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PhD Candidate

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Citizenship: Costa Rican

Fields of Concentration:
Environmental & Climate Change Economics
Development Economics
Applied Econometrics
Impact Evaluation

Desired Teaching:
Applied Econometrics
Impact Evaluation
Environmental & Climate Change Economics
Development Economics

Dissertation Title: *Essays on forest conservation policies and effects of weather on education*

Expected Completion Date: May 2017

Education:

Graduate Studies
Ph.D. in Economics 2012-present
Department of Economics, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
Supervisors: Måns Söderbom (principal) & Jessica Coria

Visiting Scholar
University of Cambridge, Jan – April 2016
Department of Land Economy & Cambridge Centre for Environment, Energy and Natural Resource Governance (C-EENRG)
Supervisor: Andreas Kontoleon

M.Sc. in Environmental Economics
Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), 2008-2009
Turrialba, Costa Rica
Thesis: "National parks' effects on local communities' wages and employment in Costa Rica"

B.A Economics
Department of Economics, University of Costa Rica, San José, 2003-2007

Fellowships, Honors and Awards:

SIDA academic capacity building program, grant for doctoral studies, 2012-2017
Adlerbertska Stipendiestiftelsen Travel Grants 2012 to 2016
Siamon Stiftelsen Travel Grant, 2014
Summa cum laude 2008 Class & Distinguished MSc. Dissertation. CATIE, 2009
Grant for Master's Program studies. CATIE, 2008-2009

Publications:

Robalino, J., **Villalobos, L.** (2015). Protected areas and economic welfare: An impact evaluation of national parks on local workers' wages in Costa Rica. *Environment and Development Economics*. 20 (3) s. 283-310.

Robalino, J., Pfaff, A., and **Villalobos, L**. Assessing the impact of institutional design of payments for environmental services: the Costa Rican experience. In Rapidel et al. (2011) Ecosystem services from agriculture and agroforestry: measurement and payment.

Working papers:

Effects of weather on daily school attendance decisions and academic performance [Job market paper]

Deforestation Spillovers from Costa Rican Protected Areas (with Robalino, J. and Pfaff, A.) *Conditional acceptance in Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, JAERE* [thesis chapter]

Evaluation of the Impact of Forest Certification on Environmental Outcomes in Sweden (with Nordén, A., and Coria, J.) Working papers in Economics No. 657 [thesis chapter]

Forgetful or reluctant? Evidence on donor behavior from panel data (with Mette Trier Damgaard, Aarhus University and Christina Gravert, University of Gothenburg)

Work in progress:

Menstruation and school attendance (with Anja Tolonen, Barnard College and Amir Jina, University of Chicago)

Choice of industrial certification labels in Mexico (with Blackman, A.)

Impacts of protected areas on population growth, inequality and marginalization in Mexico (with Robalino, J., Blackman, A., Pfaff, A.)

Research experience:

Research Assistant, Resources for the Future (RfF). Supervisor: Allen Blackman. Summer 2013.

Junior Research Fellow in Environmental Economics Field. Environment for Development Initiative (EfD-CA). Turrialba, Costa Rica. 2008-2012.

Research Assistant. Institute for Research in Economic Sciences (IICE). University of Costa Rica 2006-2007.

Research Assistant. Center of Economic and Environmental Studies (CIESA). Costa Rica. 2006.

Teaching and supervision experience:

Guest Lecturer. Environmental Policy Assessment and Evaluation (Masters Level). Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge. 2016.

Co-supervisor of two Master theses in environmental economics, University of Cambridge & CATIE, 2016.

Teacher Assistant. Undergraduate thesis course, Gothenburg University, 2014.

Lecturer. Introductory Economics & Environmental Valuation (Masters Level, in Spanish). CATIE 2011.

Teacher Assistant, Macroeconomic Theory (Bachelor level, in Spanish), University of Costa Rica, 2007.

