

Laura Contreras-Portela

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Urban economics, Labor Economics, Development Economics, International Trade.

EDUCATION

- **Aix-Marseille School of Economics** Marseille, France
PhD Candidate in Economics 2022–2025
Supervisor(s): Federico Trionfetti & Lorenzo Rotunno
Thesis: “The Consequences of Place-Based Policies: Theory and Empirical evidence”.
- **Aix-Marseille School of Economics** Marseille, France
M1 in Economics (*with honors*) 2020–2022
M2 in Empirical and Theoretical Economics
Thesis: “The economic geography effect of the Free Economic Zones”.
- **Universidad Externado de Colombia** Bogotá, Colombia
B.A in Economics 2017–2021

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

- **The Dual Faces of Development: Place-Based Policies and Informality in Colombia**
Abstract: This paper studies the local economic impact of the Free Economic Zones (FEZs) program established in Colombia between 2005-2018. Based on a novel data set that combines georeferenced data on FEZs, municipalities, and household characteristics, I measure the spatial effects of the creation of these zones on labor market outcomes, focusing on informality. Results show that the FEZs establishment significantly increases local employment by increasing informality, with positive spillovers to the nearby regions, decreasing with distance. To get the aggregate effects of such a policy, I develop a spatial structural model with informality, trade, and labor mobility, providing two channels: (i) the formalization channel that results in a decrease in the proportion of informal firms, and (ii) the entry channel resulting in an increase in firm entry, mainly driven by informal firms.
- **Caring For the Unpaid Caregivers: Evidence from Bogotá** with *Natalia Labrador*
- **Place-Based Cross-Subsidies and Self-Employment** with *Ricardo Guzman*
- **Artificial Intelligence and Trade** with *Despoina Balouktsi and Priyam Verma*
- **Technology Adoption and Informality: Evidence from Zambia**

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

- Doctoral Fellowship, Aix-Marseille School of Economics, Aix-Marseille Université 2022–2025
- AMSE Grant, Academic Excellence, Aix-Marseille School of Economics, Aix-Marseille Université 2021–2022
Scholarship for academic excellence in M1.
- Scholarship of Academic Excellence for Undergraduate Studies, ETB, Bogotá 2017–2021
Best result in Saber 11 (High school exit examination).

TEACHING

- **Teaching Assistant** at Aix-Marseille University Spring 2023

Industrial Organisation & Macroeconomics II in French, Economics & Management Faculty

- **Teaching Assistant** at Universidad Externado de Colombia Jan - Jul, 2020
Linear Algebra in Spanish, Economics Faculty
- **Teaching Assistant** at Universidad Externado de Colombia Jan - Dec, 2019
Optimization in Spanish, Economics Faculty

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

- SMILE reading group at AMSE 2022 - Present
Active member

EXPERIENCE

- R.A on “The Formation and Evolution of Urban System” Summer 2021
Supervisor: Federico Trionfetti
Data analysis of GIS and archaeological data. Construction of geographical concentration indices.

CONFERENCES

- 2023: AMSE seminar, PSE Summer School on International Trade, IEA World Congress
- 2024: AMSE seminar, QMUL workshop, Urban Economic Association Summer School, LAGV, Konstanz Brown Bag Seminar, French Japanese Conference, Junior Workshop ENS de Lyon

**Scheduled*

SKILLS

- **Programming:** R, Stata, Python, QGIS, Matlab, ArcGis.
- **Software and Tools:** MS Office, L^AT_EX, Power BI.

LANGUAGES

- Spanish (Native), English (Fluent), French (Fluent).

REFERENCES

- **Federico Trionfetti**
Aix-Marseille School of Economics
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- **Lorenzo Rotunno**
International Monetary Fund
lrotunno@imf.org
- **Juan C. Sosa**
National University of Colombia
jcsosam@unal.edu.co