

Sebastian Krantz

Junior Researcher in the Africa Initiative at Kiel Institute for the World Economy

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Core Competencies

- Economic Research and Analysis in both Academic and Policy Contexts
- Strong Skills in Econometrics, Time Series, and Machine Learning, and Practical Experience with DSGE, CGE, and Quantitative Spatial Models
- High-Performance Statistical Software Engineering and Full-Stack Web-Application and API Development
- 2 Years of Experience in Macroeconomic Policy Making in African Economies

Education

PhD in Quantitative Economics, Magna cum Laude, Kiel University (Kiel Institute). 2021–2024

Dissertation: [Africa's Economic Transformation: A Big Data Perspective](#) (Keywords: Optimal Infrastructure Investments, Regional Integration, Macroeconomic Stabilization)

Supervisor: Prof. Tobias Heidland, *Second Reader:* Prof. Christoph Trebesch.

Master in International Economics (MIE), Geneva Graduate Institute (IHEID). 2017–2019

Focus: Macroeconomics, Development, Econometrics, Trade. **GPA:** 5.54 of 6

Dissertation: [Endogenous R&D and Technology Diffusion in a Multi-Sector RBC Economy](#) (Keywords: DSGE, Endogenous Growth, Business Cycles, Sectoral Shocks)

Supervisor: Prof. Cédric Tille, *Second Reader:* Prof. Rahul Mukherjee.

BA. Liberal Arts and Science, Magna cum Laude, University College 2014–2017

Roosevelt (UCR) - Liberal Arts & Sciences Honors College of Utrecht University.

Major: Economics and Social Science (Economics, Anthropology, IR, Law, History)

Minor 1: Mathematics, **Minor 2:** Statistics. **GPA:** 3.87 of 4

Honors Thesis: [The Interdependence of Economic Growth, Human Development, and Political Institutions: A General Equilibrium Framework](#)

Employment

Junior Researcher in the Kiel Institute Africa Initiative

2021–2024

The [Kiel Institute for the World Economy](#) (IfW) is a leading research institute on global economic affairs. 2021 saw the start of [research initiatives](#) on Africa and China. I am part of the former while completing the PhD in Quantitative Economics at the University of Kiel. I have written papers on [macroeconomic stabilization](#), [regional integration](#), and economic returns to infrastructure/spatially optimal infrastructure investments in Africa. My [first](#) infrastructure paper introduces the [Africa Infrastructure Database](#) – the largest open granular database of identified infrastructure assets, businesses, and economic geography in Africa – and uses causal ML and explainable AI to understand the local and global significance of infrastructure(s) and map local economic returns to incremental infrastructure investments. The [second](#) characterizes optimal investments in the (continental) road network in partial and general equilibrium – using large-scale open routing data and quantitative spatial models. Apart from research, I developed the [Africa Monitor](#): a modern macroeconomic information platform for Africa with R and Python APIs. I also

developed a [macroeconomic database](#) and [nowcasting platform](#) for South Africa, consulted GIZ in Benin and the World Bank's Africa Chief Economist Office, and engaged in extensive [software engineering](#).

Senior Economist (ODI Fellow) in the Macroeconomic Policy Department, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Uganda.

2020-2021

Analytics & Research

[Macroeconometric analysis](#) of planned increase in excise duties on petrol and diesel. Econometric estimation of elasticity parameters for a CGE model to evaluate social policies. Paper on macroeconomic monitoring and development of a GDP nowcast. COVID-19 tourism sector emergency response paper. [Strategy paper](#) investigating the potential of cultural tourism development. Work with World Bank team to update adjusted macroeconomic indicators for Uganda and developed model to forecast them. Developed model to perform disaggregated annual revenue forecasting by tax head + short-term (monthly, quarterly) models. Started work to revise financial programming model used in the department. Research papers the [effects of fiscal spending](#) (SVAR + [fiscal multiplier analysis](#)) and [GVCs and RVCs in the EAC](#) (enhanced at Kiel Institute and [published](#) in Review of World Economics).

