

Ernesto Ugolini

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Current Position

Teaching Fellow (ATER), Aix-Marseille School of Economics (AMSE) 2025–2026
 Research Visit, Department of Economics, University of Copenhagen (Jan–Apr 2026)
 Host: Pablo Selaya

Education

Ph.D. in Economics, Aix-Marseille School of Economics (AMSE) 2021–2025
 Advisors: Renaud Bourlès, Lorenzo Rotunno
 Jury: Matilde Bombardini, Céline Carrère, Marcelo Olarreaga, Federico Trionfetti
Visiting PhD, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy (Spring 2024)
 Hosts: Jan David Bakker, Italo Colantone, Gianmarco Ottaviano
Other: Summer School in Trade at PSE; AMSE Trade Group co-organizer (2021–2024)

Master in Economics, Aix-Marseille School of Economics 2019–2021

Master of Arts in International Political Economy, King’s College London 2017–2019

Bachelor in Economics and Business, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore 2014–2017
 Exchange Semester: University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia (2016)

Research Fields

Primary: International Trade, Political Economy
Secondary: Labor Economics, Development Economics

Working Papers

Trade and Protectionist Backlash: The Redistributive Role of Democracy, *Revise & Resubmit at the EER*

Abstract. This paper combines theory and evidence to study how democratic institutions mitigate the political effects of trade shocks through redistribution. I develop a model that embeds a factor-proportions framework into a political economy setting where political power may be unevenly distributed. Voters choose between pro-trade and protectionist parties based on expected after-tax income, with redistribution determined by the strength of democracy. In the model, trade integration with lower-skilled countries reduces the pre-tax income of less-skilled workers but can raise their after-tax income when redistribution is effective. Strong democracies redistribute trade gains and dampen protectionist backlash, while weak democracies fail to do so, increasing support for protectionism. I test these predictions using a new panel of 581 parliamentary elections in 55 democracies from 1950–2020, leveraging variation in trade costs from air transportation innovations as an instrument. Consistent with the model, trade integration raises protectionist voting in weak democracies but lowers it in strong ones. Decomposing the democracy index shows that equal access to power and redistribution across groups drive the result, which is robust to measures of redistribution to the bottom 50% and post-tax inequality.

Work in Progress

An Econometric Framework for General Equilibrium Analysis of Trade Shocks, joint with Priyam Verma

Abstract. This paper develops an econometric framework that bridges the structural and reduced-form literatures by translating the quantitative trade concept of market access into a tool for causal estimation of general-equilibrium effects on local labor markets. Guided by a multi-region, multi-sector model, we compute region–sector market access that embeds domestic input–output and competition linkages, estimate how it responds to Bartik-style trade shocks,

and aggregate the resulting effects across regions and sectors using observed spatial links. Applying this framework to the China Shock, we quantify changes in market access across 722 U.S. commuting zones and 22 sectors, estimating domestic trade costs via infrastructure networks (rail, road, waterways, and air). Accounting for these spillovers reduces the estimated contraction in manufacturing employment by about 60% relative to partial-equilibrium estimates. While upstream contractions amplify the shock, reduced domestic competition redirects demand toward less-affected regions, where producers expand. By embedding general-equilibrium trade theory into a tractable econometric design, this framework offers a new tool for assessing the local labor-market effects of globalization.

From Ballots to Beliefs: Short- and Long-Term Effects of Development Projects

Abstract. This paper investigates the impact of foreign aid on democratic engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on electoral participation and individual attitudes toward democracy. To understand how development aid affects turnout, we analyze subnational lower-house electoral data from 19 African countries, combined with a comprehensive dataset of World Bank and Chinese-funded projects spanning 2000–2021. Using a regression discontinuity design based on project completion timing relative to election dates, we find that the completion of aid projects before elections significantly reduces voter turnout. This decline may be driven by perceptions of foreign aid as a threat to national sovereignty rather than a tool for development. To further explore this, we plan to examine whether long-term exposure to aid projects erodes trust in local governments and shapes support for democracy using Afrobarometer survey data from 34 African countries.

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, Aix-Marseille University

2021 – 2026

Mathematics I (Undergraduate, 1st year), 2025–2026

Introduction to Economics (Undergraduate, 1st year), 2024–2026

Micro III: General Equilibrium Theory (Undergraduate, 2nd year), 2021–2024

Data Analysis with Excel (Undergraduate, 1st year), 2024

Awards, Fellowships, & Grants

2020 - 2021 Academic fellowship, Aix-Marseille University, France

€7,500

Seminars and Conferences

2025: North American Meeting of the UEA (Oct 2025), Economics of Global Interactions, CEPPI

2024: Bocconi Trade Tea seminars, Bocconi Politics and Institutions seminar, ETSG, EDGE Jamboree, Annual Research Conference (European Commission, Ispra, Italy), AMSE PhD seminar

2023: RIEF Bruxelles, LAGV, AMSE PhD seminar

2022: PSE trade summer school, ADRES, LAGV, ASSET, AMSE PhD seminar

Professional Activities

Co-founder and co-organizer - AMSE Spatial Reading Group

AMSE, Marseille, France

2021 - 2024

[Click here to access the website](#)

Research Assistant

AMSE, Marseille, France

Jan - Jun 2019

Roberta Ziparo

Languages and Technical Skills

Languages: Italian (Native), English (Fluent), French (Fluent)

Programming: STATA, L^AT_EX, MATLAB, QGIS, preliminary knowledge of R-Studio

References

Renaud Bourlès

Professor at AMSE

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Nicolas Berman

Professor at AMSE

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Marcelo Olarreaga

Professor at Geneva School of Economics and Management

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Lorenzo Rotunno

Senior Economist at IMF

`lrotunno@imf.org`

Jan David Bakker

Assistant Professor at Bocconi University

`jan.bakker@unibocconi.it`