

RENÉ LIVAS

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UNIVERSITY

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Education**Harvard University**

Ph.D. Public Policy, Economics Track, 2020 to 2026 (expected)

Yale University

M.A. International and Development Economics, 2019

Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico

B.A. in Economics, Highest Honors, 2016

Fields

Primary: Urban Economics

Secondary: Labor Economics, International Trade

References

Prof. Gordon Hanson
Harvard Kennedy School
gordon_hanson@hks.harvard.edu

Prof. Edward L. Glaeser
Harvard University
eglaser@harvard.edu

Prof. Gabriel Kreindler
Harvard University
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Gregory A. Bruich, Ph.D.
Harvard University
gbruich@fas.harvard.edu

Teaching

Using Big Data to Solve Economic and Social Problems, Harvard University

Teaching fellow for Raj Chetty and Gregory Bruich (Undergraduate level), Spring 2024 and 2023

Econometrics I, Harvard University

Teaching fellow for Gregory Bruich (Ph.D. level), Fall 2023 and 2022

Intermediate Microeconomics, Universidad Iberoamericana

Lecturer (Undergraduate level), Summer 2021

International Trade I, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM)

Lecturer (Undergraduate level), Summer 2020

Relevant Experience

Research Associate, HKS Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy, Gordon Hanson, 2020-2025

Predoctoral Fellow, MIT, Simon Jaeger and Benjamin Schoefer, 2019-2020

Research Assistant, Banco de México, 2016-2018

Short Term Consultant, World Bank, 2016

Job Market Paper**Local Taxes and Suburbanization: Evidence from Philadelphia's Wage Tax**

with Matthew Jacob

How much do local taxes affect the distribution of economic activity within metropolitan areas? We study Philadelphia's wage tax, which applies to labor earnings of residents and of nonresidents working within the city. Wage tax rates rose from 1.5 to 4.3% between 1960 and 1984 and have gradually declined since 1995. Guided by a quantitative spatial model, we estimate the effects of the wage tax on commuting flows and worker stocks using granular data on residence, workplace, and commuting from 1938 to 2019. We identify the elasticity of commuting flows to the net-of-tax rate from changes in neighborhood commuting shares at the city boundary. Using a spatial regression discontinuity design, we show that suburban commuting to the city discontinuously fell (rose) as the wage tax rose (fell) and estimate a commuting flow elasticity of 6.39. We calibrate the model with this elasticity to structurally

estimate how removing the wage tax would affect the stock of workers and land values. We find a stock elasticity of the tax base of 0.86 and a land value increase of 4.44%. We then apply the model to tax policy counterfactuals. Although the wage tax suburbanizes economic activity and reduces other tax bases, total tax revenue is increasing in wage tax rates up to 10%.

Working Papers

The Rise of the South and the Deindustrialization of the North with Gordon Hanson

During the middle of the 20th century, U.S. manufacturing reorganized itself. A substantial share of industrial jobs was reallocated from the U.S. North to the U.S. South, presaging the exodus of manufacturing from the global North to the global South that would occur several decades later. We study how the rise of the South affected labor market outcomes in the North after 1940, instrumenting for the South's industrial growth using insights from the literature on the region's structural transformation. Northern regions more exposed to the rise of the South saw larger declines in manufacturing employment, small offsetting gains in service employment, and decreases in overall employment rates that persisted to 1980. These changes were accompanied by reductions in wage and salary income among low-wage workers, which reached their peak impact in 1960. Impacts on earnings may have been offset by reductions in the cost of housing, whose impact peaked in 1960 but remained depressed through 1980. Consistent with the hypothesis of Wilson (1987) on the origins of urban decline in former industrial cities after 1960, adverse changes in Northern labor markets were followed by more intense rioting during the social upheaval of the late 1960s, increased uptake of government transfers, and reduced economic mobility of children born to low-income parents in the 1980 birth cohort relative to the 1940 birth cohort.

Automation Technologies and Employment at Risk with Alfonso Cebreros, Aldo Heffner, and Daniela Puggioni *Bank of Mexico Working Paper 2020-04*

Papers in Progress

The Emergence of Public Transit and the Transformation of the American Downtown with Prottoy Akbar and Allison Shertzer

Commuting technologies transformed American urban form in the half-century before 1930. Yet those transformations remain largely unmeasured. Using Philadelphia's city directories over 1887-1930, we use large language models to extract name, occupation, industry, employer, home address, and work address for roughly one million directory entries. We then study the response of establishment location and individual commuting to changes in transportation technologies. In preliminary work, we find that the electrification of streetcars 1) *centralized* service establishments, 2) had no effect on the location of manufacturing establishments, and 3) decentralized residences of workers regardless of occupation.

Seminars & Conferences

Southern Economic Association 95th Annual Meeting, November 2025
Harvard Kennedy School Economics and Social Policy Seminar, September 2025

Academic Service

Referee, Journal of Urban Economics (x2)
Vice-president, Kennedy PhD Student Association (KPSA), 2023-2024
Organizer, Harvard Urban Economics Reading Group, 2023-2024
Member, Technical Board, Universidad Iberoamericana Department of Economics, 2022-2025

Research Grants

Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative Doctoral Fellowship (\$3,250), 2025
Taubman Center for Local and State Government Fellowship (\$6,000), 2024

Fellowships & Awards

Victor L. Urquidi Prize (Honorable Mention), 2020
Harvard University Graduate Prize Fellowship, 2020
Universidad Iberoamericana Academic Scholarship, 2012-2016

Languages

English (native); Spanish (native)

Software skills

Stata, Matlab, ArcGIS, Python, R, LaTeX

Personal information

Dual citizen of the U.S. and Mexico