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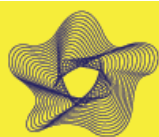
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IMTFI
INSTITUTE FOR MONEY, TECHNOLOGY
& FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

The Double Gold Standard: Session One of the 2016 Conference



In director **Bill Maurer**'s opening remarks for the annual IMTFI conference, he reviewed the history of the organization and how the interests of this unique interdisciplinary scholarly community had evolved over time in attempting to comprehend how digital or mobile payment might have "something to do with poverty alleviation." His account began with a focus on the repayment of microfinance loans, with the assumption that ubiquitous digital tools might serve as a means to "keep track and repay" in a relatively narrow sector of the economy. Maurer explained how the ideas about the interfaces of technology, money, and financial inclusion had "morphed" during the course of development of a scholarly community. He also admitted that "payment is weird" and "arcane," because it requires explorations of obscure networks and "portals and rails of infrastructure," as in the case of mapping a Visa transaction.

For Maurer, "payment in relation to poverty" invites even more inquiry into complexity.

Thinking about payment platforms also may involve partnering with people from "government and industry" and addressing issues of risk and liability around access, fees, safety and security. By supporting the "ground-level perspective" and giving attention to "voices from the field and the village," research about religion, ritual, belief, and social hierarchies has also become critical to IMTFI scholarship, since there may be occasions around payment mapping where "it matters what your elders are saying," or the existence of "people of high rank endorsing a service" may be critical. Thus ritual specialists and oracles might be important in understanding uptake of new financial services. He emphasized the need for scholars to "push the debate in industry and policy," which shaped the "insight and impact" theme of the conference.

As an illustration of how adopting new technologies is never easy, even in developed economies, he chuckled about the attempted rollout of **EMV** cards in the United States, which is now hitting its six-month anniversary. He pointed out that at this point only about 20% of the readers needed were available, and he observed that the slow adoption at merchants' terminals could be attributed to many factors in behavior change from patterns developed over 30+ years of swiping cards. Now that one must "put the chip in . . . and wait and wait . . . about that long," users may indulge in many forms of magical thinking, particularly since "the terminal has never spoken to you before," and conspiracy theorists might worry about invisible entities "stealing all your information" during the time lag. Rather than seeing adoption as a friction-free switch ("just flip the lights on"), Maurer described it as "a lumpy process" and invited his fellow participants to critical thinking by urging that they "investigate those lumps."

The first panel on "The Sharing Economy? Women and Girls and their Ties and Tensions" chaired by Erin McDonald of **Women's World Banking** addressed what she called the "tensions that women experience" to "access resources," as they might be

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very broadly defined. In many ways this panel proved to be as much about the very definitions of "success" and "value" in social as well as economic terms as much about the dynamics of gender.



Carol Chan of the University of Pittsburgh led off the discussion with her presentation on "To Send or to Carry? Gendered Evaluations of Formal and Informal Remittance Practices in Migrant-Origin Villages in Central Java, Indonesia." By talking about "migrants and their money," Chan investigated how "meanings of migrant money" might not only be gendered but also indicative of the presence or absence of practices that mark how they use and earn their money in culturally important ways. When grappling with such a high volume of transactions constituted by 8.55 billion dollars from 6 million temporary laborers, Chan had to develop a research methodology that addressed many types of volatility in returns, including "underpayment and nonpayment by employers" and susceptibility to "many risks and perpetrators" including customs officials.

Chan noted the moralistic tone of documents such as "99 tips" for how to be a successful migrant. Such official messages might ignore the challenges of "the material contexts in which people live" in "culturally specific ways," because money can serve "as a religious and moral issue" and an expression of a good "Javanese-Musim" identity. In an environment of constant social surveillance in which women might be evaluated more harshly, Chan was interested in addressing tensions. For example, for migrants building houses, members of the community might question "who do they build it for?" and "where do they build it?" Furthermore, gendered moral ideas may be supported by many kinds of institutional discourses, including projections of piety in how they dress. In pointing out that ideas about financial inclusion "are very gendered," even in supposedly neutral financial programs, Chan probed unexamined biases. She emphasized that gendered and moral aspects were expressed in how women were "mainly addressed as wives and mothers who have to put their families before themselves" and challenged assumptions about families that took as a premise that women's incomes were to be seen as supplementary.

