

CONTACT

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PERSONAL

Citizenship: Canadian
Gender: Male
Languages: English (native), French (basic spoken and written)

DOCTORAL STUDIES

2016 - 2021 London School of Economics
Program: Economic Geography
Thesis Title: "Essays in Urban and Development Economics"
Advisors: J. Vernon Henderson and Henry G. Overman

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

2021 - Research Fellow, Department of Economics, LBS

AFFILIATIONS

2021 - Associate, Centre for Economic Performance, LSE
2020 - Research Fellow, Wheeler Institute for Business and Development, LBS

PRE-DOCTORAL STUDIES

2013 - 2014 MA (Doctoral Stream) Economics, University of Toronto
2008 - 2013 BSc (Honours) Economics and Environmental Science, University of Toronto

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Course Instructor at LBS:

2021 GIS Methods in Business Research (PhD)
2021 Geospatial Analytics for Business (MBA)

Graduate Teaching Assistant at LSE:

2019 - 2020 GY210 The Economics of Cities (undergraduate)
2018 GY209 The Economic Geography of Trade, Production and Development (undergraduate)
2018 GY499: Dissertation Methods Surgeries (graduate)
2017 - 2018 GY201 Urban and Spatial Economic Analysis I (undergraduate)

RELEVANT POSITIONS HELD

2019 - 2020 Data Science Consultant, Beekin
2014 - 2016 Research Assistant, Centre for Economic Performance, LSE
2012 - 2014 Research Assistant, Department of Economics, University of Toronto

REFERENCES

J. Vernon Henderson (PhD supervisor) Dept. of Geography, LSE +44(0) 2079 556180 J.V.Henderson@lse.ac.uk	Guy Michaels Dept. of Economics, LSE +44(0) 2078 523518 econ.facultysupport@lse.ac.uk	Elias Papaioannou Dept. of Economics, LBS +44(0) 2070 008432 hthomas@london.edu
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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Primary: Urban Economics and Development Economics
 Secondary: Public Finance

JOB MARKET PAPER

[Ask a local: Improving public pricing in urban Tanzania](#),
 joint with Martina Manara,
 Revise & Resubmit at *Review of Economics and Statistics*.

Abstract: The rapid growth of cities in Africa is raising demand for urban services that many local governments struggle to provide. Information on willingness-to-pay is key for public pricing and allocation of services, but not easily collected. This paper studies land title deeds in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, asking whether local leaders know and will reveal plot owners' willingness-to-pay. First, we conduct a field experiment where local leaders predict willingness-to-pay for individual owners in their neighbourhood under randomly assigned settings. Second, we elicit owners' actual individual willingness-to-pay using the Becker-DeGroot-Marschak method. We find that the demand for titles in our study area is 25% above cost, despite very low uptake. This suggests that well-targeted fees could make titles more accessible while also covering costs. Further, leaders' predictions can approximate the aggregate demand curve and distinguish variation across owners. Using leader predictions, the government could raise revenue by 30% or increase uptake six-fold while holding revenue fixed compared to the status quo. However, policy-relevant settings affect the information that leaders reveal. Accuracy deteriorates in a setting where predictions are used to allocate subsidies but adding cash incentives mitigates this. We conclude that local leaders can provide valuable information to the state if they are compensated and more closely integrated with the formal land system.

PUBLICATIONS

[No Inventor Is an Island: Social Connectedness and the Geography of Knowledge Flows in the US](#),
 Diemer A. and T. Regan, 2022,
Research Policy, forthcoming.

[Planning Ahead for Better Neighborhoods: Long Run Evidence from Tanzania](#),
 Michaels G., D. Nigmatulina, F. Rauch, T. Regan, N. Baruah, and A. Dahlstrand, 2021,
Journal of Political Economy, 129(7), pp. 2112–2156.

[Building the city: from slums to a modern metropolis](#),
 Henderson J.V., T. Regan, and A. Venables, 2021,
Review of Economic Studies, 88(3), pp. 1157–1192.

