

Philine Widmer CV

Website: philinew.github.io • E-Mail: philine.widmer@gmail.com

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Applied Microeconomics

Political, media and development economics

Data Science for Econometrics

Machine learning, text-as-data, images-as-data

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics and Finance, Econometrics Track

▷ University of St.Gallen

Committee: Roland Hodler (supervisor), Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, Reto Foellmi • 09/2017 - 09/2023

Successful defense in 12/2022

▷ Paris School of Economics, Visiting Ph.D. student

Host: Ekaterina Zhuravskaya • 09/2021 - 06/2022

▷ ETH Zurich, Center for Law & Economics, Visiting Ph.D. student

Host: Elliott Ash • 05/2019 - 06/2019

Master in Quantitative Economics and Finance

▷ University of St.Gallen

09/2015-09/2017 • LGT Capital Partners Award for the best degree in the cohort

Bachelor in Economics

▷ University of St.Gallen

02/2013-09/2015

REFERENCES

Roland Hodler

University of St.Gallen • Ph.D.
supervisor • Co-author
(early-stage work)

Ekaterina Zhuravskaya

Paris School of Economics •
Host during research stay •
Co-author (early-stage work)

Elliott Ash

ETH Zurich • Host during
research stay • Co-author
(advanced work)

PUBLICATIONS

▷ To access a paper, please click on its hyperlinked title.

Text Semantics Capture Political and Economic Narratives (2022)

With Elliott Ash and Germain Gauthier • ACCEPTED at *Political Analysis*

Our method is publicly available as a [Python Package](#)

We develop a new “text-as-data” method. Social scientists’ interest in how narratives influence politics or the economy has been surging. Yet, it remains challenging to identify narratives in large text corpora. Our unsupervised method achieves this goal by identifying entities and mapping the relations between them.

Ministers Engage in Favoritism Too (2022)

With Noémie Zurlinden • *Journal of Public Economics*

We provide large-scale evidence for favoritism by African cabinet members. Using disaggregated health surveys and novel data on cabinet members’ birthplaces, we compare siblings to get causal estimates. Neonates’ and infants’ mortality is lower when the current health minister was born in their province.

CURRENT RESEARCH

▷ To access a paper, please click on its hyperlinked title (not available for the last listed project).

Media Slant is Contagious

With Sergio Galletta and Elliott Ash

We analyze how large, partisan outlets (national cable TV) impact local news reporting in the US. For millions of local articles, we quantify their similarity with Fox News relative to CNN/MSNBC content. With exogenously higher FNC viewership in a district (due to the channel’s lineup position), the local outlets’ articles resemble more the FNC’s content (vice versa for CNN/MSNBC).

Who Owns the Online Media?

With Ulrich Matter

We map detailed ownership networks behind thousands of online news websites in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. Outlets tend to have one ultimate owner or, otherwise, highly diversified ownership – raising concerns about the transparency of news provision. Market concentration in the online news market is moderate to high, and the financial industry has substantial involvement.

Is Propaganda Front-Page News?

Single-authored

I study subtle censorship in China through product differentiation within online newspapers. For a large, recent article sample, I construct two text-based measures for the article’s alignment with the regime’s perspective. More aligned articles tend to feature on their outlet’s front-page relative to elsewhere on the website. Censorship motives influence these front-page placements.

TEACHING

ETH Zurich

▷ Summer Institute in Computational Social Science

Focus on Machine Learning, Natural Language Processing, and Image Processing • Master and Ph.D. • Co-lecturer with Malka Guillot and Elliott Ash • Summer 2021 • Material available on [GitHub](#)

University of St.Gallen

▷ Failed States

Master • Assistant to Roland Hodler • Fall terms 2021 and 2022

▷ Data Handling: Import, Cleaning and Visualisation (Introductory Data Science Class)

Bachelor • Assistant to Ulrich Matter • Fall terms 2019 and 2020 • Set up of GitHub classroom (a teaching solution allowing for automated corrections of computer code written by students)

▷ Public Economics

Bachelor and Master • Assistant to Roland Hodler • Fall terms 2017 and 2018 • Spring terms 2020 and 2021

▷ Political Economics

Master • Assistant to Roland Hodler • Fall term 2020

▷ Social and Public Choice

Bachelor and Master • Assistant to Roland Hodler • Spring terms 2020 and 2022

▷ Introduction to Microeconomics

Bachelor • Assistant to Martin Kolmar and Bodo Hilgers • Fall terms 2017 and 2018

GRANTS AND PRIZES

Basic Research Fund (GFF) at the University of St.Gallen

▷ Stipend fully funding academic stay at the Paris School of Economics

09/2021 - 06/2022

Open Philanthropy

▷ Research project on political risks posed by advances in artificial intelligence

USD 14,000 • 04/2021-10/2022

Swiss National Science Foundation (PI: Elliott Ash)

▷ SNSF Spark Grant: Mining Narratives from Text

CHF 100,000 • 01/2019 - 01/2020

LGT Capital Partners

▷ Award for the best M.A. degree in Quantitative Economics and Finance in 2017

CHF 5,000 • 09/2017 • University of St.Gallen

EMPLOYMENT

Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich)

▷ Center for Law & Economics

Post-Doctoral Researcher | 01/2023 - now

University of St.Gallen

▷ Swiss Institute for International Economics and Applied Economic Research

Ph.D. Student and Teaching Assistant • 09/2017 - 12/2023

Junior Research Assistant • 07/2015 - 09/2017

McKinsey & Company

▷ Social Sector and Healthcare Practice

Intern (with offer for permanent position) • 11/2015 - 01/2016 • Zurich

CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNIVERSITY LIFE

University of St.Gallen

▷ School of Economics and Political Science Assembly

Ph.D. Student representative • 2018 - 2020

▷ PRISMA, the students' magazine at the University of St.Gallen

Content contributor (writing articles) • 2013 - 2016

LANGUAGES

Natural Languages

German (native) • English (proficient) • French (fluent) • Italian (fluent) • Spanish (intermediate)

Computer Languages

Python • Stata • R • SQL • Matlab