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PhD Candidate

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Citizenship: Colombian

Fields of Concentration:

Labor Economics
Development Economics
Economic History

Desired Teaching:

Econometrics
Labor Economics

Dissertation Title: *Economics of Harmful Institutions: Crime, Conflict, and Slavery*

Education:

PhD Economics, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014 – May 2020 (expected)
Supervisors: Professor [Randi Hjalmarsson](#) and Professor [Ola Olsson](#)
M.A. in Economics, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, 2012-2013
B.A. in Economics, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, 2008-2012

Working Papers:

“From Plantations to Prisons: The Legacy of Slavery on Black Incarceration in the US” [**Job Market Paper**]

“The Effect of Conflict on Social Capital: Evidence from an Exogenous Variation in an Illegal Market”

“Comparing Labor Market Risk across Developing Countries,” with William Maloney

Research Papers in Progress:

“Mined Land: Natural Resources and Conflict, Evidence from Exploration Licenses”

“Weather and Conflict: The Collapse of the Maya Civilization,” with Ola Olsson

Pipeline:

“Intergenerational Effects of Slavery in the US: Following the Children of Slaves”

“Migration and Crime: Evidence from the Great Migration”

“Media and Migration: The Role of the Chicago Defender on the Great Migration”

“The effect of Land Mines on Development: Evidence from Cambodia”

Research Experience:

World Bank, 2012-2109

Consultant for the Chief Economist for Equitable Growth, Finance and Institutions (2014-19)

Research Assistant for Lead Economist, Development Economics Research Group (2012-14)

Center for Economic Development (CEDE), 2011-2012

Research Assistant, Universidad de los Andes. Bogotá, Colombia

Teaching Experience:

Teaching Assistant, Econometrics (Undergraduate), 2012-2013

Teaching Assistant, Econometrics (Undergraduate & Graduate level), 2016-2019

Teaching Assistant, Microeconomics (Undergraduate level), 2012-2013

Teaching Assistant, Macroeconomics I (Undergraduate level), 2013

Teaching Assistant, Stata for non-economists (Graduate level), 2012

Teaching Assistant, Economic History of Colombia (Undergraduate level), 2011-2012

Thesis Advisor of Bachelor Students (Undergraduate level), 2018-2019

Fellowships, Honors and Awards:

Donationsnämnden Travel Grant, 2018

Adlerbertska Stipendiestiftelsen Travel Grants, 2017

Department of Economics Travel Grant, 2017

Filosofiska fakulteternas gemensamma donationsnämnd Travel Grant, 2015

Adlerbertska Foreign Student Hospitality Foundation, 2015, 2016

Technical Skills:

Programing Languages: Python, R

Data Analytics Tools: Stata, Jupyter, Pandas, Tableau, ArcGis, SPSS

Other Software & Tools: LaTeX

Presentations:

Labor Economics Seminar, Aarhus University, 2019

Labor Economics Seminar, George Washington University, 2019

Econometric Society Winter Meeting, Naples, 2018

Association of Swedish Development Economists, 2014, 2017, 2019

Poverty, Equity, and Growth in Developing and Transition Countries, Göttingen U., Germany, 2014

Annual Workshop of the Households in Conflict Network, UC Berkeley, 2013

Training and Mobility Network for the Economic Analysis of Conflict. Colombia, 2012

Conference Organization:

LACEA Labor Market Network – Universidad de Los Andes with the support of The World Bank
– IADB 2nd Meeting, Cartagena, Colombia, May 22 – 23, 2014

Languages: English (fluent), Spanish (native), Italian (basic)

References:

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Dissertation Abstract:

My dissertation and research agenda going forward can largely be characterized as studying the legacy of institutions that are potentially harmful for social and economic development. These institutions include slavery in the United States (and its abolition), conflict in developing countries, and natural resource exploitation (mining). These research questions are relevant both in modern day developing and, from an economic history perspective, developed countries. Other common themes that run through my dissertation work are the reliance on detailed micro-level data and quasi-experimental research designs

