

Marlon SEROR

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Contact information

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Département des Sciences Économiques
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CURRENT POSITION

2025–	Associate Professor, Department of Economics, <i>Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)</i> , Canada
2020–2025	Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, <i>Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)</i> , Canada

OTHER AFFILIATIONS

Fellow, <i>RFBerlin</i> , Germany	2025–
Member, <i>Centre on Population Dynamics</i> , Canada	2025–
Co-founder, <i>Développement économique et inégalités des territoires (DEIT) research team</i> , Canada	2023–
Affiliate Researcher, <i>DIAL (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique/Institut de Recherche pour le Développement/Université Paris-Dauphine)</i> , France	2018–
Fellow, <i>Institut Convergences Migrations</i> , France	2018–2025

PAST POSITIONS

2017–2020	Vice-Chancellor's Fellow, <i>University of Bristol</i> , U.K.
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RESEARCH FIELDS

Primary:	Urban Economics, Development Economics
Secondary:	Labor Economics, Economic History, Economic Geography

REFERENCES

Pr. Richard B. Freeman Harvard University and NBER freeman@nber.org Assistant: J. Amadeo-Holl, jennifer@nber.org	Pr. Flore Gubert (advisor) Research Director, IRD Affiliate Professor, PSE gubert@dialog.dial.pr.fr
Pr. Stephan Heblich Department of Economics University of Toronto stephan.heblich@utoronto.ca	Pr. Clément Imbert Department of Economics Sciences Po clement.imbert@sciencespo.fr

ACADEMIC RESEARCH

PUBLICATIONS

Migrants and Firms: Evidence from China (*American Economic Review*, 112 (6): 1885-1914, 2022; [Latest Version](#), [Appendix](#)), joint with C. Imbert, Y. Zhang, and Y. Zylberberg.

WORKING PAPERS

Industrial clusters in the long run: Evidence from Million-Rouble plants in China (Conditionally Accepted, *Review of Economic Studies*; [Latest Version](#), [Appendix](#), [NBER WP](#)), joint with S. Heblich, H. Xu, and Y. Zylberberg.

Persistence Despite Revolutions (R&R, *Review of Economic Studies*; [Latest Version](#), [NBER WP](#)), joint with A. Alesina, D. Yang, Y. You, and W. Zeng.

Floating population: migration with(out) family and Chinese economic development ([Latest Version](#), [CEPR WP](#)), joint with C. Imbert, J. Monras, and Y. Zylberberg.

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

Migrants' Beliefs and Investment ([WP](#)).

EDUCATION

2013–2017	PhD in ECONOMICS, Paris School of Economics and École Normale Supérieure , 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 Harvard University , U.S.A. Visiting Scholar at the National Bureau of Economic Research , U.S.A.
2015	International Ph.D. Student Attachment Programme at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University , China
2010–2012	Master's degree in ECONOMICS with distinction <i>magna cum laude</i> , Paris School of Economics , Paris Graduate student exchange, Department of Economics, University of California, Berkeley , U.S.A.
2009–2010	Master's degree in ECONOMICS with <i>Distinction</i> , SOAS, University of London , U.K.
2005–2010	Bachelor's in CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CIVILISATION with <i>Mention Bien</i> , Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales , France
2006–2008	Master's degree in PUBLIC POLICY, Sciences Po , Paris
2007	Admitted to École Normale Supérieure , Paris (through a national competitive exam)

WORK EXPERIENCE

UQAM, Canada 2020–
Courses taught: Development Economics (grad), Dissertation writing (grad), International Trade (undergrad), Microeconomics (undergrad), International Economic Relations (undergrad).

University of Bristol, U.K. 2017–2020
Vice-Chancellor's Fellow (post-doc): Research in economics — please refer to [Section Research](#) below; founder and organiser of *Flickonomics*, the economics film club of the University of Bristol, financed by two grants from the Teaching Innovation Fund.

