



GÖTEBORGS
UNIVERSITET



Work-in-Progress Workshop Series

Fall 2022 Programme

September 6

Felipe Torres (University of Oxford)

Government Audits of Municipal Corruption and Belief Updating: Experimental Evidence

Discussant: Marcia Grimes, University of Gothenburg

We implemented a field experiment that assesses whether citizens update corruption beliefs when presented with audit information about malfeasance in their municipal government. The video treatment reports results of municipal audits in Chile; the control is a placebo video. We measure incentivized pre-treatment and post-treatment corruption beliefs of 5,525 subjects.

When informed about corruption in their municipality subjects update negatively. Updating is weakly correlated with the amount of reported malfeasance and with trends in malfeasance. We find limited evidence that learning is Bayesian. Treatment effects persist after one-month. We observe higher donations to local public goods by treated subjects in municipalities with more positive audits.

September 20

Alesha Porisky (Northern Illinois University)

To Condition or Not to Condition? How Local Politics Shapes Cash Transfer Program Design in Kenya and Tanzania

Discussant: TBD

In 2020, there were approximately 123 social cash transfer programs operating in countries across sub-Saharan Africa, many of them part of government's long-term social protection plans. Where cash transfers in Latin America have largely been conditional cash transfers, which require beneficiaries to meet certain conditions or co-responsibilities, often related to education and healthcare, the majority of programs across sub-Saharan have been unconditional programs or programs with both conditional and unconditional elements. Through a comparative study of long-term government-implemented cash transfer programs in Tanzania and Kenya, this research examines the political drivers of conditionalities in cash transfer programs. It not only traces political elites' decision-making processes related to conditions in both countries but also examines how 'hard' conditionalities in Tanzania and 'soft' conditionalities in Kenya have shaped beneficiaries' experiences with social cash transfer programs across similar rural communities in Tanzania and Kenya.

The paper presents two key arguments. First, it argues that over the long-run political decisions about program design, including conditionalities, are shaped by electoral politics and internal pressures for program expansion. This argument challenges the existing literature on conditionalities in sub-Saharan Africa, which emphasizes the decisive role that international development partners play in shaping program design. The paper demonstrates that competitive elections in Kenya have led to political pressures for the broad expansion of social cash transfers nationwide rather than focus on graduation and conditionalities. In contrast, in Tanzania, the increasingly authoritarian political space has included a reinvigoration of productivist rhetoric focused on hard work and self-reliance. Political elites have thus emphasized the importance of cash transfer co-responsibilities, which are viewed as central to the creation of 'productive' citizens. Second, the paper argues that 'soft' and 'hard' conditionalities result in similar outcomes across programs, despite very different political drivers for their implementation.

October 11

Alexander Yeandle (London School of Economics)

ICTs, Development and Election Fraud: Testing a New Mechanism in Malawi

Discussant: Boniface Dulani, University of Malawi

Many existing studies have argued that the spread of ICTs, namely mobile phones and fast internet, can reduce election fraud by facilitating social monitoring and collective action. In my paper I push back against this explanation, arguing that ICTs can reduce fraud but through a different mechanism. The spread of ICTs leads to local economic development, and it is this development that reduces fraud through a number of channels, in line with existing scholarly literature. I test the argument with polling-booth election returns and proprietary

3G internet coverage data in Malawi, focusing on the 2014 and 2019 Presidential elections, the latter of which was overturned due to ballot irregularities. Using a geographic regression discontinuity design, alongside a more standard differences-in-differences approach, I find coverage exhibits a strongly negative effect on local fraud. Yet using nightlights and individual-level survey data, I also show that coverage drives local economic development and access to public goods, which increase support for the incumbent and hence reduce the incentive to engage in fraud.

October 18

Nelson Ruiz (University of Oxford),

Exchanging Contracts for Electoral Support: The Returns of Backing the Winner

Discussant: Victor Lapuente Gine, University of Gothenburg

The "hidden" power of money: how campaign contributions to legislators buy influence through executive action. Recent evidence shows that elected candidates to executive offices reciprocate their donors via public contracts, but the benefits received by legislators' donors has not been found. We argue that the quid pro quo between legislators and their donors is difficult to find because the reward for the contributions comes indirectly through actions taken by the executive and that the capacity of legislators to direct contracts to donors is conditional on their leverage with the executive. In this paper, we test how the bargaining power of legislators with the executive can condition rewards for legislators' donors. We do this by using a

novel dataset that links individual donors of local councilors to contracts assigned by the municipal governments in Colombia. In order to identify how bargaining power with the executive determine donors' rewards, we use a double regression discontinuity design; if legislators are barely elected in the party of the executive, and if the party of the executive barely obtains a majority in the council. We test whether executives assign more contracts for legislators' donors when the legislators are in the majority party, or alternatively, fewer contracts when in the minority to reward opposition support. This paper aims to open the black box on how inter legislative-executive bargaining can moderate the influence of campaign money in politics.

November 2

Pablo Balan (Tel Aviv University)

Property Rights and Social Dependence: How Informal Institutions Shape Land Formalization in Weak States

Discussant: Adam Harris, University College London

This paper draws on an RCT in the city of Kananga, DR Congo which randomly offers citizens subsidies to formal land titles ---to my knowledge the first successful RCT in an urban setting. The paper documents that the program worked: it increased the acquisition of land titles. Still, there was significant heterogeneity in who demands and obtains a land title. The program also crowded out

citizens' participation with local informal institutions - land titling had social effects. To explain these results, the paper proposes a theory about the relationship between formal land titling and local informal institutions based on the fact that such institutions are costly and, in particular, induce social dependence, while property rights have the potential to reduce such dependence.

November 15

Ashrakat Elshehawy (University of Oxford), co-author Mohamed Saleh (LSE)

Religious Minorities and Public Good Provision: Evidence from 19th and Early 20th Century Egypt

Discussant: Steven Brooke, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Why did non-Muslim local religious communities in 19th-century colonial Egypt self-organize to produce and expand public services? This paper aims to make a contribution to the field of the political economy of service provision in ethnically and religiously diverse societies, by highlighting conditions

religiously diverse societies, by highlighting conditions under which religious minorities against conventional wisdom are highly active in service provision. The paper highlights competition scenarios that foster community self-help mechanisms for service provision by a religious minority.

November 29

TBD