Balasai Vanukuri

Paris School of Economics | Citizenship: India

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FIELDS

Development Economics, Economics of Education, Behavioural and Political Economy

EDUCATION

Paris School of Economics *Sept. 2022 – Present*
PhD in Economics
Dissertation: "Essays in Development Economics and Political Economy"
Advisors: Oliver Vanden Eynde and Karen Macours

Massachusetts Institute of Technology *Fall 2025*
Visiting PhD Scholar, Department of Economics
Host: Abhijit Banerjee

Paris School of Economics *2019 – 2021*
MRes in Economics: Analysis and Policy in Economics, with *honors*

Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi *2014 – 2019*
B.Tech and M.Tech in Chemical Engineering; Minor: Business Management

REFERENCES

Karen Macours *(advisor)*
PSE Chaired Professor
Paris School of Economics
karen.macours@psemail.eu

Oliver Vanden Eynde *(advisor)*
PSE Chaired Professor
Paris School of Economics
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Nishith Prakash
Dean's Professor of Economics
and Public Policy
Northeastern University
n.prakash@northeastern.edu

Liam Wren-Lewis
Professor
Paris School of Economics
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JOB MARKET PAPER

"Backlash or Bonding?: Effect of Integration Policies in the Context of Affirmative Action" *(JMP)*

Abstract: Do policies that promote cross-group connections expand access to economic opportunities, or do they come at the expense of support from within-group networks? I examine this trade-off in the context of caste integration at a selective public university in India, exploiting random assignment of first-year roommates. I use original survey data from 2,267 students across two cohorts. I develop a model in which students allocate social time between bonding social capital, which supports well-being, and bridging social capital, which expands access to economic opportunities. Results show that, one year after assignment, lower-caste students in mixed-caste rooms have better grades but worse mental health, while upper-caste students have lower grades, relative to peers of the same caste in same-caste rooms. Lower-caste academic gains appear to be driven by higher-performing roommates, while upper-caste losses are consistent with forgone same-caste collaboration. Social frictions in mixed rooms reduce well-being for lower caste students. Three years later, upper-caste students assigned to mixed rooms earn lower internship stipends, and lower caste are less likely to do summer internships. After the first year, both groups become more supportive of affirmative action (AA), each updating attitudes toward the policy dimension concerning the other group. By the third year, upper-caste students become less supportive of AA, particularly in employment. Findings show that while cross-caste contact can reduce academic gaps, but also impose different costs on both groups.

Working Papers

"Impact of Weather Shocks on Trust in Agrarian Communities: Evidence from Rural India" *(Draft available)*

Abstract: This paper examines how drought affects collective action in rural India. Using the two-wave India Human Development Survey panel (2005 and 2012) and district-level drought measures (SPEI), I compare households in districts within the same state that experienced different numbers of dry seasons. Wet-season (Kharif) drought is not associated with reported community cooperation on water problems, while dry-season (Rabi) drought increases cooperation by about three percentage points, which does not differ significantly by baseline irrigation access. Ongoing work investigates the mechanisms.

Work in Progress

"Family Trees of Opportunity: Vertical Peer Effects and Skill Transmission in Public Universities" (with Oscar Diaz and Palaash Bhargava)

"Enabling Access to Safe Water: Evidence from Gujarat" (with Vrinda Sharma)

"Transfers, Income Diversification and Climate Adaptation: Long-term Evidence" (with Karen Macours, Patrick Premand, and Renos Vakis)

"Building Skills in Agri-Food Systems: A Meta-Analysis of Extension and Training Programs" (with Karen Macours, Marcelo Gantier, and Amit Khanal)

"Natural Disasters, Land Markets, and Inter-Religious Dynamics: Evidence from Bihar" (with Oliver Vanden Eynde and Nitin Bharati)

Teaching

Econometrics 2 *2026–27*
Teaching Assistant, Master's in Economics, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Econometrics 2A *2026–27*
Teaching Assistant, Analysis and Policy in Economics (APE), Paris School of Economics

Linear Algebra (undergraduate) *2026–27*
Teaching Assistant, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Econometrics 1 *2022–23, 2023–24*
Teaching Assistant, Master 1 in Public Policy and Development (PPD), Paris School of Economics

Research Position

Tobin Pre-doctoral Fellow *Jul 2021–Aug 2022*
Yale University (Prof. Rohini Pande)

Consulting

Short-Term Consultant *Feb–Dec 2026*
World Bank (Development Impact Group)

Research Consultant *Apr 2023–Dec 2025*
Warwick Business School (Prof. Giorgia Barboni)

External Consultant *Dec 2020–Jan 2021*
OECD

Research Funding

Integration Policies in the Context of Affirmative Action
(Roommates Integration and Mentoring projects)

Weiss Fund for Development Economics	$43,449 (2024)
CEPREMAP Research Grant	€8,000 (2023, 2024)
CNRS-PSE Development Group	€7,600 (2023, 2024)
Education Policy and Social Mobility Chair	€9,200 (2024, 2026)
EUR-PgSE Research Grant	€4,000 (2024)

Safe Water Access (joint with Vrinda Sharma)

Weiss Fund for Development Economics (pilot)	$15,500 (2026)
CNRS-PSE Development Group	€11,000 (2025, 2026)
EUR-PgSE Research Grant	€1,500 (2026)
SurveyCTO Primary Data Collection Grant	€1,000 (2026)

Presentations

2026: World Inequality Conference (PSE), QMUL PhD Workshop, NOVAFRICA Conference (Nova School of Business and Economics), Nordic Conference on Development Economics (Linnaeus University), Minorities in Economics Conference (University of Bristol), CEPR Economics Job Market Bootcamp (University of Bologna), 5th NSE PhD and Postdocs Workshop (University of Naples Federico II), MPI/ECONtribute Workshop (Max Planck Institute, Bonn), IÉSEG School of Management (invited)

2025: MIT Behavioral Seminar, Development Political Economy Seminar, Northeastern University brown bag, Tufts University PhD Seminar

2023: India China Conference, University of Namur

2022: India China Conference, PSE

Fellowships and Awards

École Doctorale 465 Full Funding (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne) *2022*

Master APE Scholarship (Paris School of Economics), €5,000 *2020*

Charpak Master BCS Scholarship (French Government) *2020*

Professional Service

Refereeing: *Journal of Development Economics*

Seminar organization: Casual Friday Development Seminar, Paris School of Economics

Skills

Programming: Stata (advanced), R (advanced), LaTeX (advanced), Google Earth Engine/JavaScript (intermediate), ArcGIS/QGIS (basic), Python (basic)

Online Courses: MicroMasters in Data, Economics, and Development Policy (MIT)

Languages: Telugu (native), Hindi (advanced), English (advanced), French (elementary, A2)

Last updated: November 12, 2026