Houda Naït El Barj

Website: houdanait.github.io/ Email: hnait@stanford.edu

EDUCATION

Stanford University

Palo Alto, CA

Predoctoral Program, GPA: 4.20/4.00

2020-Current

 Classes taken: PhD sequence in Probability, Real Analysis, Graph Theory, Stochastic Processes, Fundamental Concepts of Analysis and Statistical Methods from Physics

University College London

London, United Kingdom

BSc. in Economics with a year abroad, First Class Honours (80.72/100)

2015-2019

- Year of exchange at the University of Pennsylvania

Lycée Français de Marrakech

Marrakech, Morocco

Baccalauréat Scientifique - Spécialité en Mathématiques (20.30/20.00)

2012 - 2015

WORK EXPERIENCE

Stanford Institute of Economic Policy Research

Palo Alto, CA

Research Assistant to Professor Matthew Gentzkow

2020-Current

J.P. Morgan

London, United Kingdom

Trader - Emerging Markets Debt

May 2019–June 2020

CORE Economics

London, United Kingdom

Content Editor

2017-2018

European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)

Geneva, Switzerland

Research Intern

Summer 2016

SCHOLARSHIPS, HONOURS AND AWARDS

$\bullet~$ UCL Record Holder for Highest Grade in Econometrics Sequence (98.00/100)	2018
• Hume-Lloyd Economics Sessional Prize, UCL (both years)	2016 – 2017
• Vice-President of the UCL Economics and Finance Society	2016 – 2017
Academic Excellence - King Mohamed VI Scholarship	2015 – 2019
\bullet Second Highest Grade in the World for the French Scientific Baccalaureate (Ranked 2/12,519)	2015
• Concours Général de Physique-Chimie, laureate	2015
• Excellence-Major Scholarship from French Ministry of Education	2012 – 2015

Research

1. "Utilitarian Beliefs on Social Networks: Explaining the Emergence of Hatred" (Work in Progress with Théophile Sautory)

We study the dynamics of opinions in a setting where a leader has a payoff that depends on agents' beliefs and where agents derive psychological utility from their beliefs. Agents sample a signal that maximises their utility and then communicate with each other through a network formed by disjoint social groups. The leader has a choice to target a finite set of social groups with a specific signal to influence their beliefs and maximise his returns. Heterogeneity in agents' preferences allows us to analyse the evolution of opinions as a dynamical system with asymmetric forces. We

apply our model to explain the emergence of hatred and the spread of racism in a society. We show that when information is restricted, the equilibrium level of hatred is determined solely by the belief of the most extremist agent in the group regardless of the inherent structure of the network. On the contrary, when information is dense, the space is completely polarised in equilibrium with the presence of multiple "local truths" which oscillate in periodic cycles. We find that when preferences are uniformly distributed, the equilibrium level of hatred depends solely on the value of the practical punishment associated with holding a hate belief. Our finding suggests that an optimal policy to reduce hatred should focus on increasing the cost associated with holding a racist belief.

2. "The partisan effect hypothesis and efficient crime policy" (2018)

This paper examines whether Republican governors fight crime more efficiently than Democrats. Empirical evidence on whether Republicans can rightfully credit themselves as 'tough on crime' or as the party of 'law and order' is inconclusive. This paper tackles the question differently: First, it employs a difference-in- differences model, as opposed to standard Fixed Effects models that have previously been used to investigate partisan effects. Second, it examines social efficiency; that is, it goes further than asking a question of effectiveness, but puts costs and benefits into perspective. As such, it estimates how within a state crime variables and, thus, social efficiency change when one party takes over the executive branch from another. It will be argued that the partisan effect hypothesis does not hold with respect to crime. Closer investigation shows that the rate of newly admitted prisoners, as opposed to overall incarceration rates, tends to increase under Republican governors. However, there is no evidence that higher crime rates are a possible cause of this change. This paper concludes that this is an indication of social inefficiency and suggests further avenues for future research

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

• Volunteer work in Colombia and Lebanon 2017–2018 Worked with organisations AFEL and Fundación Niños de los Andes to help displaced populations and refugees.

• France Culture: Les Chemins de la Philosophie Radio Script Writer.

2016-2017

OTHER

• Citizenship: Morocco

• Languages: Berber (native), Arabic (native), French (native), Spanish (fluent), English (fluent), Russian (professional working proficiency)