

The Importance of Culture and Context for Development Policy

Nathan Nunn
Harvard University

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Overview

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2. These are historically determined through an evolutionary process.
3. Both history and culture matter for economic development.

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Question: Is it necessary to understand the historical and cultural context of a society if one is only interested in implementing policies aimed at improving the world?

- I'll argue: **Yes!**

Culture, context, and development policy

Will provide three examples to illustrate this:

1. Health and medicine
2. Agriculture
3. Education

HEALTH 27 SEPTEMBER 2014

Guinea residents 'refusing' Ebola treatment

Residents say people frightened to go to clinics because of conspiracy theories that they will be killed by doctors.

EPIDEMIC

'Fear and Distrust': Red Cross Workers Come Under Attack as Ebola Spreads in Congo

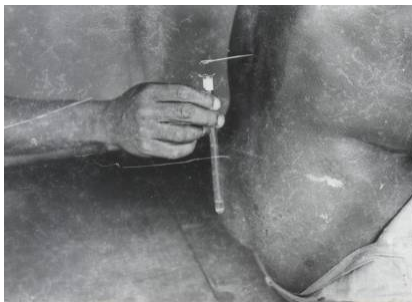
While volunteering to combat the deadly virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo, three Red Cross volunteers were violently attacked.



Olivia Messer10.04.18 12:41 PM ET

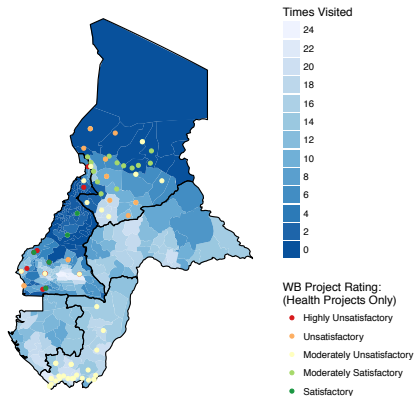


Colonial medical campaigns



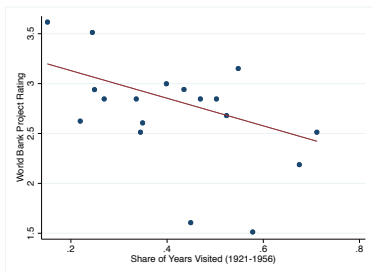
French colonial medical campaigns

- Goal was to eradicate sleeping sickness (trypanosomiasis).
- Villagers were required (often at gun point) to submit to physical exams.
- Early treatment was an arsenic-based drug called *atoxyl*.
 - Caused (at least partial) blindness in 20% of those treated.

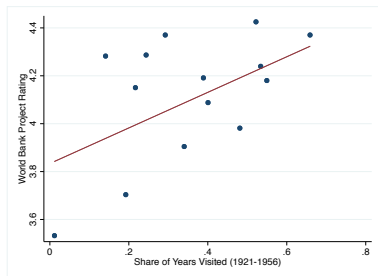


Success of World Bank development projects

Source: Lowes and Montero (2018)



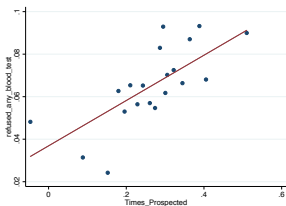
(a) Health Projects, No controls



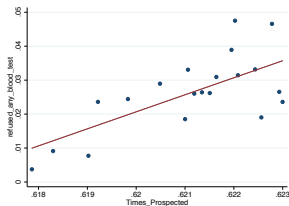
(c) Non-health Projects, No controls

Blood test refusals rates: By country

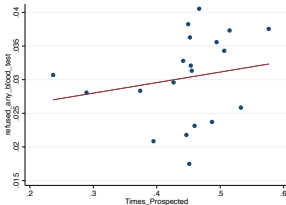
Source: Lowes and Montero (2018)