IT and Process Innovation

Scraped >10,000 macroeconomic indicators from national sources and IMF + World Bank, and coded >3000 national indicators. Developed [UGATSDB](#): a mixed frequency time series database to store this data, with monthly updates. Developed open-access [online data portal and R API package](#) for easy data retrieval. The database facilitates analysis and powers a [macroeconomic dashboard](#) that displays the GDP nowcast and leading economic indicators. Automated the department's monthly economic performance report using computable documents (Rmarkdown) linking to UGATSDB. Built a modern department [website](#) integrating these services and making accessible all public department reports.

Teaching and Capacity Building

Structured R-based [Data Science Training Programme](#) consisting of 6 delivered 2-day intensive courses taught in monthly intervals. Followed actively by 2 junior staff from the department, which now maintain the website, database, apps, and computable monthly report. 4+ external staff also attended.

Research Visits and Internships

Visiting Researcher at Stellenbosch University Economics Department

2023

Theme: Nowcasting the Economy and Measuring Inequality with Geospatial Data.

Outputs: Developed [SAMADB](#): South Africa Macroeconomic Database, and the [SA Nowcast](#). Both were [presented](#) to a broad audience (incl. Reserve Bank, Statistics South Africa, and the Treasury) at the Bureau of Economic Research (BER). Investigated the potential of geospatial data (nightlights, population, and wealth indices based on big data) to map inequality across space and time, and compared them to estimates from the Spatial Tax Panel. [Presented](#) at the department's BBL seminar.

Intern in the Chief Economists Office, Oxford Policy Management, Oxford (UK), Project: 'Rapid Technological Change: Challenges and Opportunities' - Assessing the impact of rapid technological change on the developing world.

2018

Tasks: Prepared country-specific [case studies on Indonesia and Tanzania](#): Sector-level analysis of pattern of growth, industry structure and the innovation system of these countries based on literature, national accounts and World Bank Enterprise Surveys. Developed a semi-automated R code to continue analysis for other countries and delivered a technical seminar on R.

Intern in the Research Department, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Kampala (Uganda), Project: 'Secondary Education in Uganda: New Survey Evidence' - Analyzing the quality of secondary education in Uganda.

2018

Tasks: Executed a [study on secondary education](#): Proposal, survey design + enumerator training, data collection on 500 secondary schools cross-country, data cleaning, data analysis, write-up of findings. Developed a [web application](#) for semi-automated exploratory analysis and geo-visualization of surveys.

Consulting

Office of the Chief Economist, Africa Region, The World Bank (Remote)

2024

Outputs: [Background paper](#) on “Africa’s Regional and Global Integration” (detailed trade, GVC and RVC analysis) for new flagship report: “Integrating Africa Forward: From Threads to Hubs”.

GIZ Benin and Ministry of Economy and Finance (Cotonou, Benin)

2023

Program de Réforme des Finances publiques pour l'atteinte des ODD et le Renforcement de la Mobilization des recettes de l'Etat (ReFORME) [Public Finance Reform Program to achieve the SDGs and Strengthen Revenue Mobilization].

Outputs: A one-day intensive workshop on public revenue forecasting, outlining the process in Germany and presenting in detail models developed for Uganda. Attended by around 15 staff from the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Treasury. Organized by GIZ Benin country office.

Publications

Krantz, S. (2023). Africa’s Great Moderation. *Journal of African Economies*, Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejad021>.

Krantz, S. (2024). Patterns of Global and Regional Value Chain Participation in the EAC. *Review of World Economics*. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10290-024-00558-0>

Krantz, S. (2024). collapse: Advanced and Fast Statistical Computing and Data Transformation in R. *Journal of Statistical Software*. Revise and Resubmit. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2403.05038>

Krantz, S. (2017). The Interdependence of Economic Growth, Human Development and Political Institutions: A General Equilibrium Framework. *Student Undergraduate Research E-journal*, 3.

Salam, U., Lee, S., Fullerton, V., Yusuf, Y., Krantz, S., & Henstridge, M. (2018). [Tanzania|Indonesia] Case Study: Rapid Technological Change - Challenges and Opportunities. *Pathways for Prosperity Commission Background Papers*, [7|8]. Oxford, UK

Working papers, unpublished papers, and academic dissertations see sebastiankrantz.com/research.

