

OLA OLSSON

Department of Economics
School of Business, Economics and Law
University of Gothenburg
Email: ola.olsson@economics.gu.se
Phone: +46 31 786 1341
ORCID: 0000-0003-2125-2672

Vasagatan 1
Box 640
40530 Gothenburg
Sweden

Webpage: <https://sites.google.com/site/econolaols/>
CV updated: March, 2025

CITIZENSHIP: Swedish

CIVIL STATUS: Married, three children

ACADEMIC POSITIONS:

2024-: Head of Department, Department of Economics, University of Gothenburg
2018-2024: Vice-Dean, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg
2015-2018: Deputy Head of Department
2010-: Professor of Economics, University of Gothenburg
2005-2010: Associate Professor of Economics (Docent), University of Gothenburg
2000-2005: Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Gothenburg

OTHER POSITIONS:

2019-2022: Member of Committee for Development Research, Swedish Research Council (VR)
2014-2015: Member of SIDA Research Council
2013-2015: Affiliated researcher, Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala University
2011-: Senior member, EUDN (European Network of Development Economists)
2007-2012: Resource person, AERC (African Economic Research Consortium)

RESEARCH VISITS:

Jun-July, 2022: Visiting researcher, Institute of Advanced Study (IAST), Toulouse School of Economics
Fall, 2010: Visiting scholar, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs (invited by Robert Bates), Harvard University.
Fall, 1999: Visiting student, Dept of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

EDUCATION:

M.A. in economics and political science, University of Gothenburg, 1996.
Ph.D. in economics, "Perspectives on Knowledge and Growth" University of Gothenburg, 2000.
Thesis advisor: Douglas A. Hibbs, Jr
Faculty opponent: Fabrizio Zilibotti, IIES, Stockholm University

PUBLICATIONS:

Journal articles

"Cadasters and Economic Growth: A Long-Run Cross-Country Panel" (2024) (with Michelle d'Arcy and Marina Nistotskaya) *Journal of Political Economy* 132(11), <https://doi.org/10.1086/730551>.

- “Floods, Droughts and Environmental Circumscription in Early State Development: The Case of Ancient Egypt” (2024) (with Laura Mayoral), *Journal of Economic Growth* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10887-024-09243-1>
- “Roman Roads to Prosperity: Persistence and Non-Persistence of Public Infrastructure” (2022) (with Carl-Johan Dalgaard, Nicolai Kaarsen and Pablo Selaya) *Journal of Comparative Economics* 50(4), 896-916. Media coverage: *Washington Post*; *The Telegraph*; *BBC (Spanish)*; *The Times*; *Daily Mail*; *Vox*; *Corriere della Serra*; *The NEP-HIS Blog*; *World Economic Forum*; *KRWG*; *NZ Herald*, *Göteborgs-Posten*.
- “The Origins of Cultural Divergence: Evidence from Vietnam” (2022) (with Hoang-Anh Ho and Peter Martinsson) *Journal of Economic Growth* 27(1), 45-89.
- “Transition to Agriculture and First State Presence: A Global Analysis” (2021) (with Oana Borcan and Louis Putterman) *Explorations in Economic History* 82(Oct), doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2021.101404.
- “Fiscal Capacity in ‘Post’-Conflict States: Evidence from Trade on Congo River” (2020) (with Maria Eriksson Baaz and Peter Martinsson) *Journal of Development Economics* 146(Sep), 102506.
- “A Western Reversal Since the Neolithic? The Long-Run Impact of Early Agriculture” (with Christopher Paik) (2019), *Journal of Economic History* 80(1), 100-135.
- “State History and Economic Development: Evidence from Six Millennia” (2018) (with Oana Borcan and Louis Putterman), *Journal of Economic Growth* 23(1), 1-40.
- “Navigating Taxation on the Congo River: The Interplay of Officialisation and Legitimation” (2018) (with Maria Eriksson Baaz and Judith Verweijen), *Review of African Political Economy* 45(156), 250-266.
- “Origins of the Sicilian Mafia: The Market for Lemons” (2017) (with Arcangelo Dimico and Alessia Isopi), *Journal of Economic History* 77(4), 1083-1115. Media coverage: *Washington Post*; *The Times*; *Daily Mail*; *Forbes*; *Belfast Telegraph*; *National Public Radio (UK)*; etc.
- “Long-Run Cultural Divergence: Evidence from the Neolithic Revolution” (2016) (with Christopher Paik) *Journal of Development Economics* 122(Sep), 197-213.
- “Climate Change and Market Collapse: A Model Applied to Darfur” (2016) *Games* 7(1), 9, 1-27.
- “Ethnic Cleansing or Resource Struggle in Darfur? An Empirical Analysis” (2013) (with Eyerusalem Siba) *Journal of Development Economics* 103 (July), 299-312.
- “Why Are Rich Countries More Politically Cohesive?” (2013) (with Carl-Johan Dalgaard) *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 115(2), 423-448.
- “The Roots of Ethnic Diversity” (2012) (with Pelle Ahlerup), *Journal of Economic Growth* 17(2), 71-102.
- “Feeding the Horse: Unofficial Economic Activities Within the Police Force in the DR Congo” (2011)(with Maria Eriksson Baaz) *African Security* 4(4), 223-241.
- “Country Size and the Rule of Law: Resuscitating Montesquieu” (2011) (with Gustav Hansson) *European Economic Review* 55(5), 613-629.
- “After Janjaweed? Socioeconomic Impacts of the Conflict in Darfur” (2010) *World Bank Economic Review* 24(3), 386-411.
- “On the Democratic Legacy of Colonialism” (2009) *Journal of Comparative Economics* 37(4), 534-551.
- “Social Capital vs Institutions in the Growth Process” (2009) (with Pelle Ahlerup and David Yanagizawa) *European Journal of Political Economy* 25(1), 1-14 (lead article).