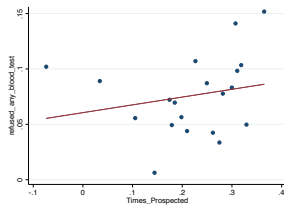
Cameroon



Congo



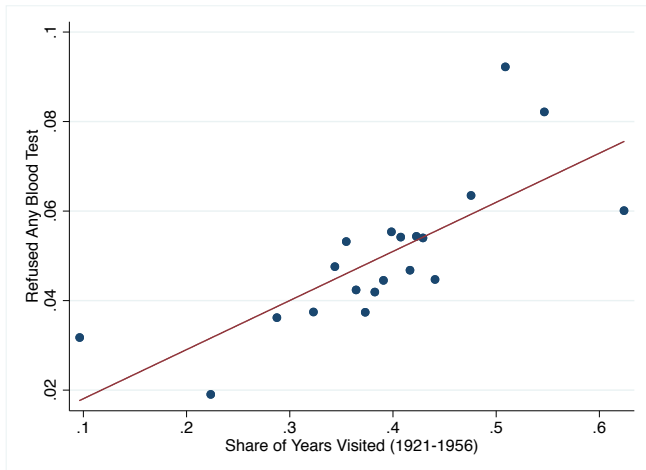
Gabon



Chad

Blood test refusals rates: All countries

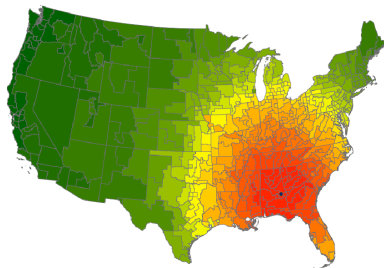
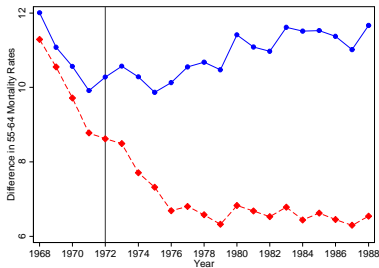
Source: Lowes and Montero (2018)



Medical distrust closer to home (Tuskegee)

Source: Alsan and Wanamaker (2018)

Panel C. 55-64 Mortality Rate



The
Economist

Lost in the maize

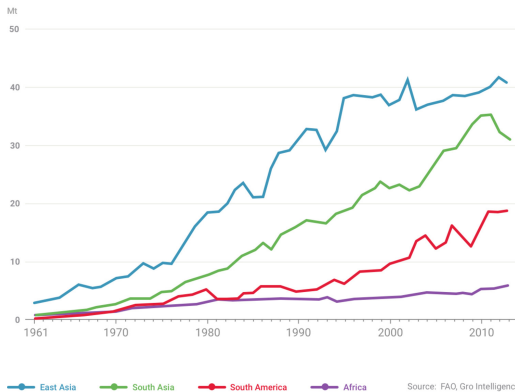
Why fertiliser subsidies in Africa have not worked

Good intentions, poor results

The rest of the world is fed because of the use of good seed and inorganic fertilizer, full stop. This technology has not been used in most of Africa. The only way you can help farmers get access to it is give it away free or subsidize it heavily.

— Stephen Carr¹

Fertilizer Consumption in Selected Regions (1961-2013)



Ongoing exploratory research in Central Africa



The consequences of agricultural success in the DRC

Evidence from vignettes (an example):

- “Imagine we are in a village outside of Kananga. The primary crop is maize. Imagine that one farmer, named Mutombo, has a maize harvest that is twice as large as all other farmers in the village.”

Vignettes: Perceived origins of success

What will others believe is the most likely reason for Mutombo's success? ($n = 165$)

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65: Use of fetishes / witchcraft / ancestors

37: Hard work

39: Prayer / blessings from God

22: Skill

2: Good luck

Vignettes: Consequences of success

- In the same year, one of the other farmers has a particularly terrible harvest and his crop was completely eaten by insects.
- How likely is it that others will blame Mutombo for the ruined crop?
 - 36:** Very likely
 - 80:** Likely
 - 18:** Neither likely nor unlikely
 - 19:** Unlikely
 - 14:** Very unlikely

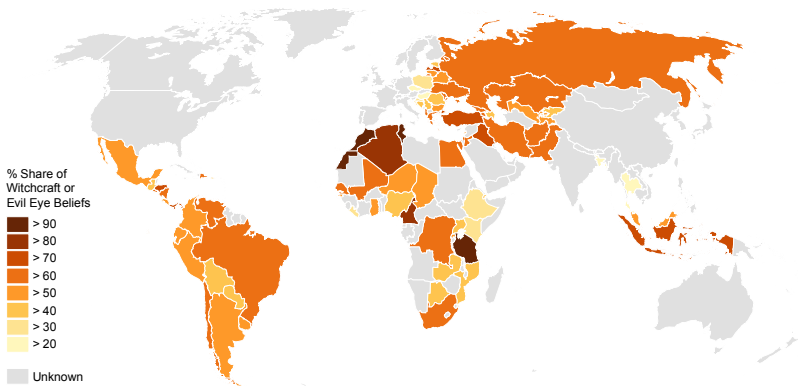
Vignettes: Redistributive pressures

- Will other people in the village expect Mutombo to share some of his new wealth with them?
 - 24:** Yes, everyone will.
 - 32:** Yes, most people will.
 - 41:** Yes, family and close friends will.
 - 27:** Yes, family will.
 - 43:** No, no one will.

