

Veda Narasimhan

Contact

February 2023

New York University - Abu Dhabi
Saadiyat Island,
Abu Dhabi, UAE

Email: veda.narasimhan@nyu.edu
Phone: +971 26285551
<https://vedanarasimhan.github.io>

Current position

Assistant Professor, NYUAD 09.2022 - Present

Education

Ph.D. in Economics, **University of Zurich** 08.2016 - 09.2022
Advisors: Lorenzo Casaburi, David Yanagizawa-Drott, Joachim Voth

Visiting Researcher, **Yale University**, USA 01.2020 - 06.2020

MSc in Economics, **London School of Economics & Political Science**, UK 08.2013 - 06.2014

BA (Hons) in Economics, **McGill University**, Canada 09.2010 - 05.2013
First-class with a Minor in Political Science

Research Fields

Economic Development, Political Economy, Empirical Micro

Research

Working Papers

‘Polity size, decentralization intensity, and public goods provision: evidence from India’
with Jeffrey Weaver (USC) (*Submitted*)

Abstract: Developing countries have increasingly moved towards political decentralization and devolution of power to elected local governments. An important aspect of this process is the division of the population into distinct local government units. This paper examines the consequences of these divisions using data from over 100,000 villages in the largest state of India and population-based discontinuities that determine local government boundaries. Over both the short and long-run, individuals allocated into local governments with smaller populations have better access to a broad range of public programs and amenities. However, the relationship is non-linear, where these positive effects are only present when allocated to jurisdictions below a certain size. We provide evidence that these results can be explained by greater civic engagement and improved selection of candidates in smaller jurisdictions, but find no evidence of other theorized mechanisms such as elite capture. These results are informative as to the optimal degree of decentralization and indicate scope for more significant decentralization in many contexts.

“Rural development & Aggregate Growth: Evidence from India”

Abstract: traditional models of economic development focus on moving people from rural areas to urban areas. In lower income countries however, the majority of individuals continue to live in rural areas. This has generated concern that development policy focused mainly on rural areas may decrease migration and hence negatively impact economic development by keeping people in villages. This paper considers a potential channel of rural development that may help to generate growth and encourage rural-urban

migration. I use a 1992 reform in India that decentralized power to local village councils, I look at the role that political institutions play in influencing rural economic development, and the impact that this has on aggregate growth. I utilize a regression discontinuity design (RDD) based on population thresholds for the state of Uttar Pradesh that determined eligibility for independent village councils versus shared councils, and aggregate it to the district-level to study aggregate economic impacts. I find that villages with an independent political unit have marginally differential economic activity, a greater provision of infrastructure-related public goods, and higher population growth. At the district-level I find that this population growth seems to be driven predominantly by rural-rural migration, but a surprising result is that rural-urban migration is higher for districts with a higher share of independent village councils. I provide suggestive evidence that improvements at the local-level help to drive down migration frictions associated with rural-urban migration which drives this finding. Finally, I show that the changes at the local-level have a positive impact on district-level GDP.

Conferences

- Urban Economics Conference 2022, *Washington DC, USA* - Presenter
- CAFRAL 2022 , *Mumbai, India* - Discussant

Professional Activities

Presentations

2021: University of Zurich (internal), Zurich Political Economy Seminar Series

2020: University of Zurich (internal), Yale University (visiting researcher)

Awards and Fellowships

Forschungskredit Research Scholarship, University of Zurich, July 2020-June 2021

Doc.Mobility Fellowship to visit Yale University, Swiss National Science Foundation, January-June 2020

Department Teaching Award (Top 3), University of Zurich

Personal Information and Skills

Languages: English (Native), French (Intermediate), German (Basic)

Software/programming: Stata, Python, R, QGIS