Chan described a range of forces at work, from religious ideas about Halal-permitted uses and the worldview that "money is a gift from god" to family expectations. Often she recounted stereotypes in which male migrants were viewed as "more responsible" and "less flirtatious/rebellious." For example, despite the rigors of life for women who work in Taiwan in factories, they might be viewed much more critically than male plantation workers in Malaysia. Many transactions were formal Western Union-style transactions, but migrants might also carry large amounts of cash across great distances, from one thousand to five thousand US dollars at a time. She found women were more harshly judged for not bringing money home, while men were pitied and excused for spending funds on seeming luxuries like cigarettes or energy drinks. Often bias was justified by assumptions that women would be domestic laborers with free lodging and food, but men also benefited from the fact that men's wealth was taken for granted. If women brought money home it might also be viewed suspiciously as a potential benefit from extramarital relationships or even sex work.

Investing in material goods was seen as less risky by the population she studied than saving, because land costs were rising and the currency was unstable. With amusement she provided a survey of local attitudes about "which houses were funded by which currencies," including how houses built with money from Hong Kong, Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore might be differentiated. Even though "the houses look alike," gossips also kept track of how much individual siblings might have contributed to particular structures, as though it was a feature of the architectural design. In an environment of gossip, discussion, and judgment, "the materiality of what money can buy," as well as ideas about bad luck and divine retribution, seemed to shape the dynamics of a no-win situation for women who must fend off gossip and project hard work. In contrast men "might be shamed but also excused." Even good female

providers faced "accusations of being bad mothers and wives," as they struggled with "fulfilling those expectations" and negotiating financial and moral risks.



"Group versus Individual Strategies: Dynamic Social Networks of Mobile Money among Unbanked Women in Western Kenya" by IMTFI veteran researcher [Sibel Kusimba](#) of American University used techniques of social network analysis and information visualization as a way to formulate research questions, present evidence, and point to new directions for inquiry. (Readers should check out my previous blog stories about Kusimba's work [here](#) and [here](#).) She began with a sociogram of Edward, a man receiving remittances from children and recirculating them to other family members in his social graph such as siblings and mothers. She showed how drawing network graphs might allow us to see central nodes. However, she was dissatisfied with the fact that graphs did not indicate time and didn't deal adequately in economic complexity. By using interactions with informants at regular intervals over time, which encompassed both persistent and variant transactions in dynamic social networks, she hoped to learn more about how transactions shape social ties and vice versa.

Kusimba had many reasons to invest research efforts in data from financial diaries, which would be complemented by questionnaires and observations. Such diaries allow researchers to understand cash flows and financial instruments and perceive a more diverse range of financial tools. Thus it is more likely to see where new products could support existing needs. She cited the work of [Daryl Collins](#) of [Portfolios of the Poor](#) on how poor people manage money and manage positive value over time and compensate seasonal events and shocks. For example, she noted how from participating in a maturity ceremony for adolescent boys (in research presented at a previous IMTFI conference), her informants managed changes in their non-cash assets, such as livestock.

Her methodology focused on 20 women in Western Kenya and represented their social roles in their networks by mapping cash money, in-kind gifts, mobile money, and other assets. She initiated visiting in December and visited women every two weeks. Her subjects ranged in age from 23 to 74 and were mostly combining farming with many entrepreneurial activities including proprietorship of a "beauty saloon." She laughed about the accident of having "captured the one percent," given the rarity of owning a car. Researchers had to have considerable discipline, because "the women are very busy; most of the time they are not home."

She showed the intricacies of the networks of Robai, a potter who was 500 meters from nearest M-PESA agent and provided a view of her home and the floorplan of household relations that demonstrated her proximity to the homes of two co-wives' houses. Rather than use older models of kinship maps, she deployed visualizations of the independent strategies to understand "how people make decisions" and situate themselves in relationship to flows of "incoming and outgoing money." Such visualization techniques with the tools of network theory also made it possible to observe centripetal and centrifugal patterns of the flow of money, resources, and relationships. This economy might include the secret places of a beer brewer or the uses of food plants by a woman. Wealth might be produced with her mobile phone, as well as with face-to-face interaction.

She also introduced the theme of the problems of mistranslation, carried over from nuclear family norms in the US. In particular she argued that "seeing the household as a separate unit" was deeply problematic, at the most basic level because men might rear children at multiple domiciles. Moreover possible words for the "household" didn't always

reflect the same social and economic grouping. She observed that there was actually no adequate word, because larger groupings like "Ekholo" (clan) were less slippery than "Mungo," which depended on a gendered. Because different words for family don't gloss for household, it was possible to commit communicative blunders when trying to translate words.