- “Windfall Gains, Political Economy, and Economic Development” (2008) (with Carl-Johan Dalgaard), *Journal of African Economies* 17, Suppl 1, 72-109.
- “Endogenous Institutional Change After Independence” (2007) (with Heather Congdon Fors), *European Economic Review* 51(8): 1896-1921.
- “Conflict Diamonds” (2007) *Journal of Development Economics* 82(2): 267-286 (lead article).
- “Diamonds Are A Rebel’s Best Friend” (2006) *The World Economy* 29(8): 1133-1150.
- “Technological Opportunity and Growth” (2005) *Journal of Economic Growth* 10: 31-53.
- “Biogeography and Long-Run Economic Development” (2005) (with Douglas A. Hibbs, Jr), *European Economic Review* 49(4): 909-938.
- “Geography and Institutions: Plausible and Implausible Linkages” (2005) *Journal of Economics* Suppl. 10: 167-194 (Special issue).
- “Congo: The Prize of Predation” (with Heather Congdon Fors) (2004) *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 321-336.
- “Geography, Biogeography, and Why Some Countries Are Rich and Others Are Poor” (with Douglas A. Hibbs, Jr) (2004), *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA (PNAS)*, March 9, 101(10): 3715-3720
- “Entrepreneurship as Recombinant Growth”, (with Bruno S. Frey) (2002) *Small Business Economics* 19(2): 69-80, (Special issue).
- “The Appearance of Knowledge in Growth Theory” (2001) *Economic Issues* 6(1): 1-20.
- “Knowledge as a Set in Idea Space: An Epistemological View on Growth” (2000) *Journal of Economic Growth* 5: 253-275.
- “Product Innovations in Small and Large Enterprises” (1998) (with Charlie Karlsson) *Small Business Economics* 10: 31-46.

Articles in books

- “Sustainable Economic Growth: A Critical Assessment of Target 8.1” (with Pelle Ahlerup), chap 2 in Dellve et al (2025) *Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 8: Economic Growth and Decent Work For All*, London: Routledge.
- “Deep determinants of economic freedom” (2024) chapter in *Handbook of Research on Economic Freedom* (ed. N. Berggren). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- “Political Economy” (with Heather Congdon Fors) (2010) *Encyclopedia of Geography*, (ed. Barney Warf), Sage Academic Publishers.
- “Reference-Dependent Utility in an Industrial Cluster” (2004), in Karlsson, Flensburg, and Hörte (eds), *Knowledge Spillovers and Knowledge Management*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, p 268-282.
- “Vad unionen gör och vad den borde göra – ekonomiska aspekter på en konstitution för Europa”, (2003) in Gustavsson, S., L.Oxelheim, and N.Wahl (eds), *Valutaunionen, Författningsfrågan och Östutvidningen, Europaperspektiv 2003*, Stockholm: Santérus Förlag, p 109-132.

