Alexander Hempel

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Citizenship: Canadian, German

Research Interests: Urban Economics, Public Economics, Applied Microeconomics

Education

Ph.D. in Economics, University of Toronto — 2024 (Expected)
Committee: Robert McMillan (supervisor), Stephan Heblich, Jonathan Hall

M.A in Economics, University of Toronto — 2018

B.A in Economics & European Studies, University of Toronto — 2017

Research

The Impact of Greenbelts on Housing Markets: Evidence from Toronto
(Job Market Paper)

New Evidence on Wealth Inequality in Canada

Awards and Grants

University of Toronto Doctoral Fellowship ($15,000 × 5)	2018 - 2023
Royal Bank Graduate Fellowships in Public and Economic Policy	2018
Chancellor's Scholarship from the Ashbaugh Fund	2016
Department of Economics Essay Prize in Economic Policy	2015

Professional Experience

Teaching Assistant — 2017 - present

- ECO 101 & 102: Principles of Microeconomics & Macroeconomics
- ECO 200 & 206: Microeconomic Theory
- ECO 336 & 446: Public Economics
- ECO 367 & 422: Economics of Inequality
- ECO 504: Lead Writing TA
- Also: Economic History, Sports Economics & Law and Economics

Research Assistant 2017 - 2020

- Michael Smart
  - Performed data analysis on Canadian tax data
  - Helped build the *Finances of the Nation* website to share economic information with the Canadian public
- Michel Serafinelli
  - Translated historic German data tables into English
  - Created figures for published research projects

Conference Presentations

Annual Conference of the Canadian Economics Association (Ottawa) 2022

Academic Service

Co-President, Graduate Economics Union 2019 - 2020
Doctoral Student Mentor 2019 - 2022

Languages

English (native), French (advanced) & German (intermediate)
Programming: Stata, Python, Julia, ArcGIS

References

Robert McMillan
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Abstracts

The Impact of Greenbelts on Housing Markets: Evidence from Toronto

(Job Market Paper)

Greenbelts are a common policy tool used to protect natural spaces from urban sprawl. With rising housing costs in many metropolitan areas, questions have been raised about the impact of Greenbelts on housing markets. Despite the intense policy debate, there is little empirical evidence on how Greenbelts affect housing supply and prices across a metropolitan region. In this paper, I contribute a new approach to estimate the impact of Greenbelt policies on housing market outcomes and use it to evaluate the introduction of the world's largest contiguous Greenbelt, which occurred in Toronto in the early-2000s. Using rich project-level data on housing developments, I first show that the Greenbelt did have an impact on housing development patterns, where restricted, developable census tracts saw less housing built relative to unrestricted tracts. Then, to quantify the effects across the metropolitan area, I build and estimate a model of housing supply and demand with heterogeneity at the census tract level. Using the model, I simulate the counterfactual scenario in which no Greenbelt was implemented, finding that the Greenbelt led to a reduction in housing supply of almost 10,000 units and price increases of 4.1% for houses and 6.1% for condominiums in 2010; this corresponds to an increase in condo rent of $675 a year. Finally, I show that had the Greenbelt been paired with a small relaxation of zoning regulations, the effects of the Greenbelt would be minimized, suggesting a viable alternative to developing Greenbelts in the face of rising housing prices.

New Evidence on Wealth Inequality in Canada

I estimate the distribution of wealth in Canada for 1990-2018 using the income capitalization method of Saez & Zucman (2016). The results indicate that while the top 1% wealth share rose from 15.3% in 1990 to 19.7% in 2008, the top 1% share has since fallen to 17.5% in 2018. Using linear decomposition methods, I show that while changes to the composition of assets in Canada can account for the increase in top shares over time, the large gap between Canada and the United States stems mostly from differences in within-asset concentration. Finally, I apply the concept of "synthetic savings" to decompose whether the fluctuations in the top 1% share were driven by changes in asset prices or changes to savings behaviour and find evidence that changes to savings behaviour across the wealth distribution correlate more strongly to the observed trends.