Furthermore, she asserted that a purely economic view of success was too limited, which charting the relationship between money and time could broaden. Thus a woman's transactions might seem to show a pattern of negative cash flow but not be associated with impoverishment, because she had acquired considerable wealth in social capital during the process. By looking at how her economic capital might get traded into social capital, Kusimba argues we get a more capacious view. In closing she cited the work of [Ananya Roy](#) on "bottom billion capitalism."



"[Generational Tensions in the Uptake of Digital Financial Services: Adolescent Girls and Adults in Nigeria](#)" by [Jude Kenechi Onyima](#) of Nnamdi Azikiwe University explored how financial adoption might be influenced not only by the issue of trust, which is common in elders, but also by generational conflicts. Anemia lamented the fact that too frequently the 32 million adolescent girls in Nigeria were "lumped together with adult population. The methods of his study focused on four communities -- half Christian and half Muslim -- with a focus on 120 randomly selected girls. In gathering data he wanted to include informants from both northern and southern regions and from both urban slums and rural areas. 96% own feature phone, and 70% own both feature and smart phones. 78% of smart phones were bought by friends as birthday or lovers' day gifts. "Adolescent girls use their phones basically for fun, peer-based learning, networking and occasionally for financial transactions." He reported that the average adolescent girl spends 4.5 hours daily on mobile phone.

He found adults were "not comfortable with adolescent girls using financial services short video phone and peer-based learning," because adults were annoyed with adolescent girls' use of phones for a variety of causes, such as the time spent with the phone, financial reasons, and the development of unauthorized relationships with unapproved males. Adults insisted on "no smart phone for early adolescent girls" and "monitoring: for late adolescents. Adults also expressed concerns about "poor interpersonal relationship" skills, compromised status, talking more with strangers than with family relations, distraction, road accidents, secretive lifestyles, increased flirting, and the abandonment of household chores

They identified three key areas of concern

- Social reasons: More pressure from opposite sex, can be cajoled into unwholesome behavior, poor interpersonal relationship especially with relatives, cyber bullying, cultural extinction, distractions from academic activities, spreading of gossips, road accident.
- Family reasons: abandon house chores, conflicting moral values(increases tendency to tell lies), conflict with family members, need to get money to buy data.
- Health reasons: snacking while pingpong(obesity), less time for exercise, poor sleeping pattern owing to night chatting, postural disorder, vulnerable to internet use gaming disorder(aggressiveness & attention deficit).

Because teens saw their digital identities as part of their global citizenship and contemporary literacy, they resisted the strategies of control from their elders, and even

learned to make their phones difficult to use. Adults also needed to be ingenious and restricted adolescent girls to specific services and sites. His research team also saw the nature of gifts received from opposite sex being transformed. New gifts included airtime/data bundles, digital money, online purchases, customized gifts, videos, and electronic gadgets. Adults bemoaned increased flirting, a tendency to tell lies, and perceived materiality among girls.

He argued that it was important to resist broad generalizations, however. Christian girls might have more chances for uptake more than their Muslim counterpart, but the resulting tensions in Christian homes might also be an inhibiting factor. Tensions are also higher among urban poor than among the rural poor, where access might also be enhanced. Unfortunately the arguments/counter arguments about whether adolescent girls shall use digital innovations and norms about when to use them and how to use them were not considered in designing marketing campaigns by DFS (digital financial services) operators. Only 3% of adults were likely to encourage uptake of DFS among adolescent girls. "This represents a huge roadblock to adoption," he argues.

In discussion participants noted the importance of rapid change and how interactions are "very much in flux." Their research on gender also encompassed different ages and education levels. The theme of the importance of translation and the problem of lack of discussion of men and boys in panels on gender was also raised. In closing, the value of comparison facilitated by IMTFI was lauded, as was their emphasis on a "monetary ecology" approach.

Posted by Liz Losh at 12:47 PM



Labels: [gender](#), [indonesia](#), [Kenya](#), [M-PESA](#), [mobile money](#), [Nigeria](#)

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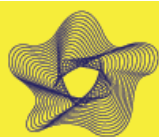
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Wednesday, April 20, 2016

Off the Charts: Session Two of the 2016 Conference



In the panel on "Ecologies in Crisis: Transferring, Converting and Marketing Value in Unstable Times" with discussant [Rosa Akbari](#) of the [International Rescue Committee](#) stories of crisis and resilience turned out to encompass a wide variety of political and natural disasters. As Akbari noted, when it comes to understanding creative responses to precarity in developing economies from the position of the developed world, "we have a lot more to learn from them." The first presentation on "[Managing, negotiating, and converting 'currency' in daily life in a multicurrency environment of Zimbabwe](#)" by Innocent Tonderai Mahiya of Women's University in Africa and Simbarashe Gukurume of the University of Cape Town grappled with the effects of a "serious economic crisis," where "the worst inflation in the world for a country not at war" had created a country of "poor billionaires," where daily 50 thousand withdrawal limits cripples those earning salaries of 50 billion units in local currency.