- Harvard University** and **NBER**, U.S.A. 2016–2017
 Arthur Sachs Fellowship (paid by Harvard University).
 Status: *Associate of the Department of Economics* (Harvard University) and *Visiting Scholar* (National Bureau of Economic Research).
- Sciences Po (Paris)**, *Europe Asia Campus*, Le Havre, France 2014–2015
 Professor (design of syllabus, course material, and exams; teaching) of mathematics (24 hours) and statistics (96 hours).
- École Normale Supérieure** and **Paris School of Economics**, France 2013–2016
 Paid doctoral contract with École Normale Supérieure.
- World Bank**, Cambodia and Lao P.D.R. 2013–2015
 Consultant (298 days).
- Cambodia and Lao P.D.R. 2013–2015
 Research: Desk research, qualitative field research, survey design (original strategy to establish a sampling frame and extract a representative sample of the population), questionnaire design, data analysis, and final report; study financed by the [Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality](#).
 Operational: Project proposal, budget design, hiring of enumerators, coordination with local counterparts (ministries, border checkpoints, and village chiefs), coordination with the survey team, managing of enumerators in both countries.
- Cambodia 2014
 Firm data analysis and writing for the *Cambodia Investment Climate Assessment (2014)*.
- Lao P.D.R. 2013
 Research: Data analysis and writing for the *Lao Development Report 2014*; design, analysis, and writing of the background research paper “Labor Market Structural Transformation” (wage evolution decomposition, assessment of sectoral mobility magnitude and impact, urbanisation and migration), and for the 3rd *Lao PDR Investment Climate Assessment (2014)* (analysis of firm data on business performance and challenges, international comparisons using micro and macro data, and analysis of qualitative data that I had collected).
 Operational: Coordination with local counterparts (ministries and Lao Statistics Bureau), and qualitative interviews with experts and high-ranking officials.
- China Development Research Foundation**, Beijing, China 2013
 Consultant (320 hours). Production of a report on city clusters and on rural-urban migration (“floating population”) in China.
- Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique**, France 2012
 Research assistant (1 month). Research on the [impact of land administration programs on agricultural productivity and rural development](#) (in terms of agricultural productivity, environmental sustainability, health, etc.). Project led by Karen Macours, Jérémy Gignoux, and Liam Wren-Lewis (École d’Économie de Paris, CNRS).
- Innovations for Poverty Action**, Morocco 2011
 3-month internship.
 Research: Implementation of a survey on savings behaviour in rural and urban areas, as part of the [Microsavings & Payments Innovation Initiative](#). Qualitative and quantitative

data collection, econometric analysis, final report.

Operational: Hiring of enumerators, budget, coordination with government (*Ministère de l'Intérieur*, local authorities, village chiefs), and management of enumerators in the field.

Peking University, Beijing, China 2009

Professor (design of syllabus, course material, and exams; teaching) of French language and literature (120 hours).

Beijing Language and Culture University Press, China 2009

Translator (50 days) of a Chinese language textbook.

Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI), Paris, France 2008

1-month internship. Organisation of the 1st **World Policy Conference** (international conference on global governance).

Le Point, weekly magazine, Paris, France 2008

1-month internship. Investigation journalism on **economic** and **environmental** issues.

French Embassy, Hanoi, Vietnam 2007–2008

4-month internship. Assessment of cooperation and development projects presented by French organisations in Vietnam. Organisation of the French Presidency of the Council of European Union in Vietnam.

Bureau of Foreign Affairs, Hué, Vietnam 2007

2-month internship. Organisation with the local government of the 27th *Assemblée générale de l'Association Internationale des Maires Francophones*.

École Normale Supérieure, Paris, France 2007–2013

Élève fonctionnaire stagiaire: Temporary civil servant contract (paid to study). Admitted through a **national competitive exam**.

RESEARCH

Migrants and Firms: Evidence from China (*American Economic Review*, 112 (6): 1885-1914, 2022; [Paper](#), [Appendix](#)), joint with Clément Imbert (Warwick), Yifan Zhang (CUHK) and Yanos Zylberberg (Bristol).

