Global Empowerment Meeting (GEM) 2018

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Overview

There is accumulating evidence showing that:

1. There are important differences in cultural traits across societies.
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!
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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!
Provide three examples to illustrate this:

1. Health and medicine
2. Agriculture
3. Education
Guinea residents 'refusing' Ebola treatment

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

Technical innovations: taylorisation, standardisation, specialization
Blood sampling
Lumbar puncture

Sources: Infocam, Yaoundé, Cameroun
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 atoxyl, an arsenic-based drug.
  - Caused (at least partial) blindness in 20% of those treated.

Figure 15: World Bank Projects and Outcome Rating

The total funds committed to each project. These control variables are described in the notes of the figure.

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Success of World Bank development projects

(a) Health Projects, No controls

(b) Health Projects, Full controls

(c) Non-health Projects, No controls

(d) Non-health Projects, Full controls

Notes:
- Data is from AidData for World Bank aid projects.
- A project was rated as highly unsatisfactory (1).
- A project was rated as satisfactory (2).
- A project was rated as moderately unsatisfactory (3).
- A project was rated as moderately satisfactory (4).
- A project was rated as highly satisfactory (5).

Figure 1: Times Prospected and World Bank Project Outcomes for Health and Non-health Projects on average, but that they perform poorly specifically in the health sector. This suggests that these places are not somehow less successful at development in other sectors, as shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4.

Notes:
1. The binscatters reveal striking correlations; for health projects, there is a strong negative correlation between number of years visited and World Bank Project Rating. For non-health projects, there is a strong positive correlation between number of years visited and World Bank Project Rating.

Colonial Controls
- Includes level of centralization, use of plow, whether indigenous slavery was practiced, and whether agriculture includes mean temperature, mean precipitation, mean land suitability, the mean surface index and tsetse fly suitability.
- Includes mean malaria ecology.

Geography and Climate Controls
- Includes total number of slaves taken from each main ethnic group in a region during the Atlantic slave trade and number of missions in each main ethnic group in a region.
- Includes the total funds committed for each project. All regressions control for country fixed effects and country by health project fixed effects. Full controls include the following set of controls:
  - Controls include the total funds committed for each main ethnic group in a region.
  - Colonial Controls include level of centralization, use of plow, whether indigenous slavery was practiced, and whether agriculture.
  - Geography and Climate Controls include mean temperature, mean precipitation, mean land suitability, the mean surface index and tsetse fly suitability.

Success of World Bank development projects

Projects labeled a "health" sector project by the world bank in the sector designations for a project. All regressions control for sleep sickness treatment between 1921 and 1956. In the non-health sectors, projects are on average more successful.
Blood test refusals rates

Figure 7: Share of Years Visited and Blood Test Refusal

Refused Any Blood Test

Share of Years Visited (1921-1956)

(a) Congo

(b) Cameroon

(c) Gabon

(d) Chad

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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 Carr

Fertilizer Consumption in Selected Regions (1961-2013)
Supernatural beliefs 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

% Share of Witchcraft or Evil Eye 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

- It had a big effect on boys education,
School construction in Indonesia

• It had a big effect on boys education, but no effect on girls.
School construction in Indonesia

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- However, the zero effect masks significant heterogeneity:
  1. For some ethnic groups, the effect was positive and very large.
  2. For others, the effect was zero.
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• The same thing is also found in Zambia.
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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.
### Education and bride price in Zambia

**Assumption 1.** Is the bride price-education relationship widely known?

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

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<th>Factor</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>152</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good morals</td>
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<td>186</td>
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<td>6.5%</td>
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<td>118</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ‘Lobola’ calculator app

Lobola Calculator
Kopo Robert Matsaneng - October 1, 2014
Entertainment
Install
Add to Wishlist

LOBOLA CALCULATOR

Questions
Lobola Map
Lobola Calculator
Questions

Welcome
This is a fun app to calculate how much lobola you'd need. You just need to answer a few simple questions and get a straightforward lobola value. It's simple, fast and meant to be playful, not so serious.

Pick your sex
Female
Male

Convert Currency
Dollar
Euro
Rand

Map of South Africa

Share your results with your friends on Instagram, Facebook, whatapp.net
Share
Back to home
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.

Need to move beyond the current one-size-fits all strategy.