The research team provided an overview of money providers. [EcoCash](#), the most widely used mobile money service in the country, launched in 2011. It was subsequently joined by [NetOne](#), which introduced the government-controlled [OneWallet](#) in 2013. With [Telecash](#), which is now the second-largest provider in the country, there are three giant telecommunication companies joined by other stakeholders and players in a growth environment in which the largest companies have over six million subscribers. Thus this national mobile money environment could be compared in scale to the territories of the M-PESA model, which the research team attributed to the rapid introduction of mobile money services, which rapidly expanded in urban and rural areas. Additionally mobile networks are seen as reliable by informants with an increased number of players in mobile money sectors. Access is added by ubiquitous advertising including omnibuses and commercials on government radio and television.

The team's field site in [Chivi](#) was one of first areas to adopt foreign currency because of immigration flows creating a sending population to the community. With so many from Chivi migrating to South Africa, there were formal and informal channels for currency alternatives long before the government adopted the multi-currency system, particularly with the circulation of the rand. The team's methodology was primarily qualitative, based on ethnographic participant observation with interviews with clients and agents of mobile money services and informal conversations with villagers. In addition to the rand, the US dollar was a common currency, but there was also the presence of the Chinese yuan. Researchers were interested in the process which is negotiated during the exchange and features that include high social solidarity and the deployment of social capital. Sometimes this involved the subverting of regulatory restrictions, as when elderly clients would sometimes send grandchildren to negotiate on their behalf or attempt transactions without documents by deploying social understanding mechanisms. They also considered types of mobile money agents and the politics of space, because some operate in makeshift booths, while others are run out of shops.

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"Financial Security: Laborers' Transfer of Value from Karachi's Marketplaces to Tribal War Zones in Pakistan" by Noman Baig of Habib University Pakhtun offered the perspectives of many participants living in contested territories under threat of drone strikes. The three major perspectives were those of impoverished laborers, state officials, and actors with a corporate point of view. This research explored "the value transfer system of ethnic Pakhtun migrants working on daily wages in Karachi's marketplaces." Baig chose to tackle the following research questions: "How do laborers transfer value from the city of Karachi to villages and tribal areas of Pakistan?" "How does state counter-terrorist surveillance impact laborers' traditional value transfer system?" and "How are emerging financial technologies such as branchless banking shaping customary ways of handling money in Karachi's marketplace?" Baig aspired to the ideals of the "good anthropologist" by attending to "their interactions with financial instruments such as branchless banking" and borrowing and credit practices "within their kinship, religious, and ethnic networks." His methodology emphasized a "deep hanging out with the laboring class" that was enhanced with semi-structured interviews. He drew on many sources of information for his study to understand the experiences of his core group of laborers and migrants, including retail agents, Easypaisa staff, State Bank of Pakistan representatives, employees of the Habib Metropolitan Bank, currency dealers, and money lenders.

In negotiating alternatives, the Pakistan Post offered money orders, which were extremely slow but carried low fees. Commercial banks charge significant transfer fee and might take days. There were a number of appealing reasons to rely on truck and bus drivers who simply carry cash to far flung villages. Finally a local shopkeeper/moneylender could serve as an intermediary: if a laborer chooses to deliver cash in Karachi, the equivalent amount of food ration can be delivered to the laborer's house in a village. In other words, in this scenario, it was not physical currency but value that gets transferred. Choices were often dictated by generational differences and issues of trust and kinship.

Easypaisa is emerging financial instrument with 250,000 retail agencies and 22 franchises in Karachi. It only takes two days to get a franchise, although it used to take 15 days. The major requirement is to have to have a physical roof, so agents are not just sitting on a sidewalk.

Such mobile financial services facilitate dramatic changes around existing community bonds, which could also create disruptions in an already disrupted environment. The use of digital financial instruments might seem to offer relative autonomy, Baig argued, but that autonomy could also risk greater precocity. A person becomes "more vulnerable to economic crisis" but is "also released from embedded networks of kinship." These changes also encompass changing gender dynamics and disrupt existing systems of home delivery through kinship.

