

Fabio Blasutto
Place Montesquieu 3/L2.06.01
1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Belgium
+32 489545996

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Department of Economics
Northwestern University
2211 Campus Drive
Evanston, IL 60208-2600

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a 3rd year Ph.D. student at the *Institut de Recherches Économiques et Sociales (IRES)* of UCLouvain, Belgium. My advisors are Prof. David de la Croix and Prof. Fabio Mariani.

I would hereby like to confirm my interest in joining the PhD school of Northwestern University as a visiting student during the period September to December 2019 with Prof. Matthias Doepke.

My research interest cover family economics, demographic economics and economic history. The first chapter of my dissertation focuses on understanding the different mating behavior observed by education in the USA: single college graduate are relatively less likely to start a cohabitation rather than a marriage compared to the rest of the population, and they are also more likely to experience the transition from cohabitation to marriage. Using a structural dynamic model of partnership choice where agents learn about the quality of their match, I find that for college graduates cohabitation is more of an investment good, used to gather information about the partner that they eventually marry, while for the others informal cohabitation is more of a consumption good, used as a cheap substitute for marriage.

During my visiting at Northwestern University I would focus on the development of my first chapter, deepening my understanding about how economic incentives shape the choice between marriage and informal cohabitation. In particular, I plan to study the role of the laws governing separation and divorce: the cost of dissolution and how this is split can not only make more or less costly the transition to singlehood, but they can also modify the efficiency of risk sharing within the couple through a variation in the degree of commitment. Understanding how different people self select into two types of partnership with different rules governing dissolution is the base for designing welfare enhancing policies.

In light of the above, I am confident that staying one semester at Northwestern University would prove extremely insightful for the advancement of my doctoral dissertation. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Fabio Blasutto