Books (monographs):

Paleoeconomics: Climate Change and Economic Development in Prehistory (2024) Palgrave MacMillan. Media coverage: *Our Long Walk* (podcast), *Vetenskapsradion*

Essentials of Advanced Macroeconomic Theory (2012) London: Routledge.

Popular articles, book reviews, reports, etc

”Tillväxtens djupa bestämningsfaktorer” (2019) *Ekonomisk Debatt* 2/2019, 5-21.

”The Big Squeeze” (2018) *Aeon*, Sep 5.

”Nu behöver vi breda politiska lösningar” (2016) opinion article, *Dagens Samhälle*, Nov 16.

”Det nya samhällskontraktet” (2013) *Ekonomisk Debatt* 4/2013, 43-53.

”Tillväxt en förutsättning för minskad fattigdom” (2013) opinion article, *Göteborgs-Posten*, January 13.

”The Darfur Conflict: Geography or Institutions?” (2012) forthcoming in *Journal of African Development* (book review).

”Institutionernas roll för ekonomisk utveckling” (2012) *Ekonomisk Debatt*, s 89-93, 8/2012 (book review of Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) *Why Nations Fail*).

”The Economics of Industrial Development” (2012), *Papers in Regional Science* 91(3), 692-693 (book review).

”Industrial Policies in Rwanda: Review of Policy-Induced Incentive Structure” (2011) (with Michele Savini) report for International Growth Centre, LSE.

”Är förbannelse bruten?” (2011) *Internationella Studier* Höst, s 52-55.

”Sudan – en utmaning för utrikespolitiken” (2011), opinion article, *Göteborgs-Posten*, February 15.

”The Political Economy of Mining in Zambia” (2010) (with Arne Bigsten and Sixtus Mulenga), World Bank report.

”Geography, Structural Change, and Economic Development: Theory and Empirics”, (2010) *Papers in Regional Science*, 89(4), 882-884 (book review)

”Klimatet och samhällsekonomin”, (2008) (with Fredrik Andersson), editorial for *Ekonomisk Debatt*, s 3-4, 4/2008.

”Mot en ny fördelning av svenska forskningsresurser” (2008) (with Fredrik Andersson), editorial for *Ekonomisk Debatt*, s 3-4, 1/2008.

”Invandrarers integration på arbetsmarknaden” (2007) (with Per Skedinger), editorial for *Ekonomisk Debatt*, s 3-4, 3/2007

”Tjänstedirektivet och protektionismen” (2007) (with Per Skedinger), editorial for *Ekonomisk Debatt*, s 3-4, 1/2007.

”Institutionerna och samhällsekonomin”, (1999) from *Globalisering, Forskarvolym IX, Demokratiutredningen* (SOU 1999:83) (ed. Erik Amnå) (with Douglas Hibbs and Anna Brink), p 63-103.

WORKING PAPERS:

”The Political Economy of Bread and Circuses: Weather Shocks and Classic Maya Monument Construction”

- “Conditional Persistence? Historical Disease Exposure and Government Response to COVID-19” (with Annika Lindskog) (2023) *Working Papers in Economics* No 835, Dept of Economics, University of Gothenburg.
- “Sustainable Economic Growth: A Critical Assessment of SDG 8.1” (with Pelle Ahlerup) (2023) *Working Papers in Economics* No 834, Dept of Economics, University of Gothenburg.
- “Resource Windfalls and Local Government Behavior: Evidence from a Policy Reform in Indonesia” (with Michele Valsecchi) (2015), *Working Papers in Economics* No 635, Dept of Economics, University of Gothenburg.
- “Quantifying Ethnic Cleansing: An Application to Darfur” (with Michele Valsecchi) (2010), *Working Papers in Economics* No 479, Dept of Economics, University of Gothenburg.
- “Unbundling Ex-Colonies: A Comment on Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, 2001” (2004), *Working Papers in Economics* No 146, Dept of Economics, University of Gothenburg.
- “The Rise of Neolithic Agriculture” (2001), presented at the “Long-Run Growth Workshop” in Copenhagen, *Working Papers in Economics* No 57, Dept of Economics, University of Gothenburg.
- “A Microeconomic Analysis of Institutions”, (2000) *Working Papers in Economics* No 25, Dept of Economics, University of Gothenburg.

EDITORIAL WORK:

Co-editor (for development and growth), *Economic Inquiry*, 2014-2017

Editorial board, *European Journal of Political Economy*, 2011-

Editor, *Ekonomisk Debatt* (Journal of the Swedish Economic Association), 2007-2008.

