

Giulio Schinaia

Department of Economics,

University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Email: giulio.schinaia@economics.ox.ac.uk

Website: gschinaia.github.io

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Dear recruiting chair,

I am writing to apply for the two-year postdoctoral position at the Mistra Center for Sustainable Markets (MISUM) at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) recently advertised by your department across the European Development Research Network.

This position would be a perfect path towards a tenure-track faculty position, which I plan to start searching for in the autumn of 2024.

I am currently a PhD candidate in Economics at the University of Oxford, and I expect to receive my degree in August 2023. My research lies at the nexus of development, labour, and behavioural economics. My research studies how different public policies can affect rural markets in low-income countries using randomised and natural experiments. I am investigating how access to market information can benefit smallholder farmers, how exposure to role models can increase their future-oriented investments, and on the effects of workfare programmes on rural labour markets. In this letter, I first summarise my current research and then explain how the position would help me launch my academic career.

In my job market paper, I conduct a nationwide randomised controlled experiment providing reliable weekly messages with market news, prices, and marketing advice to smallholder cashew nut producers in Guinea-Bissau. Cashew nuts account for 90% of the country's exports and are a key source of income for producers. However, producers often sell at low prices because they lack reliable information on price fluctuations, which are mostly driven by international markets. I show that access to **market information** can increase the income of smallholder farmers. Access to this information increases incomes but helping producers bargain better deals but also by changing farmers' decision on the timing of their sales. While previous work had shown that market information can change the location of producers' sales and improve their prices, my study's main contribution highlights the relevance of market information in the timing of sales.

In a second paper, I study whether people in poverty may not make long-term investments if they doubt that a better life is possible. This study randomly selected households in remote rural Ethiopia to watch video documentaries. The videos described **role models** that had improved their welfare through their own efforts. The role models came from similar communities as the study participants and worked in agriculture or business. Five-years after the screening took place, those that watched the videos changed their behaviours. They had increased investment in their farms and towards their children's education. This paper shows persistent effects of a light-touch behavioural intervention on economic investments. Finally, in a third paper, I assess how a **workfare programme** in rural Ethiopia changes local labour markets. My study finds that the programme shifted employment from agriculture towards non-agricultural self-employment. These shifts are the result of indirect changes to the local labour market, rather than direct changes to beneficiaries.

The postdoctoral position would be a unique opportunity to build my research portfolio and broaden my professional network before applying to tenure-track positions. First, since the SSE is an authoritative and vibrant research community continuously pushing the research

frontier, I would benefit greatly from presenting and discussing my work related to public service delivery with faculty members, like Prof. Martina Björkman Nyqvist and Prof. Abhijeet Singh. In particular, I would be excited to develop my future research studying the importance of managerial characteristics on the performance of public sector organisations, which are ultimately responsible for public service delivery. Second, this position would also allow me to explore new ideas beyond my ongoing projects. My research interests would fit well into MISUM and could spark new collaborations in topics related to public service delivery and sustainable development. As a follow-up study to my job market paper, I am planning to evaluate novel ways through which information communication technologies can support smallholder farmers in coping with environmental shocks.

I have eight years of experience in both economic policy and international development research, which equip me with a breadth of knowledge that I would share during my period at MISUM; whilst also learning from researchers at the MISUM. I have effectively worked with senior civil servants and ministers across different governments (in the UK and Guinea-Bissau), efficiently managed impact evaluations and the implementation of surveys in low-resource contexts (in Ethiopia and Guinea-Bissau), and built a deep expertise of economics and public policy through my training at the University of Oxford.

I would like to pursue an academic career, building a research portfolio that can help inform the design of public service delivery programmes, grounding such insights in economic theory. Gaining experience in a multi-disciplinary research environment and conducting my research alongside researchers based at MISUM would have a very lasting impact on my professional trajectory by equipping me for the academic job market and enriching my professional network. This position would be the perfect opportunity to embark in this career path.

As part of my application, I am including my curriculum vitae and job market paper. You should expect to receive letters of recommendation from Prof. Pramila Krishnan and Prof. Simon Quinn.

I look forward to hearing from your search committee.

Yours sincerely,

Giulio Schinaia