How does rural-urban migration shape urban production in developing countries? We use longitudinal data on Chinese manufacturing firms between 2000 and 2006, and exploit exogenous variation in rural-urban migration induced by agricultural income shocks for identification. We find that, when immigration increases, manufacturing production becomes more labor-intensive and productivity declines. We investigate the reorganization of production using patent applications and product information. We show that rural-urban migration induces both labor-oriented technological change and the adoption of labor-intensive product varieties.

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

Media coverage: [VoxDev](#) (2022).

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

(Conditionally Accepted, *Review of Economic Studies*; [Latest Version](#), [NBER WP](#)), joint with Stephan Heblich (Toronto), Hao Xu (CCB) and Yanos Zylberberg (Bristol).

We study the impact of large, successful manufacturing plants on other local producers in China, focusing on “Million-Rouble Plants” built in the 1950s during a brief alliance with the U.S.S.R. The ephemeral geopolitical situation and the locations of allied and enemy airbases provide exogenous variation in plant siting. We find a boom-and-bust pattern: Counties hosting these plants were 80% more productive than control counties in 1982 but 20% less productive by 2010. This decline reflects the performance of local establishments, which exhibit low productivity, limited innovation, and high markup. Specialization hindered spillovers, preventing the emergence of new clusters and local entrepreneurship.

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

Persistence Despite Revolutions (R&R, *Review of Economic Studies*; [Latest Version](#), [NBER WP](#)), 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 and Cultural Revolution aimed to do exactly that. Using household survey data, as well as newly digitized archival records, 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 almost half a century after the revolutions. Individuals whose grandparents belonged to the pre-revolution elite earn 14 percent more income and have completed more than 11 percent additional years of schooling than those from the rest of the population. We find evidence that human capital (such as knowledge, skills, and values) has been transmitted within the elite families, and social capital embodied in kinship networks have survived the revolutions. These channels allow the pre-revolution elite to rebound after the revolutions, and their socioeconomic status persists despite one of the most aggressive attempts to eliminate differences in the population.

Presented at: NBER Economics of Mobility meeting (2020).

Media coverage: [NBER Digest](#), [The Economist](#) (2020), [The Economist](#) (2022), [Forbes](#) (2022), [InequalityTalks](#) (2023).

Floating population: migration with(out) family and Chinese economic development ([Latest Version](#), [CEPR WP](#)), joint with Joan Monràs (UPF), Clément Imbert (Sciences Po), Yifan Zhang (CUHK) and Yanos Zylberberg (Bristol).

In developing countries, rural workers who migrate to urban areas face large monetary and non-monetary costs, which gives them an incentive to leave family behind. This option is absent from standard equilibrium models of migration. Using Chinese data from 2000 to 2005,

we develop and estimate the first quantitative spatial model in which workers can choose whether to migrate, whether to bring their family, where to go, and how to allocate their consumption across locations. We show that the ability of rural workers to become a “floating population” that consumes partly at origin through remittances was essential for Chinese economic development.

Presented at: VDEV/CEPR/BREAD Seminar (2025).

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 to isolate variation in the natural distribution of economic centers across space. I compute time-varying trade costs and collect original data on population and taxation from dynastic histories and local gazetteers spanning 2,000 years. This allows me to assess the effect of exogenous variation in market access on population density and resource extraction. I find that the changes in connectedness have two opposite effects. First, they induce a very large increase in the level and concentration of economic activity in the shorter run. Second, they trigger a large increase in rent capture by local elites, which severely mitigates the concentration effect in the longer run.

Migrants’ Beliefs and Investment ([WP](#)).

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

2023	L’évaluation des impacts socio-économiques de la mise en valeur du Lieu historique national du Canal-de-Lachine , report for Parks Canada. Joint with Kristian Behrens and Florian Mayneris.
2018	Glass Barriers: Constraints to Women’s Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade Publications in Cambodia and Lao PDR . 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	Glass Barriers: Constraints to Women’s Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade in Cambodia and Lao PDR , <i>World Bank Policy Research Working Paper WPS8249</i> . Joint with Julian Clarke (World Bank) and Richard Record (World Bank).
2014	Lao PDR Investment Climate Assessment 2014: Policy uncertainty in the midst of a natural resources boom . Joint with Richard Record (World Bank), Konesawang Nghardsaysone (World Bank) and George Clarke (Texas A&M).
2014	Background paper for the Lao Development Report 2014: Expanding Productive Employment for Broad-Based Growth . World Bank.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