Conference and Seminar Presentations:

EAERE 22nd Annual Conference, Zurich, 2016.
17th Annual BIOECON Conference, Cambridge, UK, 2015.
LACEEP 10+ Event Lomas de Santa Fe, Mexico City, 2015.
EAERE 21st Annual Conference, Helsinki, Finland, 2015.
8th Annual Meeting. Environment for Development, EfD Initiative. Tanzania, 2014.
5th World Congress of Environmental and Resource Economists (WCERE). Istanbul, 2014.
North America Congress for Conservation Biology (NACCB). Oakland, California, 2012.
EAERE 19th Annual Conference, Prague, 2012.
Conference "Mind the Gap: From evidence to policy impact" Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2011.
Workshop "Midiendo la Deforestación Evitada: un enfoque de Políticas Públicas" Mexico, 2011.
Camp Resources XVII. North Carolina, 2010.
4th World Congress of Environmental and Resource Economists (WCERE). Montreal, 2010.
IV Congress of the Latin American and Caribbean Association of Environmental and Natural Resources Economists (ALEAR). Costa Rica, 2009.

Professional Affiliations:

Latin American and Caribbean Environmental Economics Program (LACEEP)
Environment for Development Initiative (EfD)

Referee services:

Journal of Environmental Economics and Management; Environment and Development Economics; World Development; Desarrollo y Sociedad, edited by the Universidad de los Andes, Colombia.

Languages:

Spanish (native), English (fluent), Portuguese (fluent), French (conversational)

Training Courses:

Impact Evaluation. LACEEP. Turrialba, Costa Rica, 2011.
Evaluating Social Programs Course. Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), MIT, 2014.
Economics of ecosystem services and biodiversity. LACEEP, Turrialba, Costa Rica, 2011.
Applying Game Theory and Behavioral Economics to the Environment. Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics. Montreal, 2010.
Economic experiments applied to behavioral economics. EfD-CA, Turrialba, Costa Rica, 2009.
Environmental economics with emphasis on the role of businesses on the environment and climate change issues. (LACEEP). Turrialba, Costa Rica. 2009.
Elements of Analysis. University of Costa Rica, MSc. in Applied Mathematics, 2009.
Global Positioning Systems related to information technology and applied to natural resources. National University of Costa Rica (UNA), Heredia, Costa Rica, 2008.
Environmental Policy and Resource Economics. LACEEP, Turrialba, Costa Rica, 2008

Policy-oriented research & media coverage

Special Report Contribution to: Estado de la Nación en Desarrollo Humano Sostenible (2014). Efectividad de las políticas de conservación en Costa Rica. Capítulo 4 Armonía con la Naturaleza. With J. Robalino
La Nacion, newspaper: "Vivir cerca de parque nacional potencia pago de trabajadores" November 19th, 2015. http://www.nacion.com/vivir/ambiente/Salario-vecinos-areas-protegidas-superior_0_1525247476.html

Robalino, J., Lang, G., Moraes, C., Sandoval, C., Vargas, L., Villalobos, L. (2014). Evaluación de Impacto del Distrito de Riego Arenal-Tempisque Región Chorotega, Costa Rica, 1981-2011. Strategic Public Evaluation (commissioned by the Costa Rican Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy, MIDEPLAN).

Alpízar, Francisco; Robalino, Juan; Sandoval, Catalina; Villalobos, Laura. 2012. Local Effects of Payments for Environmental Services on Poverty. RFF Discussion Paper EfD 14-12 May 2014.

Alpízar, F., Naranjo, M., Vargas, A., Villalobos, L., and Munoz, C. (2011). Cost based pricing tool to estimate the cost of providing non-essential services in protected areas: Case Study National Park Corcovado and Marino Ballena. The Nature Conservancy, Costa Rica.

Chacón, A., Naranjo, M., and Villalobos, L. (2011) Evaluation of the impacts of the Mesoamerican Agroenvironmental Program (MAP): constructing the baseline. Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE).

Robalino, J. and Laura Villalobos (2009) Conservation and welfare: Effects of National Parks on local employment in Costa Rica. Paper elaborated for the Poverty-environment publication series of the UNEP-UNDP Initiative.

