Tomas Wilner

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Northwestern Economics

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Contact Information

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Fields

Research: Industrial Organization, Environmental Economics, Energy Economics
Teaching: Industrial Organization, Energy Economics, Econometrics

Education

Ph.D., Economics, Northwestern University (anticipated) 2024
Committee: Mar Reguant (Chair), Gaston Illanes, Robert Porter, Vivek Bhattacharya
M.A., Economics, Northwestern University 2021
M.A., Economics, Universidad de Chile 2017
B.Sc.Eng., Industrial Engineering, Universidad de Chile 2015

Fellowships & Awards

Dissertation University Fellowship, Northwestern University 2023–2024
Distinguished Teaching Assistant Award, Northwestern University 2020–2021
University Fellowship, Northwestern University 2018–2023
National Masters Degree Fellowship, Chilean Ministry of Education 2015–2017

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University 2019–2023
Industrial Organization (graduate), Energy Economics (undergrad), Applied Econometrics (undergrad)
Teaching Assistant, Universidad de Chile 2013–2016
Econometrics (graduate), Statistics (undergrad), Finance II (undergrad), Marketing (undergrad)

Research Experience

Research Assistant, Professor Gaston Illanes, Northwestern University 2021–2023
Research Assistant, Professor Mar Reguant, Northwestern University 2021
Research Assistant, Professor Carlos Noton, Universidad de Chile 2017
Research Assistant, Professor Juan Escobar, Universidad de Chile 2016
Research Assistant, Professor Marcelo Olivares, Universidad de Chile 2015-2016

Other Experience

Summer Intern, Chilean Antitrust Agency 2016

Job Market Paper

"Natural gas to complement solar intermittency: Long-run consequences of policy interventions" with Jingyuan Wang

Abstract: Natural gas has become a pivotal technology in the energy transition, as it can complement renewable generation at a lower emission rate compared to alternative fossil fuels. In countries with insufficient natural gas reserves, firms might exhibit suboptimal import levels relative to governmental preferences due to risk factors inherent in the procurement process. In this paper, we study different policies designed to incentivize larger natural gas orders and examine their impact on long-term renewable entry. Our research is conducted in Chile, a notable player in the adoption of solar energy, which implemented a novel policy to encourage the procurement of natural gas. We find that, even though the policy displaces coal usage, it simultaneously increases natural gas imports

to such an extent that it counterbalances its positive effects on emissions. The removal of this policy would not only result in a short-term reduction in emissions but also stimulate increased solar energy adoption in the long run. Among the policies we examined, the implementation of a carbon price emerges as the optimal choice, as it elevates natural gas imports, lowers emissions in the short run, and maximizes solar energy entry in the long term.

Working papers

"Beyond the impossible: Steering consumers away from beef"

Abstract: The effect of meat consumption on the environment is well-documented, yet little is known about the effect of policies targeting environmentally harmful food choices. I build a structural model of the demand for meat which allows me to study consumer responses to three different policies: a 50% reduction of beef products on retail shelves, an environmental tax reflecting the environmental costs of food products, and advertisements for plant-based products that increase consumers' valuation of them. I also analyze the supply side to estimate how prices would change in equilibrium under these counterfactual scenarios. I find that imposing restrictions on beef products alone does not achieve a significant reduction in emissions. The consumer welfare loss is larger than the environmental gains, and its benefits can be easily matched with a small tax instead. Conversely, the tax and an increment on plant-based products' valuations prove to be more effective in reducing emissions. However, the burden of the tax policy is born disproportionately by underprivileged consumers. The environmental benefits of the tax come mainly from consumers switching to poultry and pork products. Therefore, a policy that subsidizes these types of meat products while taxing beef might achieve more progressive results.

Invited workshops

Berkeley/Sloan Summer School in Environmental and Energy Economics, University of California, Berkeley — 2020

Programming

Matlab, Python, Julia, Stata, R, QGIS (basic)

Languages

English (fluent), Spanish (native), Portuguese (basic)

References

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