

Jens Oehlen

PERSONAL INFORMATION

CONTACT: Department of Economics, Stockholm University
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WEBSITE: <https://jensoehlen.github.io/>
FIELDS: Political Economics, Economic History, Economics of Science and Innovation

APPOINTMENTS

2026 – 2027 **Albert O. Hirschman PostDoc**
KIEL INSTITUTE
2027 – **Lecturer (Assistant Professor)**
UNIVERSITY OF YORK

EDUCATION

2020 – 2026 **Ph.D. Student in Economics**
STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY
2022 – 2023 **Visiting Student Researcher**
STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Host: [Prof. Matt Gentzkow](#)
2018 – 2019 **M.Sc. in Economics**
BARCELONA SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
2014 – 2018 **Diplom (equivalent to M.Sc.) in Industrial Engineering**
TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DRESDEN

WORKING PAPERS

Enigma (*Job Market Paper*)

Abstract: This paper examines the role of private information in conflict. While acting on information can provide an advantage, using it can expose its source and diminish its value in the long run. I study this trade-off empirically, focusing on the *Battle of the Atlantic* during World War II. There, Allied merchant ships faced Nazi U-boats, which regularly communicated their positions with German central command using Enigma encryption. The Allies secretly broke these codes. I combine novel data on decrypted messages with records of U-boat and merchant ship losses. Using an event-study design, I show that U-boat sinkings of Allied ships fell by 80 percent in the days following position reports, likely due to the rerouting of merchant ships. In contrast, U-boats' own survival declined only marginally. Allied strikes were selective, prioritizing high-capacity commanders and increasing over time—consistent with the Allies strategically forgoing benefits to protect their information access. Counterfactual simulations suggest that military intelligence prevented 40 percent of potential shipping losses.

Leveling the Playing Field: Knowledge Production in the Digital Age, with [Max Mähr](#)

Abstract: 80 percent of all journals are not freely available—even though access to existing knowledge is crucial for pushing the research frontier. In this paper, we examine the impact of Sci-Hub, an online platform providing free access to scientific articles, on knowledge creation. Using data on 300 million geo-coded download requests and the near-universe of scientific articles, we employ an instrumented difference-in-differences design. We find that Sci-Hub has significantly changed consumption patterns of scientific works, with a substitution of references from open- to closed-access publications. In turn, greater access to frontier knowledge resulted in higher-quality research output as measured by citations, but not more publications.

Social Policy and Autocracy: Evidence from East German Administrative Data

Abstract: This paper studies the role of social policy in shaping citizen-state relations under autocratic rule. I argue that social policies can increase political support especially when they signal recognition—of citizens' needs, burdens and social identities. To examine this argument, I focus on the introduction of extended maternity leave in former East Germany, a policy that extended material benefits but also signaled attentiveness to

women's dual roles as workers and caregivers. Using administrative data on civilian bureaucrats, I show that women giving birth after the policy reform saw a surge in membership of the ruling party compared to women giving birth shortly before. I also find suggestive evidence of gendered spillovers: first, affected grandmothers were more likely to become members, but not grandfathers. Second, in present-day surveys, likely affected daughters lean more towards left-wing ideology.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Coffeehouses and the Rise of Science, with [Monir Bounadi](#)

Abstract: Coffeehouses emerged as a key social institution in early modern England. In 1962, Jürgen Habermas famously argued that they transformed the public sphere by fostering rational debate, enabling Enlightenment ideas to flourish. This paper tests that claim in the context of Enlightenment science in seventeenth-century London. Combining comprehensive location data on coffeehouses, applied scientists, and scientific-instrument shops, we find that scientific activity rose markedly after the first coffeehouse opened in an area. We argue that coffeehouses fostered this growth by lowering the cost of accessing scientific knowledge, increasing interactions between applied scientists and instrument makers, and making experimental science more public. Consistent with this mechanism, coffeehouses especially benefited individuals with weaker ties to elite intellectual circles, strengthened links between theory-oriented scientists and practical instrument makers, and increased the number of experimental instrument shops.

PAST EMPLOYMENT

2019 – 2020	Full-time Research Assistant UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH, Prof. Joachim Voth
2016 – 2018	Part-time Student Assistant TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DRESDEN, Prof. Alexander Kemnitz

TEACHING

2025	Political Economics II (PhD), Stockholm, TEACHING ASSISTANT
2024	Political Economics II (PhD), Stockholm, TEACHING ASSISTANT
2023	Microeconomics I (Master), Stockholm, TEACHING ASSISTANT
2022	Econometrics I (PhD), Stockholm, TEACHING ASSISTANT
2021	Econometrics I (Master), Stockholm, TEACHING ASSISTANT
2017	Microeconomics I & II (Bachelor), Dresden, TUTOR
2016	Microeconomics I & II (Bachelor), Dresden, TUTOR

SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

2025	Universitetets Donationsstipendium
2025	Lars Hierta Research Grant
2024	Siamon Stiftelse Grant
2021	Wallanders och Tom Hedelius Stiftelse Scholarship
2018	Merit-Based Partial Tuition Fee Waiver (BSE)
2018	DAAD Graduate Scholarship
2016	PROMOS Scholarship
2016	Professor Endriss Prize
2015	Deutschlandstipendium
2013	Claussen-Simon-Stiftung Scholarship

CONFERENCES & SEMINARS (INCL. SCHEDULED)

2026	Universität St.Gallen RIDGE Forum Workshop on Historical Development (BARBADOS) LEAP Seminar (STELLENBOSCH) CEPR Political Economy Symposium (LISBON) London Business School ROCKWOOL Foundation Berlin University of York CUNEF Madrid
2025	CEEH (TU MÜNCHEN) University of Oxford Yale-UB HPE Workshop (BARCELONA) EEA Meeting (BORDEAUX) Lund University TU Dresden University of Mannheim
2024	HEDG (ODENSE) EAYE Annual Meeting (PARIS) Warwick Economics PhD Conference IOG-BFI Summer Conference (STOCKHOLM) SIOE (CHICAGO)
2023	DEVPEC (UC BERKELEY/STANFORD) NBER SI SSF (co-author)

REFEREEING

American Economic Review: Insights, Journal of Public Economics

SERVICES

2024	SUDSWEC Conference Organizer
2023 – 2024	Internal Political Economics Seminar Organizer, STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY
2020 – 2021	Chair, Graduate Students Council, Dep. of Economics, STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY
2015 – 2017	Commission of Studies, Industrial Engineering, TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DRESDEN

SKILLS AND SOFTWARE

SOFTWARE	L ^A T _E X, Stata, Python, R, ArcGIS
LANGUAGES	German (Native), English (Fluent), Chinese, Spanish, Swedish (Basic)

REFERENCES

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University of Southern California, Economics
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