This disintermediation might be appealing when "laborers hesitate to visit banks" that are too "fancy and glittery." In place of banks, retail agents offer banking services to the underprivileged, but laborers' income gets incorporated into financial logics far beyond Karachi. "So they become included but they stay excluded." In other words, "financial inclusion and physical exclusion happens simultaneously," because "financial

categorization reproduces social hierarchies" in the "network paradox of capitalism" that "allows you in but excludes you also." Baig insists that such people aren't really "unbanked" but they are banked "in their own ways."

He cautioned that regulation of Hawala by the state plays a significant role as existing networks are "demonized" and the "alternate of corporate technologies" is lauded. He explained that Western Union "became popular after 9/11," because the informal system was seen as illegal, but "profit comes to Wall Street." In his view of the "financial ecology" he is interested in "how a laborer in bazaar in Karachi is connected" to the U.S. sector. He also expressed his concerns that "the discourse of financial inclusion gives a negative valuation to everyday forms of money management" particularly "under the rubric of security and counter-terrorism."



According to the presenter, "[Strange Intersections: Humans, Technology and Disaster in a Himalayan Valley \(Nepal\)](#)" by Kabir Mansingh Heimsath of Lewis & Clark College could just as easily be retitled "strange disjunctions." The commodity Heimsath focused upon in his IMTFI research is an unusual one: the caterpillar fungus [yarta](#). He explained how his interest in "the experience of space and place" shaped a relatively "new project on South side of the Himalayas." Although he hasn't "done focused fieldwork yet," the research questions began to emerge in late June 2013 from a conversation in back of vehicle going to [Manang](#). He described interacting with a "spotlessly dressed" man "just as monsoons were beginning." When he glanced down at the man's baggage, the man explained that he was going up to a remote region to sell caterpillar fungus, because he was told prices were higher in a remote valley than up in metropole. Heimsath puzzled over the "weird commodity chain" of "taking something out and bringing it back again."

He described how Manang was culturally Tibetan but part of Nepal with a history of trade and smuggling. Because of a large exodus to Katmandu, the region had "huge ostentatious houses based on money they made with international trade," as well as financial streams from trekking tourism and yartsa. He characterized the area as "cosmopolitan for decades," because Yartsa was already comparable to the price of gold and "almost anyone can pick it." He described himself as working "in the footsteps of Anna Tsing whose [2009 article](#) on mushroom foragers was formative for his work. He also credited the ideas of [Tim Ingold](#) on space and place as helpful for not conceptualizing them as an "empty passive category" containing place. He noted his own "preference in thinking about pathways and movements," so that space was "always coming into being through pathways, movements."

This product of "summer grass" and "winter worms" grows in human influenced landscapes and yak pathways. Foragers never sell directly to the international market, because there are several levels of middlemen. "Exporters aren't even on map," because there are smugglers as well as buyers and exporters. Yarta is used primarily as gift item among elites like Tsing's mushroom mappings. In considering the overlap with tourist networks, he asked if it an intersection or lanes on the highway. He aspires to do a "similar mapping for road the itself," because in Nepal half of all roads have been built in last decade in response to a "teleological development paradigm" in which "we build the road, and everything else will be fine." As he exclaimed, "these networks existed before the road got there, and the money was there before the road, so why do we need the road?" (He pointed out that hydropower was also as paradigmatic development project.) His planned research would look at how the earthquake has effected all of this.

In the question and answer session, participants developed the theme of "following the money" and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in a group largely skeptical of the development paradigm.

Posted by Liz Losh at 4:56 PM



Labels: [disaster](#), [hyperinflation](#), [Nepal](#), [Pakistan](#), [Zimbabwe](#)

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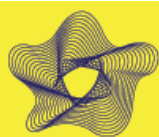


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IMTFI
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Wednesday, April 20, 2016

Bank Backdoors, Burials, and Betting: Session Three of the 2016 Conference



The panel on "Accessories to Technology: Mobile Financial Services, Risk, and Insurance with discussant [Ananya Roy](#) of UCLA addressed how institutions must adjudicate claims and manage liability in volatile environments of new products, precarious populations, and financial experiments. "[Assessing the Need and Feasibility for Using Pre-Paid Card Technology in Delivering Added Services to Micro Finance Customers in Selected Regions of Uttar Pradesh: \(India\)](#) by [Debashis Acharya](#) of the University of Hyderabad and [Tapas Kumar Parida](#) of the State Bank of India led off the session with a focus on the third largest state in India, where about 22 MFIs (microfinance institutions) operate.