REFEREEING:

Academic journals

American Economic Review, *Econometrica*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Journal of Political Economy*

Acta Politica, *American Economic Journal: Macro*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Political Science Review*, *Applied Economics*, *BE Journal of Economic Analysis and Policy*, *Bulletin of Economic Research*, *Canadian Journal of Economics*, *Comparative Sociology*, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *Economica*, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *Economic History of Developing Regions*, *Economic Journal*, *Economic Inquiry*, *Economics Letters*, *Economic Systems*, *Economic Theory*, *Economics of Governance*, *Empirical Economics*, *European Economic Review*, *European Journal of Political Economy*, *Explorations in Economic History*, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *Frontiers in Public Health*, *International Economic Review*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of African Economies*, *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *Journal of Development Economics*, *Journal of Development Studies*, *Journal of Economic Growth*, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *Journal of Economic Studies*, *Journal of Economic Surveys*, *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, *New Global Studies*, *Oxford Economic Papers*, *PLoS One*, *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, *Resources Policy*, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, *Science Advances*, *Social Science and Medicine*, *World Development*, *World Politics*, and several research anthologies.

Other (selected)

AWARDED GRANTS (selected):

Vetenskapsrådet (Swedish Research Council), 2018-2020 “Climate change, political instability, and state collapse over 5000 years: New data and future implications” (with Laura Mayoral), 3.6 million SEK

SIDA, 2011-2013, “Natural Resources and Ethnic Violence in Darfur”, 2.4 million SEK

SIDA, 2007-2009, “Institutions and Long-Run Economic Development”, 1.8 million SEK

Vetenskapsrådet (Swedish Research Council), 2007-2009, “Institutional Economics and Long-Run Development”, 2.4 million SEK

Jan Wallander and Tom Hedelius Foundation, 2007-2009, 1 million SEK

Jan Wallander and Tom Hedelius Foundation, 2000-2002.

Adlerbertska Research Foundation, 1999-2000.

PhD-THESIS SUPERVISION:

Heather Congdon Fors, *Essays in Institutional and Development Economics*, PhD-thesis, Sep 2006. Faculty opponent: Ragnar Torvik, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim. Job placement: U Gothenburg.

Gustav Hansson, *Social Distance, Institutions, and Economic Growth*, PhD-thesis, Sep 2008. Faculty opponent: Stephen Block, Tufts University, Boston. Job placement: Riksrevisionen, Stockholm.

Pelle Ahlerup, *Essays on Conflict, Institutions, and Ethnic Diversity*, PhD-thesis, Oct 2009. Faculty opponent: Erwin Bulte, Wageningen University. Job placement: U Gothenburg.

Daniel Zerfu, *Essays on Institutions and Economic Outcomes*, PhD-thesis, Feb 2010. Faculty opponent: Stephan Klasen, University of Göttingen. Job placement: IMF, Washington.

Eyerusalem Siba, *Essays on Industrial Development and Political Economy of Africa*, PhD-thesis, Sep 2011. Faculty opponent: John Page, Brookings Institution. Job placement: Brookings Inst, Washington DC.

Michele Valsecchi, *Essays in Political Economy of Development*, PhD-thesis, Nov 2012. Faculty opponent: Jakob Svensson, IIES, Stockholm University. Job placement: New Economic School, Moscow.

Oana Borcan, *Economic Determinants and Consequences of Political Institutions*, PhD thesis, Nov 2015. Faculty opponent: Sascha Becker, Warwick University. Job placement: University of East Anglia.

Simon Felgendreher, *Essays on behavioral economics and the effects of the colonial rule on Java*, PhD thesis, March 2018. Faculty opponent: Jo Tori Lind, Oslo University. Job placement: Federal Statistical Office, Bonn.

Hoang-Anh Ho, “Essays on Culture, Institutions, and Economic Development”, June 2020. Faculty opponent: Peter Sandholt Jensen, University of Southern Denmark. Job placement: University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City.

Melissa Rubio, June, 2020. Job placement: University of Cologne.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION:

LOC for ASWEDE 2nd Annual Meeting in Development Economics, Gothenburg. 2016.

Chair of Local Organizing Committee for EEA-ESEM Meetings in Gothenburg, 2013.

Member of Local Organizing Committee for the Nordic Conference in Development Economics, 2012.

