

VICTORIA BIAGI

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Postdoctoral Researcher , University of Essex (UK) Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), MiSoC Centre	2026 - present
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OTHER AFFILIATIONS

Research Affiliate , Bocconi University, CLEAN (IT)	2024-
Research Affiliate , UNU-MERIT (NL)	2024-

EDUCATION

PhD in Economics , University of Liverpool (UK) Visiting Researcher at CLEAN Bocconi University - hosts Paolo Pinotti, Gianmarco Daniele (Fall 2024) Supervisors: Giuseppe De Feo, Jakub Lonsky, Balazs Murakozy <i>Thesis: Essays in the Political Economy of Crime: Mafia Legacies, Weak Institutions, and Local Intervention</i> Thesis Committee: Maria Michaela Sviatschi, Neomi Mantovan	2022-2026
Double MSc in Public Policy and Human Development , Maastricht University (NL) Specialisation: Social Protection Policy, UNU-MERIT (NL) <i>Dissertation: Organised Crime as a Threat to Social and Economic Mobility: Evidence from Sicily</i>	2021-2022 <i>with distinction</i>
Erasmus Plus Programme , Budapest University of Economics and Business (HU) Main subjects: International economics and politics	2020-2021 <i>GPA: 4.83/5</i>
BSc in International Relations and Diplomatic Affairs , University of Bologna (IT) <i>Dissertation: Essay on the Rule of Law and the Illiberal Democracies in the EU</i>	2018-2021 <i>with distinction</i>

PUBLICATIONS

Murder in the Marketplace — Public Choice (2026) <i>with Alexander Cardazzi and Zachary Porreca</i>	
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JOB MARKET PAPER

Another Brick in the Wall? The Educational Effects of Repurposed Mafia Properties

Abstract: Italy's anti-Mafia legislation allows confiscated Mafia properties to be converted into educational, cultural, and welfare facilities where local NGOs offer various social activities specifically targeting the youth and other vulnerable groups. This study provides the first causal evidence on how exposure to these repurposed spaces affects students' dropout rates by changing their attitudes toward educational and criminal pathways. Using school-level geo-referenced data from 2015 to 2022 and exploiting the staggered timing of property repurpose, I investigate changes in local dropout rates and students' aspirations. Results find a significant reduction in dropout rates of approximately 36% for students living near repurposed properties. Students are less likely to expect to find occupation through Mafia or political connections, and place greater value on education and formal application processes. Students also report greater confidence in State capacity, with reduced distrust in local police and politicians. Sentiment analysis of students' definitions of the Mafia corroborates these results, with the strongest effects among students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The effects are not explained by gentrification, additional educational support, or civic engagement levels.

WORKING PAPERS

The Unintended Political Consequences of Expanding Police Authority: Evidence from London with E. Cavallotti and A. Khemka

Abstract: Policies expanding police discretionary authority are widespread and politically contested, yet their effects on police behaviour, institutional trust, and political preferences remain poorly understood. We study Britain's 2014 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, which authorised local councils to implement Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs), prohibiting broadly defined anti-social activities and expanding officer discretion in designated areas. Using the first comprehensive dataset on PSPO implementation across London census tracts (2016–2024), linked to crime records, stop-and-search data, and electoral outcomes, we exploit PSPOs' staggered adoption to identify causal effects. These policies increase unproductive police stop-and-search activity, disproportionately targeting non-white residents. Reported anti-social behaviour and other crimes remain unaffected. These findings suggest that vaguely defined discretionary enforcement tools can generate racially unequal policing without delivering the public order benefits that justify their adoption.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Mafia and Social Order

with Giuseppe De Feo and Giacomo De Luca

Abstract: Mafia groups have been developing their power and local control over Sicily since the 19th century by enforcing an alternative institutional system with its own laws. In this paper, we test the historical effect of the Mafia on the legal judiciary as an alternative mechanism of conflict resolution. Under an IV approach, we find that the presence of the Mafia reduces the number of lawyers and the number of civil sentences at the tribunal level.