[Life in a slum: understanding living conditions in Nairobi's slums across time and space](#),
 Bird J., P. Montebruno, and T. Regan, 2017,
Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 33(3), pp. 496–520.

[Building functional cities](#),
 Henderson J.V., A. Venables, T. Regan, and I. Samsonov, 2016,
Science, 352(6288), pp. 946–947.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

The Economic Consequences of Statistical Property Valuation: Evidence from Kampala, Uganda,
 (sole author),

Abstract: To improve the cost-effectiveness of property tax administration, many governments in developing countries are turning to statistical procedures of property valuation. What are the economic implications of these procedures? With empirical evidence from Kampala, Uganda I study how the method of valuation impacts equity and revenue through effective tax rates. Valuation is never perfect, and discrepancies between true income and valuation result in

effective tax rates at the individual property level that differ from the policy rate. I show generally that any assessment procedure that provides an unbiased prediction of property value will be regressive. I document that this regressivity is empirically important in Kampala; on average, the lowest-earning decile of landlords would face an effective tax rate that is 28% higher than the policy rate, while the top decile would face a 27% reduction. Furthermore, I develop a simple model of tax compliance to quantify how this regressivity in assessment will affect government revenues.

Public Disclosure and Property Tax Compliance,
(with Priya Manwaring)

Project Summary: Property taxes are an important source of local government revenue. However, compliance rates can be extremely low in some developing country cities. This project studies the effectiveness of a specific type of policy intervention: public disclosure of tax compliance. The central question is “Does public disclosure of tax behaviour raise compliance?”. We consider two channels of effect through which disclosure could affect compliance. The first is a direct effect; “Do taxpayers change their compliance behaviour when they know that it will be publicised?”, and the second is a knock-on effect; “Do tax payers change their behaviour when they are publicly notified of the behaviour of others?”. Further, we compare the relative effectiveness of two different types of disclosure: publicly reporting tax delinquents (shaming) and publicly honoring tax compliers. To study these questions we partner with the Kampala Capital City Authority to randomise variations of their proposed tax reporting scheme. In this experiment, treatment notifications are administered by text message to roughly 80,000 unique phone numbers associated with roughly 200,000 tax-owing properties.

Improving the Effectiveness of Formal Housing Delivery in Tanzania,
(with Vernon Henderson, Martina Manara, and Guy Michaels)

Project Summary: Urban informality can reduce public and private investments, lower tax bases, and exacerbate urban disamenities. Therefore, a key policy instrument is the provision of surveyed, titled, and serviced de-novo plots in green-field areas, on which residents build houses. Such development strategies are advocated to solve coordination problems in contexts with weak institutions and rapid, haphazard, and unorganized growth. However, these projects come with concerns that plots may be too large, roads poorly placed and constructed, and that strict regulation may leave some areas underdeveloped, if not vacant. Our research aim is to determine how to implement this de-novo approach in a more effective and inclusive way. We study the case of Tanzania which offers a unique context to compare the effects of public and private provision of formal plots. Since the early 2000s, the Government has delivered over 58,000 formal plots through the “20,000 plots” project, implemented in Dar es Salaam and other cities. We study the effects of land use planning regulation, amenity provision, and local market accessibility.

Zoning laws and land value capture: Evidence from Rwanda,
(with Paul Brimble, Guy Michaels, and Matthew Sharp)

Abstract: Rapid urbanisation in Africa and other developing regions increases demand for urban services, which local governments often struggle to provide. Land value capture and taxation through zoning presents an under-exploited opportunity to mitigate this problem. Rwanda, with its fast-growing cities, first adopted a comprehensive land use zoning law in 2013. Focusing on the urban fringe in Rwandan cities, we compare the value of (previously unbuilt) land zoned for residential use to nearby land zoned for agricultural use, allowing us to assess the potential for revenue generation from zoning.

