

Johannes Walter

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Research Interests

Digital economics; behavioral and experimental economics; algorithmic advice and governance; AI persuasion and political polarization; online field and lab experiments.

JEL: D83; C93; C92; L86; O33 (secondary: D72; L51; O38; K23)

Research Experience

ZEW – Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research, Mannheim

May 2019 – present

Researcher (Digital Economy Unit) & Ph.D. Student (KIT)

- **Using AI Persuasion to Reduce Political Polarization:** Two experiments showing that conversations with an AI chatbot can reduce political polarization. *Single-authored working paper here.*
- **Advised by an Algorithm:** Experiment on how people learn the strengths and weaknesses of algorithmic advice. Available [here](#).
- **Testing Novelty Incentives in Human Red Teaming:** Two experiments documenting the effects of explicit incentives for novel harm in human AI red teaming. Funded by the Baden-Württemberg Foundation.
- **The Effect of AI on the Demand for Human Expertise:** Observational study of 100,000+ users around ChatGPT adoption to examine how consumer AI shifts reliance on human-expertise websites.
- **Automated Misinformation Correction on Social Media:** Online experiment testing the feasibility and effects of AI-generated fact-check replies within threads.

Education

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)

May 2022 – present

Ph.D. in (Technical) Economics

Visiting Ph.D. Student, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA, Sep–Dec 2022

University of Cologne

Oct 2015 – Nov 2018

M.Sc. Economics (120 ECTS). Specialisations: Econometrics; Behavioral Economics (GPA: 1.8)

Semester abroad: Durham University, UK. *Master's thesis in Microeconomics* (Grade: 1.7)

University of Passau

Oct 2011 – Jun 2015

B.A. Governance and Public Policy (180 ECTS), Economics major (GPA: 1.5)

Semester abroad: Charles University, Prague. *Bachelor's thesis in Labor Economics* (Grade: 1.0)

Selected Presentations & Media

Conference/workshop presentations: EARIE (2025), Munich Summer Institute (2025), TSE Digital Economics Workshop (2025), Verein für Socialpolitik (2024, 2025), IBEO Digital Economics (2024), ICT Conference (2024), ASFEE (2022, 2025), Young Economist Summit (2022).

Attended: CODE (MIT, 2022), German-American Conference (Harvard Kennedy School, 2022), ICT Conference (2020 - 2025).

Media & opinion: Research has been covered in *Politico Digital Future Daily*; opinion pieces at Table.Media and Euractiv.

Workshops Organized

Academic

- *Red Teaming Generative AI Models*: Co-organizer; research workshop on adversarial testing and auditing of generative AI at the ML–market design interface; Online, Sep 6, 2024.

Policy & Regulatory

- *AI Act Workshop*: Co-organizer; focus on regulatory implementation; invited stakeholders from EU institutions and academia; Brussels, Feb 2024.
- *Implementing the AI Act in Germany*: Co-organizer; participants from several Ministries and Members of Parliament; Berlin, Feb 2024.

Policy Briefs

Walter, J. (2024). *Human oversight done right: The AI Act should use humans to monitor AI only when effective.* ZEW Policy Brief. Available [here](#).

Rehse, D.; Valet, S.; Walter, J. (2024). *Using Market Design to Improve Red Teaming of Generative AI Models.* ZEW Policy Brief. Available [here](#).

Earlier Research & Teaching Experience

Student Trainee, Weber Shandwick (Analytics), Cologne

Apr 2017 – Jul 2018

Developed a statistical model to assess causal effects of women's university degree choices.

Student Research Assistant, Univ. of Passau (Chair of Microeconomics)

Oct 2014 – Apr 2015

Tutor, Labour Market Economics

Instructor, Microeconomics *Repetitorium* (exam preparation)

Skills

Programming and tools: Python (pandas, scikit-learn, Keras, PyTorch); R (tidyverse, ggplot2, plotly); oTree / Django / JavaScript for web-based experiments; LaTeX & R Markdown; Git; SQL.

Languages: German (native); English (fluent; TOEFL 114/120), French (basic).

Extracurricular Activities

Amnesty International: Focus Group “Human Rights in the Digital Age”

2010–present

Talks and workshops on AI and human rights (Chaos Computer Congress (cc3), Digitale Woche Kiel, University of Mainz; internal trainings for Amnesty Germany).

Improvistional theatre: Member/performer in groups in Passau, Cologne, Mannheim, and Stuttgart.