Black males constitute 6.5% of the US population today, but account for 40% of the prison population. My *job market paper*, “**From Plantations to Prisons: The Legacy of Slavery on the Black Incarceration Rates in the US,**” studies the roots of this race gap in incarceration. In particular, I trace the origins of this gap to the penal system that emerged immediately after the abolition of slavery in 1865. I rely on historical datasets from US census records for the period 1850 to 1940 and exploit variation in the prevalence of slavery that existed across counties in southern states prior to the Civil War to estimate the short- and long-run impact of slavery on black incarceration rates. I document a substantial increase in black incarceration immediately after the abolition of slavery, with no comparable effect on whites, and that this black-white incarceration gap continued to grow. I argue that these baseline OLS results are not driven by omitted variables given their robustness to: (i) observable controls, which proxy for racial attitudes and socioeconomic and geographic characteristics, (ii) analyses of neighboring counties

that are more likely to be comparable on unobservable dimensions, and (iii) an IV analysis that instruments for slavery intensity with cotton suitability.

In addition, I transcribed novel historical data on prison work camps from the Department of Labor to provide evidence that the high levels of black incarceration in the US started, at least in part, due to labor scarcity in which convict labor was used to replace slave labor. This mechanism is further supported in analyses of three natural experiments -- land grant allocations, Boll Weevil cotton pests, and the Mississippi River floods -- that reduced the demand for labor; these reverse shocks are associated with lower black incarceration rates.

The findings in this paper provide motivation for future work in several directions – one of which is to study how the effects of slavery are mediated by the intergenerational mobility consequences of slavery. Specifically, one can ask whether some of the persistence over time of the race gap in incarceration, and even its growth over time, is partly attributed to spill-over effects of parental incarceration on their children. Therefore, I plan to match individuals across censuses to compare incarceration outcomes of former slaves, and their children and grandchildren. This is one project that I have active plans to pursue after the completion of my dissertation.

The second chapter of my thesis strives to understand the role of institutions such as crime and conflict on social cohesion of communities. My paper, **“The Effect of Conflict on Social Capital: Evidence from an Exogenous Variation in an Illegal Market,”** studies the effects of violence on social capital using individual and municipal level data in Colombia. To estimate causal effects, I exploit changes in violence attributed to cross border shocks on coca markets in neighbouring countries, interacted with a novel index of suitability for coca cultivation. I find that violence has a negative effect on social capital measures such as trust, participation in community organisations, and cooperation. My findings are consistent with conflict in which is hard to identify the perpetrators.

I also have two works in progress that emphasize the causes and consequences of conflict. The first, **“Mined Land: Natural Resources and Conflict, Evidence from Exploration Licenses,”** aims to estimate the impact of mining on conflict. Most of the available literature uses resource discoveries as random events; however, discoveries are not necessarily a pure result of nature, they are likely to be related with geographic and institutional characteristics that might also affect the levels of conflict, and therefore estimates can be biased. I overcome this limitation by using an exogenous source of variation in mineral discoveries. My identification strategy uses the fact that villages where minerals were discovered constitute the treatment group, while villages with drilling but no discovery are the control group. Furthermore, this article provides evidence of an additional mechanism explaining the relationship between mining and conflict: forced displacement because of competition for productive land.

The second work in progress (with Ola Olsson), **“Weather and Conflict: The Collapse of the Maya Civilization,”** aims to identify factors that explain the collapse of the Maya civilization. While the collapse of the Maya society has been an issue of ongoing debate, little is known about

the economic reasons behind it. This paper estimates the effect of extreme weather conditions on the construction of monuments. We take advantage of rich paleontological data on weather conditions during the Maya era which can be linked to archaeological data on the location of monuments and the occurrence of wars. To shed light on potential mechanisms, we study heterogeneity along with the suitability for growing maize – the main crop of the Maya civilization.

Finally, the third chapter of my dissertation (with William Maloney), “**Comparing Labor Market Risk across Developing Countries**,” demonstrates my interest in development and labor economics more generally. In this paper, we acknowledge that differences in the risk that workers face are relevant for welfare analysis, and therefore we generate comparable measures of income risk in the labor market across countries. The purpose is to have a measure among standard welfare proxies as GDP per capita or the GINI coefficient for income distribution. Having a measure for income risk is a greater concern. First, education is an asset as any other, and a rise in the risk and return to the asset will depress investment in human capital. Second, Krebs & Maloney (2003) show that reducing US income risk to zero would lead to an accumulation of human capital that contributed 0.5% additional to growth. Finally, measuring income risk allows one to identify the existence or not of a development trap where risky jobs are taken by poorer workers.