Illuminating Africa?,
(with Giorgio Chiovelli, Elias Papaioannou, and Stelios Michalopoulos)

Abstract: A growing research in economics, political science, and remote sensing is using satellite night-time lights to proxy economic development (poverty, output), especially in Africa that lacks high-quality data. However, there are still questions on where, when, and under what conditions luminosity can provide meaningful approximations of local economic conditions. First, using machine learning techniques we homogenize the data that come from satellites with different properties. We thus provide annualized series from 1992 till 2020. Second, using hundreds of georeferenced (demographic and health) surveys and (representative and full-population) census data for most African countries, we

evaluate the ability of night-time lights to proxy socio-economic development outcomes, including education, industry of employment, and access to public goods. We conduct the analysis both across regions and over time, further distinguishing between (administrative) units of various spatial scales. We examine the relative performance of older DMSP data with newer VIIRS data, as well as the harmonized version. Our analysis yields the following: First, both the old and the new, post-2013, luminosity series proxy well economic development at local levels; night-time lights correlate strongly with education, industry of employment, and household assets across all levels of spatial resolution (admin-2, 3, 4, and 5), even when we explore variation across nearby units (for example across admin-4 units, conditional on admin-3 fixed-effects). Accounting for blooming, top-coding, and sensor quality yields stronger correlations, as compared to unadjusted lights series, especially at granular levels. Second, within-district changes in luminosity also capture changes in socio-development, especially at fine levels of spatial aggregation. In changes, using full-Census information strengthens the correlations and improves the model fit considerably. Therefore, using properly adjusted and harmonized night-time lights can be a useful tool for development diagnostics and measurement.

RESEARCH GRANTS

- 2021 Wheeler Institute (£20,000), *Improving the Effectiveness of Formal Housing Delivery in Tanzania*, with Vernon Henderson, Martina Manara, and Guy Michaels
- 2021 IGC (£4,800), *Exploring interactions between national and local government taxes*, with Priya Manwaring
- 2020 IGC (£65,000), *Public Reporting and Property Tax Compliance*, with Priya Manwaring
- 2020 IDS (£27,000), *Public Reporting and Property Tax Compliance*, with Priya Manwaring
- 2019 IGC (£6,300), *Public Reporting and Property Tax Compliance in Kampala*, with Priya Manwaring
- 2019 IGC (£8,852), *Valuation models for property tax*, with Priya Manwaring
- 2018 IGC (£19,491), *Leveraging Informal Institutions*, with Martina Manara

REFEREE SERVICE

Review of Economic Studies, Journal of Public Economics, Journal of Urban Economics, Regional Science & Urban Economics, Journal of Economic Geography, World Development, Applied Geography, Regional Studies

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- 2021 Paris Sorbonne Sustainable Development Seminar, NTU Economics Seminar, University of Montevideo Economics Seminar, U of Toronto Munk School, 6th Zurich Conference on Public Finance in Developing Countries.
- 2020 Meeting of the Urban Economics Association (virtual).
- 2019 WEHIA at City University (London), UREW at Universidad Javeriana (Bogota).
- 2018 IDE-JETRO School (Tokyo), LSE-NHH Conference (London).
- 2017 SERC Conference (London), IGC Making Cities Work (London), UEA Summer School (Paris), Geo4Dev Symposium (Berkeley).
- 2016 Land and Poverty Conference at the World Bank (Washington DC).

HONORS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2019 David Jones Prize for inter-cluster research, LSE
- 2016 - 2020 PhD Studentship, LSE
- 2013 - 2014 Doctoral Stream Fellowship, University of Toronto
- 2012 T-Holder's Academic Excellence Award, University of Toronto
- 2010 Bronze T Award - Varsity Water Polo, University of Toronto
- 2008 - 2013 Cmolik Foundation Scholarship

SOFTWARE

Python, Stata, R, ArcGIS, QGIS, ODK