# NBER Digital Economics and AI Tutorial, Spring 2026

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I am a 5th-year PhD candidate in Economics at the Rome Economics Doctorate, a joint program run by EIEF, LUISS, Sapienza University of Rome, and Tor Vergata University of Rome. I will finish my PhD in Spring 2026 and will start a postdoc under the supervision of Prof. Ruben Durante. My research interests are in political economy, development economics, and the economics of digitization.

My primary research relevant to this tutorial focuses on how digital platforms reshape social interactions and risk. The paper, *"The Impact of Dating Apps on Young Adults: Evidence from Tinder"* (with Alexey Makarin and Heyu Xiong), forthcoming in the American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, uses Tinder's targeted rollout to Greek organizations and over 1.1 million survey responses to estimate a difference-in-differences design for U.S. college students. We show that the app's introduction leads to a sizable, persistent increase in sexual activity, little change in long-term relationship formation, greater inequality in dating outcomes (especially among male students), and higher incidences of sexual assault and STDs, while average mental health does not worsen. The paper was presented by my coauthor at the NBER Digital Economics and AI Meeting in Spring 2024 at Stanford University, which I attended as a coauthor.

A second project investigates how Brazil's instant digital payments platform, Pix, reshapes criminal activity and displacement. Launched by the Central Bank in late 2020, Pix enables real-time, low-cost transfers and has quickly reached about 70% of the population. I combine municipality-month data on Pix usage from the Central Bank with harmonized crime statistics from state public-security departments (street robbery and theft, cash crimes, phone theft, and electronic fraud) and estimate a difference-in-differences model that exploits cross-municipality variation in Pix intensity and the staggered introduction of anti-fraud safeguards. Preliminary evidence from Rio state shows that, as Pix diffuses, traditional street and cash crimes fall while fraud rises, consistent with a displacement of criminal activity toward digital targets. The project asks whether instant-payment systems generate a true "safety dividend" or primarily reallocate

crime into harder-to-police digital forms, with implications for the design of payment platforms and fraud-prevention policies.

In parallel, I work on the political economy of state capacity using large-scale administrative data. My current main research project, *"Remaking the State from Below: Local Government Formation in Ukraine"* (draft available upon request), studies whether consolidating local governments while expanding their autonomy improves governance and development. I exploit Ukraine's 2015-2020 decentralization reform, which allowed small local councils to voluntarily amalgamate into newly created hromadas with greater fiscal and administrative authority. Using procurement, subnational budgets, satellite nightlights, and survey data, I find that amalgamation improves procurement performance, strengthens fiscal capacity, and increases local economic activity, alongside stronger identification as Ukrainian, especially in rural areas most exposed to the reform.

Beyond these projects, I am also working on joint papers on movies and political preferences, gendered political polarization, and the effects of catastrophes and social ties on voting behavior, which further connect my interests in political economy, media, and social behavior.

I entered the Rome Economics Doctorate in 2020 and completed a year of coursework before moving full-time to research. My dissertation will build on the Ukraine project and my work on digital platforms. My dissertation committee consists of Mounu Prem (main advisor), Luigi Guiso, Alexey Makarin, and Stefano Gagliarducci. I am applying to the Digital Economics and AI Tutorial to strengthen the conceptual and empirical foundations of the economics of digitization component of my research agenda. I am particularly interested in discussions around platform behavior and digital adoption, which directly relate to my work on Tinder and Pix and would also inform the digital angle of my state-capacity research.