You are cordially invited to the following seminar
Thursday, 1 April from 12:15 – 13:15hrs, ONLINE via ZOOM

Banning the Immediate Acceptance Mechanism in England: Effects on Admissions, School Access, and Achievement

Countries and cities around the world increasingly rely on centralized assignment systems to assign students to schools. Two algorithms, Deferred Acceptance (DA) or Immediate Acceptance (IA), are widespread. The latter is often criticized for harming disadvantaged families who may be unsophisticated and unable to obtain access desirable schools. This paper investigates the effect of the national ban of the IA mechanism in England in 2008. Before the ban, 70% of the English Local Authorities used DA and 30% used IA. Afterwards, all switched to DA. We use a difference-in-differences research design to study the effect of the ban on segregation, school access, and inequality between high- and low-SES students. We find that the ban had a large effect in districts with high competition for schools. The elimination of IA affected the school composition of low SES students more than high SES students. Because of the ban, low-SES students were 1.9 percentage points more likely to have low-SES peers and peers with 0.04 SD lower baseline test scores compared to high-SES students. At the school level, we show that the ban reduced cream-skimming of high-SES and high-achieving students through admissions policies. Our findings illustrate that while DA levels the playing field by allowing low SES students to access more sought-after schools, this need not decrease school-level segregation.

Camille Terrier is an Assistant Professor at the University of Lausanne. She works on economics of education and market design.