Curriculum Vitae

NAME
Olly Owen

NATIONALITY
British

LANGUAGES
English

SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE
An anthropologist, governance professional and former risk analyst working on political economy issues, specialising in state institutions and everyday state-society relations with a regional focus on West Africa. Olly has practical development experience in state-level institutional reform processes and has worked with private sector, civil society organisations, Nigerian state and federal government bodies, ECOWAS, African Union organs and international donors. He combines fieldwork-based anthropological research with policy engagement, has held research fellowships at Oxford and led an ESRC Future Research Leaders project on tax reform in Nigeria. He is currently a Policy Practice associate delivering political economy and conflict sensitivity and has worked on FCDO, EU, Gates Foundation, CIFF and USAID programmes across Nigeria and Central Africa.

COUNTRY EXPERIENCE
Nigeria (extensive fieldwork at federal and state levels including Lagos, Ekiti and 11 demographic case-study locations); wider West African sub-region; Central Africa / Congo Basin; Kenya; United Kingdom

EXPERTISE
- Political economy analysis with a focus on state institutions and state-society relations in West Africa, governance of state-society interfaces.
- Natural resources and climate, including climate-smart agriculture and forest management, biodiversity conservation;
- Taxation, public revenue reform and the accountability-based social contract;
- Mobilising research in policy engagement
- Conflict sensitivity, policing, and security sector reform;
- Forest governance, land and environmental policy in West and Central Africa
- Infrastructure and development in historical context;
- Demographic trends, family health and social change;
- Market systems development; private sector and civil society engagement;
- Fieldwork-based anthropological research methods; risk analysis and country forecasting

QUALIFICATIONS
2013 DPhil Social Anthropology, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford University. Thesis: "An Institutional Ethnography of the Nigerian Police" (ESRC-funded)

2008 MSc Social Anthropology Research Methods, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford University

2002 MSc African Politics, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London

2000 BA Hons (First Class) Archaeology & Anthropology (Social Anthropology), Selwyn College, Cambridge University

EMPLOYMENT / SELECTED ASSIGNMENTS

- **Principal at The Policy Practice** (2014-present). Delivering more than 50 assignments including in-depth PEA reports, training, strategic planning support, continual programme support, monitoring and evaluation for a wide variety of development-partner supported programmes in West, Central and East Africa.
- **Rechnical Advisor on Forest Governance and Climate Change, Ekiti State Government, Nigeria** (2020 – present). Developing programming and building institutional capacity in forest management and agroforestry.
- **Research Director, Nigeria Tax Research Network** (2017 – 2020). Leading a collaborative network of more than 400 institutional and individual members in Nigeria and abroad, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and administered by the International Centre for Tax and Development, IDS Sussex.
- **Participant Researcher, "Governing the African Transition" research programme, Oxford Martin School** (2017 – 2021 Researching the political economy and social imagination of rail infrastructural development.
- **Lecturer in African Anthropology, Oxford University African Studies Centre / Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology** (2018 – 2019). Teaching and research for MSc students in African Studies and Anthropology, MPhil and Doctoral supervision.
- **ESRC Future Research Leaders Fellow, Oxford University** (2014 – 2017). Three-year research project "Social contracts in transformation: Tax reform in Nigeria", focusing on the political economy of revenue reforms in five selected Nigerian states.
- **Project Design and Lead Governance Consultant, EU-FLEGT / UNFAO / Ekiti State Ministry of Environment** (2013 – 2014, concurrent). Reviewed and restructured forestry governance for the Ekiti State Ministry of Environment, Nigeria.
- **Junior Research Fellow, Department of International Development, Oxford University** (2012 – 2018). Undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, administration, research and publication on state-level taxation in Nigeria; knowledge exchange project with the UK Justice for All programme and Nigeria Police Force.
- **Risk Analyst, Economic Associates, Lagos** (2006 – 2007). Developed the first ever state-by-state risk and forecasting model of Nigeria with the in-house team.
- **Research Analyst, Global Insight, London** (2003 – 2006). West Africa analyst at investment risk and economic forecasting agency with global private and public sector clients.
- **Project Officer, Centre for Democracy and Development, London** (2002 – 2003). Prepared and anchored the evaluative observation team for Nigeria's 2003 elections.

Policy Practice portfolio

SPRING, Nigeria (2024-ongoing)

- Issues analysis, PEA training and support to team on thinking and working politically in this FCDO-funded conflict transformation programme working in selected States of Northern Nigeria.

Propcom+, Nigeria (2023 – ongoing)

- Subcontractor to The Palladium Group on this seven-year FCDO-funded project, which aims to promote market systems development for climate-smart agriculture in Nigeria
- The Policy Practice provides expertise on building a political economy and conflict sensitivity approach into the market systems development initiatives supported by Propcom+ in sectors including climate-smart crop varieties, poultry vaccination, e-extension, sustainable forestry and carbon capture

Kenya Tax Administration Programme (2025-ongoing)

- Providing policy, stakeholder and contextual analysis on regular basis, contributing to strategy and approaches to publics, institutional stakeholders and key interest groups in this programme which was designed after a TPP-lead diagnostic study on which I also worked.

Partnership for Forests (P4F) Congo Basin (2025-ongoing)

- Part of TPP team advising this programme which aims to protect forests in the Congo-basin through market-based solutions to deforestation-free economic development.

