My main interests lie in the fields of public economics and political economy, which I approach from both applied and theoretical perspectives. The broad theme of my research is how economic behavior and outcomes are influenced by political institutions. In my primary strand of research, I empirically investigate how elections, election results, and political parties influence real economic outcomes such as employment and growth. In another strand, I take a theoretical approach to studying the strategic incentives for political candidates inherent in different electoral systems, and how these incentives affect the diversity and dispersion of ideological platforms adopted in equilibrium.

In my job market paper, “Electoral cycles in government employment: Evidence from US gubernatorial elections” (accepted at *European Economic Review*), I empirically investigate whether gubernatorial elections in the United States induce electoral cycles in public sector employment. Incumbent governors running for reelection may have the incentive and opportunity to raise employment levels leading up to elections, or delay employment reducing decisions until afterwards. This could happen through the allocation of funds in the state budget, the timing of employment policies, large projects, and so on. Exploiting the staggered and fixed election cycles across states, I implement both fixed effects specifications and a geographic regression discontinuity design that compares counties at state borders with different election cycles, thus controlling for prevailing economic conditions at a very local level. I indeed find evidence of electoral cycles consistent with the incumbents’ electoral incentives – state and local government employment increase in the quarters leading up to an election, following which they abruptly return to normal levels – and several heterogeneity analyses support the results. There is also suggestive evidence of interesting interactions between state and local governments. In particular, incumbent governors may be able to influence local government employment, over which their control is not direct, through politically aligned local government officials or politicians. In contrast to the previous literature, which largely focuses on developing countries or direct policy instruments, the presence of systematic electoral cycles in a mature democracy and in a real economic outcome is quite surprising. My findings highlight the importance of incorporating an understanding of the incentives faced by elected officials into assessments of economic policy, policy outcomes, and political institutions.

A second related empirical paper, “The Democratic-Republican presidential growth gap and the partisan balance of the state governments” (with Niklas Potrafke), investigates the apparent superior economic performance of the United States economy under Democratic presidents compared to Republican presidents. Whether this performance gap is real and the reasons behind it are a subject of some debate. We study this phenomenon from a new angle, investigating whether the partisan control of governorships
and legislatures at the state level plays a role. We find that state partisan control does matter – economic growth was higher when more governorships and state legislatures were controlled by the Democratic Party – although this does not explain the presidential performance gap. Rather, the findings appear to corroborate the presidential gap, suggesting the existence of a more generalized Democratic performance advantage that extends beyond just the presidency to state level partisan control as well.

My other line of research investigates how the electoral system in use affects the political platforms adopted by candidates running for office, and has so far resulted in three publications. In “Nonconvergent Electoral Equilibria under Scoring Rules: Beyond Plurality” (with Arkadii Slinko, Journal of Public Economic Theory, 2017), we study in a spatial voting model the equilibrium properties of a broad class of voting rules – scoring rules. Examples include plurality rule, Borda count, and negative voting. We identify several classes of scoring rules exhibiting a range of different equilibrium properties. In “Electoral competition under best-worst voting rules” (with Arkadii Slinko, Social Choice and Welfare, 2018), we study spatial competition under voting rules where voters, in addition to voting for their preferred candidate, may also vote against their least preferred. We show that the set of equilibria is similar to that of plurality, except the negative votes have an important moderating effect, allowing a more desirable mix between diversity of platforms and extremism to be attained. Finally, since previous studies mainly focus on symmetric equilibria, in “Asymmetric equilibria in spatial competition under weakly concave scoring rules” (with John McCabe-Dansted and Arkadii Slinko, Economics Letters, 2018), we instead study asymmetric equilibria. We uncover a class of voting systems for which, not only can asymmetric equilibria exist, but they may also be the only equilibria that exist. These papers illustrate how different voting institutions affect the incentives of strategically competing candidates and, most importantly, which features result in more desirable equilibrium outcomes.

I am conducting ongoing research within both of my existing agendas. On the empirical front, which is my primary focus, I am investigating how election outcomes lead to differential behavioral responses in hiring in industries and regions with different levels of political alignment with the winning candidate. In related work, I study how employment dynamics in different industries at state borders respond to changes in own- and neighboring-state economic policies and the political environment. I also continue to work my coauthors on extending our theoretical voting results to other settings such as networks. That said, my research potential is not limited to just these areas, and I am always looking to diversify my projects. Given my background in applied microeconomics, I have technical and methodological skills that would be highly transferable to the study of a wide range of key policy issues.