

PhD student in Data Intensive Science applied to Astrophysics and Cosmology at University College London  
Member of the Physics & Astronomy group and the Cosmoparticle Initiative

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## EDUCATION

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[UCL – University College London](#) (UK) 2017-2021

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Data Intensive Science, 4-year programme.  
Advisors: Benjamin Joachimi and John Shawe-Taylor.  
Thesis on the application of machine learning generative models to cosmology.

[University of Padova](#) (Italy) 2015-2017

2-year master course in Physics. Final grade: 110/110 *cum laude*.  
Advisor: Sabino Matarrese.  
Final project on characterising the intrinsic alignment of bright structures in dark matter haloes using simulation and real data.

[UCL – University College London](#) (UK) 2017-2017

6-month traineeship funded by the Erasmus+ programme.

[University of Padova](#) (Italy) 2012-2015

Undergraduate course in Physics. Final grade: 110/110 *cum laude*.  
Advisor: Denis Bastieri.  
Final project on testing various dark matter models using Fermi LAT data.

## INDUSTRY

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[Faculty AI](#) (UK) 2020

8-month internship in the most experienced Artificial Intelligence (AI) company in Europe. Worked in the R&D team dealing with AI privacy, fairness, explainability and robustness. Collaborated with data scientists, computer scientists and software engineers to develop AI solutions for companies and organisations.

[ASI Data Science](#) (UK) 2018

4-month group project in Natural Language Processing applied to topic modelling. Developed and built a web interface for fast topic modelling of large corpora of text.

## PUBLICATIONS

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MNRAS: Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society  
ICLR: International Conference on Learning Representations

GJI: Geophysics Journal International  
\* indicates joint effort

1. [Toward fast machine-learning-assisted Bayesian posterior inference of realistic microseismic events](#)  
**D. Piras**, A. Spurio Mancini, B. Joachimi, M. P. Hobson. 2021. Submitted to GJI.  
We used machine learning techniques to speed up the Bayesian inference of any type of microseismic event and identify the source type. I devised the algorithm, implemented the experiments, validated the results and wrote the paper.
2. [Learning to Noise: Application-Agnostic Data Sharing with Local Differential Privacy](#)  
A. Mansbridge\*, G. Barbour\*, **D. Piras\***, C. Frye, I. Feige, D. Barber. 2020. To be submitted to NeurIPS 2021.  
We developed a machine learning variational approach to guarantee the privacy of high-dimensional data. I co-lead the implementation and the experimental validation of the method, and helped with its theoretical design and paper writing.
3. [Deep generative models for accelerated Bayesian posterior inference of microseismic events](#)  
A. Spurio Mancini, **D. Piras**, M. P. Hobson, B. Joachimi. 2020. Submitted to Solid Earth Discussions.  
We applied 7 different machine learning models to seismic traces to obtain a huge speed-up in the Bayesian inference of their locations. I helped devise the algorithms, lead their validation and wrote the corresponding parts of the paper.
4. [The mass dependence of dark matter halo alignments with large-scale structure](#)  
**D. Piras**, B. Joachimi, B. M. Schäfer, S. Hilbert, M. Bonamigo, E. van Uitert. 2018. MNRAS, 474 (1), 1165-1175.  
We developed a theoretical framework to characterise the intrinsic alignment of galaxies as a function of the mass of the hosting dark matter haloes. I lead the data analysis and the model verification, and wrote the paper.

## AWARDS

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Valentino Baccin Prize (2017)

Prize for the excellent work done in preparing and publishing a master's degree thesis in the field of Physics (€5.0k).  
From: City of Bassano del Grappa, Vicenza.

**Sergio Gambi Study Prize (2017)**

Prize for the best 2nd year performance amongst all 2-year scientific master's degrees (€2.5k).

From: University of Padova, Padova.

**Fermi High School Prize (2012)**

Prize for obtaining the highest marks in high school, which was completed one year in advance (€1.0k).

From: Enrico Fermi High School, Padova.

**TALKS, WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

Feb 2021, CDT seminar, UCL, London, UK

*Differential privacy for high-dimensional data*

Nov 2020, Geophysics Group Meeting, UCL, London, UK

*Accelerated Bayesian inference of microseismic events using deep learning*

Dec 2019, Data Science for Physics and Astronomy, Alan Turing Institute, London, UK

*Using machine learning to generate virtual universes*

Sep 2019, CDT in DIS Annual Meeting, UCL, London, UK

*Using machine learning to generate virtual universes*

Jun 2019, Artificial Intelligence methods in Cosmology, ETH, Ascona, Switzerland

*Generating virtual uniVAErses*

May 2019, PhysAstroData Round Table, UCL, London, UK

*Introduction to TensorFlow*

Mar 2019, MSc Open Day, UCL, London, UK

*Generating virtual universes using machine learning*

Dec 2018, CDT in DIS – Upgrade talks, UCL London, UK

*Generating virtual universes*

Jul 2018, STFC's Summer School in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, UCL, London, UK

*A semi-supervised approach to topic modelling (poster session)*

**SOFTWARE SKILLS**

Python (including advanced TensorFlow and PyTorch)

IDL (basic)

C++

HTML (basic)

FORTRAN (basic)

CSS (basic)

**TEACHING**

[UCL – University College London](#) (UK)

since 2017

Teaching assistant, demonstrator, marker and invigilator for the following courses:

Practical Physics and Computing 1

Electromagnetic Theory

Classical Mechanics

Electricity and Magnetism

Practical Astrophysics and Computing

Machine Learning with Big Data

[London Business School](#) (UK)

since 2018

Teaching assistant and demonstrator for the following courses:

Python Programming – Master in Management

Introduction to Python for Data Science

Python Programming – Master of Business Administration

Machine Learning for Big Data

Applied Programming Course: Basic Python

Decision Analytics and Modelling

Applied Programming Course: Intermediate Python

Python for Finance

**OUTREACH AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

UCL-Jordan Machine Learning workshops

2021

Prepared and delivered a series of 5 hands-on workshops in machine learning topics.

[UCL Data Science MSc](#)

since 2020

Helping the MSc students by providing guidance and support through workshops and Q&A sessions.

[UCL-Jordan DIS](#)

since 2020

Tutor for the Machine Learning course held between UCL and the [University of Jordan](#).

[ML Journal Club](#)

since 2019

Set up and co-hosting a journal club in machine learning in the Centre for Doctoral Training in Data Intensive Science at UCL.

[For Inquisitive Minds](#)

2019

An outreach podcast where I discussed my PhD topic with non-experts.

[PhD peer mentoring](#)

since 2018

Providing friendly support to 1<sup>st</sup> year PhD students in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at UCL.

[UCL Certificate of Higher Education in Astronomy](#)

2018

Helped mature students by marking and providing feedback to their final dissertations.

[DataKind UK – Data Dive](#)

2017

A 2-day hackathon to explore applications of data science to help charities.