

# Marlon SEROR

Last update: May 4, 2021

[seror.marlon@uqam.ca](mailto:seror.marlon@uqam.ca)  
<https://marlonseror.github.io>

## Contact information

ESG-UQAM  
Département des Sciences Économiques  
C.P. 8888, succursale A  
Montréal, QC, H3C 3P8, Canada

## CURRENT POSITION

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2020– Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, **Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)**, Canada

## PAST POSITIONS

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2017–2020 Vice-Chancellor's Fellow, School of Economics, **University of Bristol**, U.K.

## RESEARCH FIELDS

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**Primary:** Development economics, Urban economics  
**Secondary:** Labor economics, Economic history, Economic geography

## REFERENCES

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**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 (Ph.D. advisor)**  
Director, Dépt. Société, IRD  
Affiliate Professor, PSE  
[gubert@dial.prd.fr](mailto:gubert@dial.prd.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

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### ONGOING RESEARCH

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

**Persistence through Revolutions** ([Working Paper](#)), joint with A. Alesina, D. Yang, Y. You, and W. Zeng.

**Industrial clusters in the long run: Evidence from Million-Rouble plants in China** ([Latest Version](#)), joint with S. Heblich, H. Xu, and Y. Zylberberg.

**Random river: Trade and rent extraction in imperial China** ([Latest Version](#)).

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

## EDUCATION

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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

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2018–2020	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 Professor/Lecturer (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

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**Migrants and Firms: Evidence from China** (Conditionally accepted, *American Economic Review*; [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).*

**Persistence through Revolutions** ([Working Paper](#)), joint with Alberto Alesina (Harvard), David Yang (Harvard), Yang You (Harvard) and Weihong Zeng (Xi'an Jiaotong).

Can efforts to eradicate inequality in wealth and education eliminate intergenerational persistence of socioeconomic status? The Chinese Communist Revolution in the 1950s and Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 aimed to do exactly that. Using newly digitized archival records and contemporary census and household survey data, we show that the revolutions were effective in homogenizing the population economically in the short run. However, the pattern of inequality that characterized the pre-revolution generation re-emerges today. Almost half a century after the revolutions, individuals whose grandparents belonged to the pre-revolution elite earn 16 percent more and have completed more than 11 percent additional years of schooling than those from non-elite households. In addition, individuals with pre-revolution elite grandparents hold different values: they are less averse to inequality, more individualistic, more pro-market, and more likely to see hard work as critical to success. Through intergenerational transmission of values, socioeconomic conditions thus survived one of the most aggressive attempts to eliminate differences in the population and to foster mobility.

*Presented at the NBER Economics of Mobility meeting (2020).*

*Media coverage: [NBER Digest](#).*

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

([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), Harvard Cities and Development Workshop (2020).*

**Random river: Trade and rent extraction in imperial China** ([Latest Version](#)).

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.

#### **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

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| 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

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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

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- 2021    Universität Bayreuth, Germany  
         China Economy Seminar, Harvard University, U.S.
- 2020    University of York, U.K.  
         DIAL (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement/Université Paris-Dauphine),  
         France  
         Göttingen University, Germany
- 2019    Université de Cergy-Pontoise, France  
         CERDI, Université Clermont Auvergne, France  
         ENS Lyon (GATE), France  
         Institut Convergences Migrations, Paris School of Economics and CEPPI, 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

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- 2020 Cities & Development Workshop, Harvard University, U.S.
- 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

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- 2020– Honorary staff, **University of Bristol**, U.K.
- 2018– Fellow, **Institut Convergences Migration**, Paris
- 2017– Affiliated researcher, **DIAL (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement/Université Paris-Dauphine)**, Paris
- 2017–2020 Affiliated researcher, **Cabot Institute**, U.K.  
Affiliated researcher, **Jean Golding Institute**
- REFeree SERVICE *Journal of Development Studies, Regional Studies, Economics of Transition, Journal of Economic Geography, Journal of Urban Economics, Migration Studies, Journal of Development 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

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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