Presentations

2022 – PEGNet Conference (Kampala), German Development Economics (GDE) Conference (Stuttgart), IDOS Conference (Bonn), Federal Ministry of Finance (Berlin).

2023 – BBL at Stellenbosch University (Stellenbosch), Bureau for Economic Research (x2) (Stellenbosch), SEM Conference (Milan), GDE Conference (Dresden), IfW WCA Conference (Berlin), MIASA Policy Conference (Accra), Oxford Summer School (Oxford).

2024 – Global Policy Lab (Berkeley), CSAE Conference (Oxford), The World Bank (GOST - virtual), IfW Research Seminar (Kiel), Japan International Cooperation Agency (virtual).

Software Development

I develop high-performance open-source statistical software, focusing on R and C/C++ backends for R packages. I developed packages [collapse](#), [fastverse](#), [dfms](#), [osmclass](#), and API packages [ugatsdb](#), [africamonitor](#) (also in Python), and [samadb](#) (also in Python and Julia). I have contributed to [fixest](#), [plm](#), [decompr](#), [dggridR](#), and [kit](#). [collapse](#) is benchmarked on [windows](#) and [linux](#) among the best-performing solutions for database-like operations (top 5 for laptop-grade datasets) and has been downloaded 2+ million times. An [article](#) is under review at the Journal of Statistical Software. My latest software project is [OptimalTransportNetworks.jl](#), a Julia library to solve optimal transport networks in spatial equilibrium.

Computer and Language Skills

ANALYTICS & PROGRAMMING

- R (Advanced + C-API)
- C/C++ (Intermediate)
- Python (Intermediate)
- SQL (Intermediate)
- STATA (Intermediate)
- Julia (Intermediate)
- Mathematica (Beginner)
- Matlab & Dynare (Beginner)
- GEMPACK (Beginner)
- Linux Server + NGINX (Beginner)

OFFICE, DATA PRODUCTS, MEDIA

- MS Office & Latex (Intermediate)
- QGIS (Intermediate)
- Shiny Apps (Advanced)
- Plotly Dash Apps (Beginner)
- Simple (HTML & CSS) Websites
- R Packages (Advanced)
- Python Packages (Beginner)
- Julia Packages (Beginner)
- Photo: Lightroom & Photoshop
- Video: iMovie & Premiere Pro

LANGUAGES

- German (Native)
- English (Fluent)
- French (B1)
- Dutch (A2)
- Spanish (A1)

Other Skills Trainings

BREAD-IGC Virtual PhD Course on Urban Economics. (<i>9 Online Lectures</i>)	2024
Political Economy and Development Economics , University of Oxford. (<i>1 Week</i>)	2023
Financial Programming and Policies, Revenue Forecasting, and Macroeconomic Forecasting , IMF Institute for Capacity Building via edX.	2020-2021
Practical CGE Modeling , CoPS - Victoria University. (<i>2 Week Online Course</i>)	2020
The Science and Art of DSGE Modeling , CIMS - University of Surrey. Specialization: Emerging Open Economies. (<i>5 Day Boot Camp</i>)	2018
Big Data in Macroeconomics and Finance , Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW). (<i>6 Day Intensive Summer School</i>)	2018
Studied several MOOCS/books on Data Science, ML, and Algorithms	2018-2023

Academic References

- **Prof. Tobias Heidland** (Director of the RC International Development at IfW and Main Supervisor)
- **Prof. Rainer Thiele** (Director of the Kiel Institute Africa Initiative at IfW)
- **Prof. Christoph Trebesch** (Director of the RC International Finance and Macroeconomics at IfW)
- **Prof. Cédric Tille** (Professor of Economics at IHEID [Teaches Macroeconomics in the MIE], Dissertation Supervisor)
- **Prof. Ugo Panizza** (Professor of Economics at IHEID [Teaches Econometrics in the MIE])
- **Dr. Hylton Hollander** (Associate Professor of Economics at UCT, Research Host in Stellenbosch)
- **Dr. Alexei Karas** (Associate Professor of Economics at UCR, Honors Thesis Supervisor)

Professional References

- **Dr. Albert Musisi** (Commissioner of the Macroeconomic Policy Department, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of Uganda)
- **Dr. Stevan Lee** (Chief Economist at Oxford Policy Management)