USAID FABS, Central Africa (February – July 2024)

- Co-leading on a research mission and report to scope the political economy factors affecting the continuing work of the longstanding US-funded CARPE programme for support to the protection of forests in the Congo Basin

Demography Political Economy Analysis, Nigeria (February – December 2022)

- Completed a political economy analysis on the demographic transition in Nigeria
- Based on detailed fieldwork in 11 locations, the study addressed the political, economic and socio-cultural factors influencing population policy and outcomes
- Identified six potential pathways of change towards a more rapid demographic transition and made recommendations on how development partners can support these pathways

Other Policy Practice assignments

- Participation in and leadership of PEA-based analyses on civil society and governance support programmes and technical assistance pool programmes in Nigeria
- African Union taxation strategies
- Nigerian fiscal and taxation strategies
- Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Environment implementation capacity
- Demographic trends and family health policies

Other consultancy and pro bono advisory clients

Clients and pro bono partners in governance and institutional reform, security sector reform and development evaluation have included: the EU; the UK DfID and FCO; the Nigerian Federal Inland Revenue Service; the UK Parliament's All-Party Group on Freedom of Religion; the Crown Prosecution Service; International Crisis Group; Transparency International; DfID / British Council Justice for All; the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture; ITAD Ltd / MacArthur Foundation; the Nigeria Railway Corporation; the EU-FLEGT / UNFAO and Ekiti State Ministry of Environment; and the heritage NGO Legacy1995.

Academic grants and fellowships

- ESRC Future Research Leaders 3-year Fellowship: Tax & the Social Contract in Nigeria
- ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (2014): Knowledge Exchange Fellowship
- Oxford University Fell Fund (2013): To develop research on taxation in Nigeria
- Oxford Development Studies Conference Support Award (2013): For workshop on new research in Nigeria
- British Academy Partnership and Mobility Grant with Dr J. Steinberg (2012): To bring African scholars of policing to Oxford for research and conference
- ESRC Overseas Institutional Visit Award (2011): For Doctoral research at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife
- Oxford University Lienhardt Fund Bursary (2008): For doctoral fieldwork research
- Economic & Social Research Council (2007-2011): Full doctoral research grant
- SOAS (2001): Full bursary for fees and maintenance for MSc African Politics

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SELECTED REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Books

Co-editor (with Beek, Goepfert & Steinberg) (2017) *Rethinking Policing in Africa*, London: Hurst.

Book chapters

Owen, O. (2018) *'Trust, taxation and representation'* in LeVan (ed) Oxford Handbook of Nigerian Politics, Oxford University Press.

Owen, O. (2013) *'Positions of Security and the Security of Position: Bureaucratic Prebendalism Inside the State'* in Adebanwi, W. and Obadare, E. (eds) Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria: Critical Interpretations. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Articles in peer-reviewed journals

Owen, O. & Brown, Z. et al (2025) Understanding the diverse values of shade trees on cocoa farms in Ekiti State, Nigeria Agroforestry Systems Vol 99 (6).

Owen, O. & Goodfellow, T. (2019) *Taxation and property rights in urban Lagos.* Economy and Society.

Owen, O. (2019) *Introduction: Impôts et pratiques fiscales : interroger la signification et les usages de la formalité (Tax and fiscal practice: Interrogating the meaning and use of formality),* in self-edited special edition of Politique Africaine on Gouverner par la Fiscalité (no. 151).

Owen, O. (2019) *« Dans les règles » : fiscalité, confiance et considération dans les campagnes agricoles du Nigeria ('Going legit': Taxation, trust and attention in agrarian rural Nigeria),* in self-edited special edition of Politique Africaine on Gouverner par la Fiscalité (no. 151).

Owen, O., Williams, G., Duncan, A., Kingsmill, W. & Paterson, A. (2019) *DFID governance programming in Nigeria: What difference has thinking and working politically made in practice?* Development Policy Review, 37(S1), 33-49.

Owen, O. & Cooper-Knock, S. J. (2018) *Government paper: the negotiated production and life of state documents.* Canadian Journal of African Studies, 52(3), 269-287.

Owen, O. & Gatt, L. (2018) *Direct Taxation and State-Society Relations in Lagos, Nigeria.* Development and Change, 49(5), 1195-1122.

Owen, O. & Usman, Z. (2015) *Briefing: Why Goodluck Jonathan lost the Nigerian presidential election of 2015.* African Affairs, 114(456), 455-471.

Owen, O. & Cooper-Knock, S. J. (2014) *Between vigilantism and bureaucracy: Improving our understanding of police work in Nigeria and South Africa.* Theoretical Criminology.

Owen, O. (2012) *'Maintenir l'ordre au Nigeria : vers une histoire de la souveraineté de l'Etat',* Politique Africaine, no. 128, special edition on Corps habillés: Politique des métiers de l'ordre (Bureaucrats in Uniform), edited by Debos, M. and Glasman, J.

Owen, O. (2009) *Biafran Pound Notes.* Africa, 79(4).

Selected policy literature

Owen, O. & Husaini, S. F. (2024) *The political economy of forest policy in Nigeria: Changing trends.* Policy Practice Working Paper no. 3, September 2024.

Owen, O. (2014) *The Nigeria Police Force: Predicaments and possibilities.* Nigeria Research Network Working Paper No. 15, July 2014.

Owen, O. & Faull, A. (2014) *On the record: Police performance management in South Africa and Nigeria.* South Africa Crime Quarterly (46), January 2014.

Owen, O. (2013) *Policing communal conflicts – between the state, parallel providers, and communities.* Policy Brief No. 4, Nigeria Research Network, Oxford Department of International Development.

Owen, O. (2002) *Reinforcing the Foundations: Ongoing Democratic Transition in Mali.* Centre for Democracy and Development, London.

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