphine, France Department of Economics, City University of London, U.K.
2016	China Economy Seminar, Harvard University, U.S.
2015	DIAL (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement/Université Paris-Dauphine), France Lingnan University, Hong Kong, China Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China

## CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

---

- 2019    Cities & Development Workshop, Harvard University, U.S.  
European Historical Economics Society meeting, Paris School of Economics, France  
India-China Conference, Warwick University, U.K.  
Industrial Organization and Spatial Economics, Higher Economic School, Russia
- 2018    GREThA International Conference on Economic Development, Université de Bordeaux, France  
Centre for the Study of African Economies Conference: Economic Development in Africa, Oxford University, U.K.
- 2017    Oxford Development Economics Workshop, Oxford University, U.K.  
Asian Meeting of the Econometric Society, Chinese University of Hong Kong, China  
Warwick Economics Ph.D. Conference, University of Warwick, U.K.  
Yale Conference on Agriculture and Development, Yale University, U.S.A.
- 2016    Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference, MIT, U.S.A.  
China Economics Summer Institute, HKUST, Hong Kong, China  
PODER Summer School, Université de Namur, Belgium  
International Conference on Migration and Development, EUI, Italy  
India-China Conference, Paris School of Economics, France  
DIAL–GREThA Workshop, Université Paris-Dauphine, France  
Spring Meeting of Young Economists, Lisbon, Portugal  
Royal Economic Society Junior Symposium, University of Sussex, U.K.  
Midwest International Economic Development Conference, University of Minnesota
- 2015    J–PAL Conference on Field Experiments in Labor Economics and Social Policies, Paris, France  
Centre for the Study of African Economies Conference: Economic Development in Africa, Oxford University, U.K.  
American Economic Association / ASSA, Boston, U.S.A.  
European Development Research Network Ph.D. Workshop, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany  
Annual Meeting of the French Economic Association, Lyon, France  
Conference “Comparative and Multi-sited Approaches to International Migration”, INED, France

## SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES

---

- 2018–    Fellow, **Institut Convergences Migration**, Paris  
2017–    Affiliated researcher, **Cabot Institute**, U.K.  
Affiliated researcher, **Jean Golding Institute**  
Affiliated researcher, **DIAL (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement/Université Paris-Dauphine)**, Paris
- REFeree    *Journal of Urban Economics, Migration Studies, Journal of Development*  
SERVICE    *Economics, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Economica, Journal of African Economies, Journal of Regional and Urban Economics / Revue d'Économie Régionale et Urbaine.*

## LANGUAGES & SKILLS

---

French (native), English (bilingual), Chinese (fluent in Mandarin, intermediate in Cantonese), German (fluent), Arabic (intermediate), Vietnamese (intermediate)

Stata, Python, ArcGIS, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X