2023	Research grant	CEPREMAP Digitization of historical narratives to map and study the effects of the Underground Railroad, joint with Lukas Althoff (Stanford/Yale) and Stephan Heblich (Toronto)
2022	Research grant	SSHRC/CRSH Migrants, Cities, and Development: Evidence from China and Ethiopia, joint with Simon Franklin (QMUL), Clément Imbert (Sciences Po), and Yanos Zylberberg (Bristol)
2022	Research grant	IGC Migrants and City Growth: Evidence from Ethiopia, joint with Simon Franklin (QMUL), Clément Imbert (Sciences Po) et Yanos Zylberberg (Bristol)
2021	Research grant	SSHRC/CRSH Neighborhood change and businesses: multinationals, nightlife, and noise, joint with Kristian Behrens (UQAM), Julien Martin (UQAM), Florian Mayneris (UQAM), Amine Ouazad (HEC Montréal), and Farid Toubal (Paris-Dauphine)
2021	Research grant	CEPREMAP Creation of a land classification algorithm using satellite imagery, joint with Clément Imbert (Sciences Po), Xiaolun Yu (Reading), and Yanos Zylberberg (Bristol)
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, paid by Harvard University 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-Noël 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

2025	Simon Fraser University, Canada UOttawa, Canada
2024	FGV-EESP, Brazil FGV-EPGE, Brazil UFRJ, Brazil University of Auckland, New Zealand
2023	Université Paris I, France McGill University, Canada IESR, Jinan University, China
2022	Université de Montréal, Canada SITE, Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden
2021	HEC Montréal, Canada Université Laval, Canada Université de Lille, France Universität Bayreuth, Germany China Economy Seminar, Harvard University, U.S.
2020	University of York, U.K. EHESS (cancelled due to lockdown), Paris, France GREThA (cancelled due to lockdown), Université de Bordeaux, France Georg-August Universität, Göttingen, Germany
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

- 2025 RFBerlin Migration Forum, Berlin, Germany
- 2024 CReAM/RWI Workshop on the Economics of Migration, Essen, Germany
ICDE, Aix-en-Provence, France
SED, Barcelona, Spain
- 2023 Urban Economics Association North America Meeting, Toronto, Canada
16th AFD-World Bank International Conference on Migration and Development, Boston University, U.S.A.
Welfare and Policy Conference, Bordeaux, France
- 2022 Workshop on Macroeconomic Implications of Migration, Bank of Canada and Global Migration Center, Ottawa, Canada
6th Empirical Microeconomics Workshop, Banff, Canada
Canadian Urban Economics Workshop, Canada
- 2021 China Economics Summer Institute
- 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

2021– Associate Editor, **China Economic Review**
2025– Fellow, **RFBerlin**, Germany
2025– Member, **Centre on Population Dynamics**, Canada
2018– Affiliated researcher, **DIAL (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique/Institut de Recherche pour le Développement/Université Paris-Dauphine)**, France

2018–2025 Fellow, **Institut Convergences Migrations**, France
2020–2021 Honorary staff, **University of Bristol**, U.K.
2017–2020 Affiliated researcher, **Cabot Institute**, U.K.
Affiliated researcher, **Jean Golding Institute**, U.K.

REFEREE SERVICE *Quarterly Journal of Economics, Journal of Political Economy: Microeconomics, Journal of Urban Economics, Journal of Economic Growth, Journal of Economic Geography, Journal of the European Economic Association, Journal of Development Economics, American Economic Journal: Applied, Journal of Development Studies, China Economic Review, Journal of Demographic Economics, Journal of International Economics, Bulletin of Economic Research, Economic Journal, Review of Economics and Statistics, Canadian Journal of Economics, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Economic Systems, Regional Studies, Regional Science and Urban Economics, Economics of Transition, Journal of African Economies, Migration Studies, Economica, 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), Amharic (beginner)

Stata, Python, ArcGIS, L^AT_EX