The Impacts of Relational and Restorative Practice in School

with Emilia Del Bono, Angus Holford, Luca Favero, and Paul García

Abstract: Exclusions from English schools are at record levels. Relational and Restorative Practice (RRP), an approach centred on building and repairing relationships damaged by harmful behaviour, offers an alternative, but its evidence base is thin. This project maps the prevalence and intensity of RRP across a nationally representative 10% sample of English primary and secondary schools, using systematic text analysis. We then use matched difference-in-differences methods to estimate the causal effect of RRP on exclusions, attainment, post-16 trajectories, criminal justice contact, and teacher retention.

Justice Delayed for Children? Justice Consolidation and Looked-After Children

Abstract: Between 2014 and 2019 roughly 20% of family courts in England and Wales closed under the government's court estate reform programme, during a period when public law care proceedings were already failing their 26-week statutory target. This project asks whether those closures lengthened proceedings and left a lasting mark on the children involved. I plan to use a staggered difference-in-differences method to estimate the effect of closure exposure on case duration, on the probability that a child's care episode resolves within 26 weeks, and on subsequent education and offending trajectories. Mechanisms tested include delay, travel distance, judicial continuity, and placement instability.

Beyond the Checkout: Shopping Malls and Social Capital in Rural Italy

with B. Martorano

POLICY WORK CONTRIBUTIONS

Save The Children Italia: Fare Spazio alla Crescita, 2023

Descriptive statistics about the use of the confiscated mafia properties

PRESENTATIONS IN ACADEMIC CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

- 2026: LESE 2026 (accepted), European Urban Association European Meeting 2026 (accepted), RES 2026 (University of Newcastle), Milan PhD Workshop (Bocconi University, *accepted*), Diversity and Human Capital Workshop (University of Exeter), EEA 2026 (University College Dublin), CLEAN Summer Workshop (Bocconi University)
- 2025: Women in State Capacity Conference (Oxford Martin School), Applied Young Economists Webinar (AYEW), NWSSDTP Doctoral Conference (University of Manchester), 4h Junior Economists Meeting (UniMi-JEM2025), ViCE Seminar Series, Economic History Internal Workshop (University of Birmingham), 9h Workshop on the Economics of Organised Crime (University of Edinburgh), Workshop on the Economics of Education (KU Leuven), SAEe 2025 (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)
- 2024: Crime Before Christmas CLEAN Workshop (Bocconi University), CLEAN Internal Seminars (Bocconi University), NWSSDTP Doctoral Conference (Lancaster University), AMBS Alliance Conference (University of Manchester), Administrative Data Workshop (University of Liverpool), Micro Applied Cluster (University of Liverpool), Internal Seminars Economics Group (University of Liverpool)
- 2023: Micro Applied Cluster (University of Liverpool), Internal Seminars Economics Group (University of Liverpool)

TEACHING

University of Liverpool	2024-2025
Principles of Macroeconomics (Undergraduate)	
	2024-2025
Statistics for Economics and Business Students (Undergraduate)	
	2023-2024
Principles of Microeconomics (Undergraduate)	

OTHER ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

University of Liverpool

- 2024-2025: Postgraduate Researchers Wellbeing Ambassador for the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Statistics Tutor for Stats@Liverpool, IELTS Test Centre Invigilator, Postgraduate Researchers Representative for the Economics Group
- 2023-2024: Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Postgraduate Researchers representative for the University of Liverpool Management School

GRANTS AND AWARDS

University of Liverpool

- 2023: ULMS first-year PhD Award
- 2025: ULMS PhD Award

SKILLS

STATA (advanced), R (intermediate), GIS (advanced), L^AT_EX (advanced)

LANGUAGES AND MAIN CERTIFICATES

Italian (native), English (advanced), French(intermediate), Spanish(beginner)

- 2024: Accredited Researcher (ONS DEA), Adult Mental Health Aware (MHFA England)
- 2023: Associate Fellowship of the HEA (University of Liverpool), Education Data Literacy (UNICEF), Understanding Transnational Organised Crime (UNODC)

REFERENCES

Giuseppe De Feo

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