

Matteo Ruzzante

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Contact Information

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Citizenship: Italian

Fields

Primary: Development Economics, Economic History
Secondary: Industrial Organization, Public Economics

Education

Ph.D., Economics, Northwestern University (anticipated) 2026
Committee: Christopher Udry (Co-Chair), Joel Mokyr (Co-Chair), Jacopo Ponticelli
MA, Economics, Northwestern University 2021
MSc, Economics, Nova School of Business and Economics, Lisbon 2017
BSc, Economics and Management, University of Padua 2015

Teaching Experience

[Link to teaching evaluations.](#)

Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University 2023-2024
Economics of State and Local Governments
Economic Development in Africa
Teaching Assistant, Nova School of Business and Economics, Lisbon 2016-2017
Development Economics
Intermediate Macroeconomics (2X)

Research Experience

Short-Term Consultant, Development Impact (DIME), World Bank 2024-2025
Research Assistant, Prof. Dean Karlan, Northwestern University 2024-2025
Research Assistant, Prof. Christopher Udry, Northwestern University 2022-2023
Research Assistant, Prof. Erika Deserranno, Northwestern University 2022-2023
Research Assistant, DIME, World Bank 2018-2020
Research Assistant, Development Research Group, World Bank 2017
Fund Internship Program, International Monetary Fund 2017

Job Market Paper

“Price Regulation of Agricultural Technology” with Felipe Berrutti.

Regulating technology prices can facilitate diffusion yet deter innovation. In India, price controls on genetically engineered (GE) cotton seeds induced this trade-off. Leveraging the policy’s differential timing across states, we show that mandated price reductions accelerated diffusion of GE seeds among farmers. Although seed supply kept pace, innovation stalled: fewer new varieties were introduced. Using newly assembled data from experimental field trials across India, how that agronomic yields of new varieties fell in price-controlled states. To quantify the overall welfare implications of price and quality responses, we develop and estimate a structural model of demand and supply for seeds with endogenous product attributes. While the policy raised farmers’ surplus, especially among the poor, ignoring quality adjustments in equilibrium vastly overstates their welfare gains. We use the estimated model to assess alternative policies that better balance diffusion and innovation incentives. For a given public budget, incentives for seed developers based on the productivity of new varieties achieve the highest aggregate welfare.

Other Papers

“The Origins of the Nitrogen Revolution” with Christopher Sims.

Natural soil endowments have historically constrained agricultural productivity and population growth. The 19th century witnessed technological breakthroughs, such as nitrogenous fertilizers, which alleviated these constraints and paved the way to intensive farming. This paper studies the introduction and rapid diffusion of *guano* in 19th-century England. We first establish that nitrogen deficiency shaped cropping patterns prior to guano’s arrival. Drawing on newly digitized data and leveraging the discovery of Peruvian guano as a natural experiment, we show that nitrogen-poor areas reallocated their production toward nitrogen-demanding, more profitable crops. These same areas also experienced increases in livestock, consistent with a shift to “high farming”. The effects are driven by areas with (i) initially lower agricultural productivity, and (ii) higher distance to input markets, consistent with convergence. We evaluate the welfare gains from guano through a quantitative spatial model of agricultural trade within England. While guano raised welfare substantially, the “converging” nature of the technological shock reduced gains from trade across regions.

“Shaping Productive and Progressive Agricultural Subsidies in Mozambique”, with Paul Christian, Steven Glover, Florence Kondylis, John Loeser, and Astrid Zwager.

We study the optimal design of agricultural input subsidies using an experiment in Mozambique that cross-randomized subsidy rates for small and for large input quantities. Increased subsidy rates for small quantities increase payouts to poorer farmers, but divert farmers from large input quantities. While they do not reach poorer farmers, increased subsidy rates for large quantities increase agricultural production by 36% by increasing input use by more marginally productive farmers, overcoming both informational and financial constraints. We derive and estimate sufficient statistics to quantify how planner preferences over productivity, transfers, and equity shape optimal agricultural input subsidies.

Work in Progress

“Local Manufacturing of Productive Inputs and Technology Adoption: Evidence from Nigeria”, with Ricardo Guzman.

“Maximum Wages and Organizational Performance: Evidence from the Liberian Public Sector”, with Erika Deserranno, Vincent Pons, and Daniel Rogger.

“Through the Mill: Tax Compliance and Political Backlash in Post-Unitary Italy”, with Caterina Alfonzo.

Publications

“Brigandage and the Political Legacy of Monarchical Legitimacy in Southern Italy” with Cristoforo Pizzimenti.

Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Volume 235, 107000, July 2025

“Teacher-Led Innovations to Improve Education Outcomes: Experimental Evidence from Brazil” with Caio Piza, Astrid Zwager, Rafael Dantas, and André Loureiro.

Journal of Public Economics, Volume 234, 105123, June 2024

“Do Private Consultants Promote Savings and Investments in Rural Mozambique?” with Paul Christian, Steven Glover, Florence Kondylis, Valerie Mueller, and Astrid Zwager.

Agricultural Economics, Volume 53, Issue 1, Pages 22–36, January 2022

Fellowships,
Grants & Awards

Dissertation Fellowship, Northwestern University	2025–2026
Graduate Student Visitor Program, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago	2025
International Conference Travel Grant, Northwestern Buffett Institute for Global Affairs	2025
Distinguished Teaching Assistant Award, Northwestern University	2024
Early Career Scholars Grant, Policy Impacts	2024
Graduate Research Grant, Northwestern University	2024
Conference Travel Grant, Northwestern Buffett Institute for Global Affairs	2024
Exploratory Travel and Piloting Grant, Weiss Fund, University of Chicago	2024
Data Purchase Grant, Global Poverty Research Lab, Northwestern University	2023–2024

Susan Schmidt Bies Prize, Northwestern University	2023
Graduate Fellowship, Northwestern University	2022–2025
Marco Fanno Scholarship, UniCredit Foundation	2020–2022
Erasmus+ grant, European Commission	2014–2015

Presentations (☞ planned)

LSE Environment Week☞, Advances with Field Experiments Conference☞, Policy Impacts Annual Conference, “Technology and Long-term Development: Lessons from the past” Workshop, Marco Fanno Alumni Workshop, Development Innovation Lab’s Research Seminar	2025
28th Annual ICABR Conference	2024
Special ESA Meeting Buenos Aires	2022
XIII Ridge Forum: 14th Annual Meeting Impact Evaluation Network of LACEA	2021

Professional Activities

Graduate Applications International Network (GAIN) mentoring	2024–
Economics PhD peer mentorship program, Northwestern University	2022–
NOVAFRICA mentorship program	2021–2024
Development Economics Lunch organizer, Northwestern University	2022–2023
First Graduate Student Event organizer, Global Poverty Research Lab	2022

Refereeing

British Educational Research Journal, Economics of Education Review, Review of Development Economics, Journal of African Economies
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Languages

Italian (native), English, Portuguese, Spanish (fluent)

Programming

R, Stata (advanced), Julia, Python (intermediate)

References

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Professor Jacopo Ponticelli Kellogg School of Management Northwestern University 2211 Campus Drive Evanston, IL 60208 847.467.4623 jacopo.ponticelli@kellogg.northwestern.edu	Professor Gastón Illanes Department of Economics Northwestern University 2211 Campus Drive Evanston, IL 60208 847.491.8227 gaston.illanes@northwestern.edu
Professor Benjamin F. Jones Kellogg School of Management Northwestern University 2211 Campus Drive Evanston, IL 60208 847.491.3177 bjones@kellogg.northwestern.edu	