Effective Programming Practices for Economists

Debugging

Using the Pdb+ debugger

Janoś Gabler and Hans-Martin von Gaudecker

Setting a breakpoint

Simple

```
def cobb_douglas(x1, x2, gamma1, gamma2, a):
    import pdbp; breakpoint()
    return (a * x1**gamma1 * x2**gamma2,)
```

Conditional

```
def cobb_douglas(x1, x2, gamma1, gamma2, a):
    if gamma1 <= 0.5:
        import pdbp; breakpoint()
    return (a * x1**gamma1 * x2**gamma2,)
```

- Set a breakpoint with `import pdbp; breakpoint()`
- You can do that anywhere!
  - Inside function definitions
  - In loops
  - In if conditions!
- Execution will stop at the breakpoint and show you the interactive debug prompt

Important commands

Command	Action
`n`	Execute the **n**ext line
`s`	Execute the next **s**tep
`c`	**c**ontinue until the next breakpoint
`u`	Go one frame **u**p (go backwards through code)
`d`	Go **d**own one frame (go forward through code)
`exit`	Stop the debugging (also `ctrl + d`)

- More commands here
- Do not use any of those as variable names!

Graphical alternatives

- VScode and other IDEs have graphical debuggers
  - Set breakpoints via clicking
  - Variable explorers
- We prefer the terminal for several reasons
  - Integrates perfectly with pytask and pytest
  - Extremely fast once you get a bit of practice
  - More robust (in our experience)