OTHER ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES:

Co-founder and Member of Master Program Committee, International Administration and Global Governance, 2008-.

MAJOR POLICY ADVICE:

Long-term fiscal implications of LNG production in Tanzania, report for Uongozi Institute, 2017.

Responsible Market Economies, study for the Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013.

Study for IGC on industrial incentives for exports in Rwanda, 2011.

World Bank study of the political economy of mining in Zambia, 2010.

PRESENTATIONS:

Plenary and keynote speeches

EEA-ESEM in Geneva, 2016 (keynote speaker at invited session)

2nd Sheffield Workshop in Political Economy, Sheffield University, 2016 (keynote speaker)

EfD Conference, Dar-es-Salaam, 2014 (keynote speaker)

Professorial inauguration lecture, School of Business, Economics and Law, 2010

Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, 2009 (keynote speaker)

African Economic Research Consortium, Nairobi, 2006 (plenary speaker)

DEGIT IX, Reykjavik, 2004 (keynote speaker)

Invited talks

Lund University, 2025; Umeå University, 2025; Japanese Environmental Economics Webinar Series, 2024; Research Institute of Industrial Economics, Stockholm, 2024; NYU Abu Dhabi, 2023; Örebro University, 2023; Korea University, 2021; University of Verona, 2021; Hong Kong University, 2021; Research Institute of Industrial Economics, Stockholm, 2021; Hamburg Lecture in Law and Economics, 2020; Brock University, 2020; University of Duisburg-Essen, 2019; University of St Gallen, 2019; Toulouse School of Economics, 2019; Warwick University, 2018; University of Nottingham, 2018; London School of Economics, 2017; Dept of Political Science, U Gothenburg 2017; DIW Berlin, 2016; University of Bonn, 2016; University of Navarra, 2016; Linneaus University, 2015; Queens University, Belfast, 2014; University of Manchester, 2014; NHH Bergen, 2014; NYU Abu Dhabi, 2014; University of East Anglia, 2013; Umeå University, 2013; University of Copenhagen, 2013; Research Institute of Industrial Economics, Stockholm, 2013; University of Oslo, 2012; University of Leuven, 2012; University of Namur, 2012; Dept of Political Science, U Gothenburg, 2011; SITE, Stockholm School of Economics, 2011; Harvard University, 2010; Brown University, 2010; Tufts University, 2010; Lund University, 2010; University of Osnabrueck, 2010; Sorbonne University, 2009; University of Nottingham, 2009; Lund University, 2008; Ratio Institute, Stockholm, 2008; NTNU, Trondheim, 2007; Växjö University, 2007; Research Institute of Industrial Economics, Stockholm, 2006; University of Copenhagen, 2006; Tilburg University, 2005; IIES, Stockholm University, 2005; Lund University, 2004; Stockholm University, 2004; University of Copenhagen, 2004; Stockholm School of Economics, 2001; FIEF, Stockholm, 2001; IIES, Stockholm University, 2001

Conference and workshop presentations (selected)

ASSA, San Francisco, 2025
Third Workshop on Historical Economics, Bolzano, 2025
SIOE, University of Chicago, 2024
Cultures of Trust and Institutions, Prague, 2024
Cities and the Wealth of Nations Workshop, York University, 2024
ABCDE Conference, World Bank, 2023
Southern Economic Association, Fort Lauderdale, 2023
ASWEDE Conference in Development Economics, various locations, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023.
ASSA, Atlanta, 2019 (paper pres), 2021 (comment)
ASREC Europe, Lund, 2019
The New Malthusianism: A Symposium, Cambridge University, 2018
World Cup Workshop in Political Economy, NES Moscow, July 2018
Public Economics Workshop, New Delhi, March 2018
Deep-Rooted Factors in Comparative Development, Brown University, 2013 and 2016
EUDN workshop, Berlin 2013 and Bonn 2016
Nordic Conference in Development Economics, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2022
7th Development Economics Workshop, Tilburg University, 2016
Workshop in development economics, NHH Bergen, 2015
Cultural and Political Factors in Institutional Change and Development, University of Warwick, 2013
Conflict: Theory and Evidence, Stockholm School of Economics, 2013
The Instability of States Workshop, Oslo, 2012
Second Conference on Early Economic Developments, Vancouver, 2009
Workshop on borders and fragmentation, Warwick University, 2009
Institutions and growth workshop, Cape Town, 2008
European Economic Association , 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2012.
DEGIT XI, Jerusalem, 2006