References:

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Dissertation Abstract

Two of the most pressing environmental challenges for the 21st Century are the loss of biodiversity and land degradation, and adaptation to climate change (UNEP, 2012). The first two chapters of my dissertation are devoted to estimating empirically the effectiveness of two of forest conservation policies.

In recognition of the importance of the environmental services provided by the forests, countries have implemented several policies aimed at protecting the natural capital within their borders. The traditional and still leading policy is to set aside area for conservation purposes. At present, as much as 12% of the terrestrial area of the World is under protection according to the World Database on Protected Areas, 2012. For such a non-negligible investment of resources, it is of particular interest to understand how effective this policy is in stopping deforestation and forest degradation, and how to improve its design and implementation.

The first chapter of my dissertation (with Juan Robalino & Alexander Pfaff) "Heterogeneous Local Spillovers from Protected Areas in Costa Rica" offers a contribution to the literature estimating the impact of protected areas (PAs) on preventing tropical deforestation. It extends previous work by looking at how the establishment of national parks affects land use change in the neighboring private land. This is a relevant question as most analyses to date examine the realized deforestation impacts of PAs only

within their borders, generally finding reduced deforestation effects. However, spillovers can significantly reduce or enhance net effects of land-use policies. Using data from Costa Rica, we find that protected areas can increase deforestation in adjacent private land when the returns to agriculture are high, but we also show that proximity to alternative activities such as tourism can block these leakage effects.

A second policy for forest protection that is becoming increasingly popular is forest certification. Certification is a voluntary policy instrument intended to solve an information asymmetry market failure. The idea is that producers who meet stringent environmental standards or rules (set by an external party) are allowed to label their products in the marketplace and potentially achieve greater market access and receive higher prices for their products. Sweden is leading this policy with the largest total area of certified forest in Western Europe (UNECE/FAO, 2012).

The second chapter "Has Forest Certification Improved Environmental Outcomes in Sweden?" (with Anna Nordén & Jessica Coria) estimates the effects of the two major forest certification schemes, FSC and PEFC, on environmental outcomes during the forest management for non-industrial forest owners in Sweden. The contribution of the paper is to identify the causal effect of this policy, ruling out other potential explanations. This is relevant as the voluntary nature of certification programs implies that it is difficult to determine the effects of forest certification due to selection bias. Our findings indicate that certification has not improved any of three evaluated environmental outcomes. Furthermore, we find no differences between the FSC and PEFC schemes. Our findings suggest that for forest certification to have an effect, the standards should be tightened and the monitoring and enforcement of forest certification schemes strengthened.

The third chapter of my dissertation "Effects of weather on daily school attendance decisions and academic performance" is a contribution to the understanding of how climate change can affect economic growth. Recent empirical evidence finds sizable economic losses of higher-than-normal temperatures. However, how individual decisions are affected by weather and how these mechanisms translate into aggregate economic loss is still largely unknown, and not accounted for in the climate change models.

In this paper, I study how weather affects human capital by estimating the impact of meteorological conditions on schooling outcomes in the context of a middle-income tropical country. I find that attendance to school decreases with precipitation and with every additional degree for students exposed to temperatures higher than 26˚C. These results are relevant for decision making. Relatively small adjustments such as climate control technologies and schedule design could have significant effects in increasing attendance. In addition, these results inform about classic issues of economic development and especially the role of geographic features in influencing development paths (Dell et al. 2014). Given this relationship and a scenario of warmer and more extreme weather events, regional gaps in schooling outcomes might not close in the future.

Bibliography

Dell, M., B. F. Jones, and B. A. Olken (2014). What do we learn from the weather? The new climateeconomy literature. Journal of Economic Literature 52 (3), 740–798.

UNEP, 2012. 21 Issues for the 21st Century: Result of the UNEP Foresight Process on Emerging Environmental Issues. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi, Kenya, 56pp.

UNECE/FAO, 2012. Forest Products Annual Market Review, 2011-2012. In: U.N. PUBLICATIONS (Ed.). Geneva Timber and Forest Study Paper 30, New York and Geneva.