Vignettes: Sabotaging success

- How likely is it that other members of the village will try to sabotage Mutombo's crop in some way?
 - 30:** Very likely
 - 92:** Likely
 - 26:** Neither likely nor unlikely
 - 17:** Unlikely
 - 2:** Very unlikely

Global prevalence of such beliefs



Data: Pew Forum Surveys 2009 - 2016

School construction in Indonesia



- In 1973, the Indonesian government launched a program that built 61,807 primary schools over seven years.
- It was the biggest school construction project ever undertaken.
- **Was it a success?**

School construction in Indonesia

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- **What's going on?**

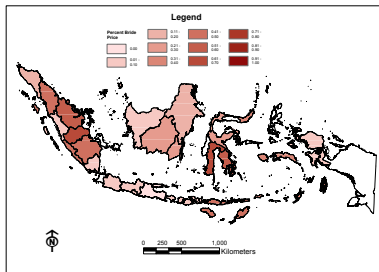
Marriage customs

Bride Price: Payment from the groom and/or groom's parents to the bride's parents at marriage.

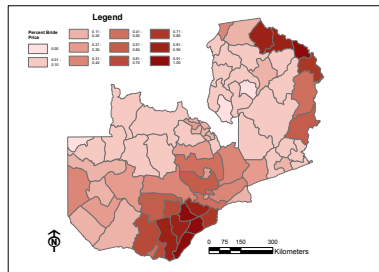


Variation in the practice of bride price

Source: Ashraf, Bau, Nunn, and Voena (forthcoming)



(a) Prevalence in Indonesia



(b) Prevalence in Zambia

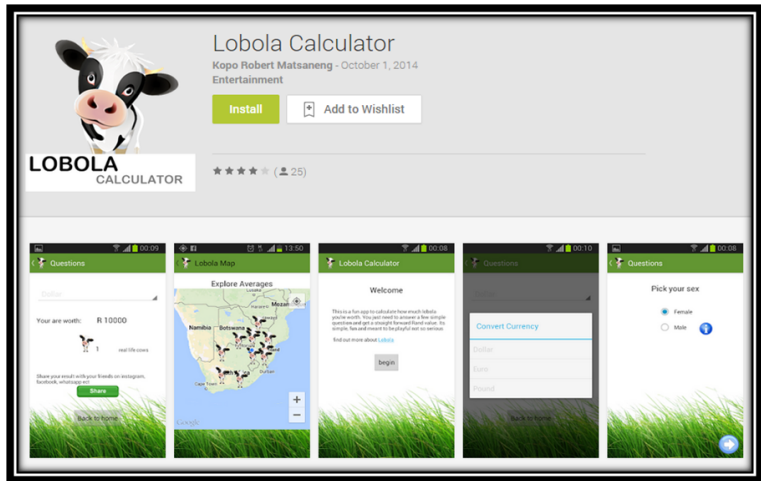
Education and bride price in Zambia

Source: Ashraf, Bau, Nunn, and Voena (forthcoming)

*Think about the factors that affect bride price today.
What is the... most important factor?*

		<i>First</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Third</i>
Education	obs	543 37.3%	223 15.3%	152 10.4%
Good morals	obs	191 13.1%	283 19.4%	216 14.8%
Family values	obs	214 14.7%	272 18.7%	206 14.2%
Virginity	obs	137 9.4%	186 12.8%	179 12.3%
Age	obs	41 2.8%	94 6.5%	141 9.7%
Ethnicity	obs	104 7.1%	117 8.0%	190 13.1%
Other	obs	144 9.9%	118 8.1%	85 5.8%

The 'Lobola' calculator app



Lobola Calculator
Kopo Robert Matsaneng - October 1, 2014
Entertainment

Install Add to Wishlist

LOBOLA
CALCULATOR

★★★★☆ (25)

Questions

Dollar

Your are worth: R 10000

1 real life cows

Share your result with your friends on Instagram, Facebook, whatsapp!

Share

Back to home

Lobola Map

Explore Averages

Namibia Botswana

Map showing cow icons across southern Africa.

Google

Lobola Calculator

Welcome

This is a fun app to calculate how much Lobola you're worth. You just need to answer a few simple questions and get a straight forward result. No strings, fees and meant to be playful not so serious.

Find out more about [Lobola](#)

begin

Convert Currency

Dollar

Euro

Pound

Back to home

Questions

Pick your sex

Female

Male

Back to home

History, cultural context, and development policy

- In these examples, the effectiveness of policy depends critically (and in non-obvious ways) on the historical and cultural contexts of the society in question.
- Effective policy requires taking these into account.
- Suggest a need to move beyond the current one-size-fits all strategy.