New 2014 regulations have been reshaping the role of IRDA, the statutory body that regulates the insurance sector in India, which is tasked with both protecting the interests of policyholders while also ensuring the growth of the insurance industry. Knowledge partners in the study included [Bajaj Allianz Insurance](#), [M2P Solutions](#) (a prepaid card provider), and [Utkarsh Micro finance](#), which is one of the leading 25 MFIs in India, according to a CRISIL 2014 report. They traced how a claim settlement process might evolve along three trajectories: 1) the Traditional/Conventional Model in which the MFI collects documents from clients after the death of the insured and submits materials to the insurance company, 2) the model of Electronic Transfer (NEFT) to the bank, which opens up possibilities for alternative payment mechanisms and split payment paradigms, and 3) the Open Loop Pre-Paid Card model in which the nominee gets directly benefitted by this process and in which unsettled claims can be reissued and fresh claims can be processed by pre-paid card. Acharya described the costs and benefits of pre-paid cards from the perspective of users who think about mobile phones primarily as devices for communications.

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"The Curious Case of Mobile Micro-insurance in South Africa: A View from Above and Below" (South Africa) by [Christopher Paek](#) of London School of Economics focused on Xhosa funerals and financial risk mitigation through insurance. To demonstrate the importance of the issue of funeral insurance, he began with the case of Godfrey, who maintains a household composed of a wife, three children and a mother in a township outside Cape Town. With a monthly income of R2000 (about \$130) it would be difficult to manage costs generated by the death of his father-in-law, which would include multiple undertakers, transportation to ancestral homeland, ceremonial slaughter of one cow (and a second cow for a male head-of-household), food for guests, and the slaughter of a sheep for the funeral banquet. All tallied, such costs would be R41,780 or about 21 months of Godfrey's salary. Rather than turn to the formal sector of conventional insurance, most planning for family funerals would depend on informal mechanisms, such as burial societies, family and friends, churches, or Mashonisas (loan sharks). Funeral parlors themselves could serve as either formal and informal partners in contingency planning.

Paek explained his methodology of mixed qualitative and quantitative methods and his choices to integrate ethnographic methods in his work at the primary site in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa. His data was collected from 23 formal sector interviews, which drew on informants in insurance companies, MNOs, and TSPs, as well as regulators/legislators, administrators, and industry representatives. He also conducted 6 informal sector interviews with funeral parlors and burial societies, as well as client interviews with 76 survey respondents and 47 focus group respondents.

As inspiration Paek cited the work of [Camilo Téllez](#) and plugged his 2012 paper on "Emerging Practices in Mobile Microinsurance." Now that telecommunications companies and mobile money firms were becoming interested in the funeral insurance market, there were even possibilities for paying for funeral coverage with airtime spending. Paek described M-insurance as "fertile ground" for innovative products and presented both a "view from above" and a "view from below" that was informed by [Evans' and Pirchio's 2015 research](#) oriented around an empirical examination of why mobile money schemes may flourish in one country and flounder in another. Like other IMTFI researchers he pointed to concepts and notions of trust.

He argued that mobile money might be slower to take off in the context of high crime rates, lack of access to formal legal recourse, inundation by scams, lack of consumer advocacy, saturation with fly-by-night operations, high unemployment rates (which erodes trust in social networks), and a proliferation of scams on the phone. All of these factors undercut potential word of mouth benefits and reinscribe consumer needs for tangibility, typified by desires for a paper contract or a need to see an office. This "seeing is believing" mentality preserves the status quo, as do gatekeepers on the fence between informality and formality. Furthermore, South Africa is a country that is relatively heavily banked, so that mobile money is not something people need. Moreover, there are very heavy regulations, and e-money can only be lent by banks. In these "less than ideal payment systems," the risk of overdraft fees presents an additional deterrent to adoption. When national policies must balance between financial inclusion and consumer protection, South Africa leans toward protection.



"Sports Betting in Uganda: Causes and Consequences" by Sylvan Herskowitz of UC Berkeley encouraged those afflicted with academic snobbery to take a "multi-billion dollar global industry" seriously, which has "exploded across sub-Saharan area" and "quintupled between 2009 and 2013," thanks to a weak regulatory environment, access to international betting markets, new technology to manage bets, and the credibility of payouts. With more than 1500 betting branches in a country with less than forty million people, Uganda is a vibrant area of economic experimentation. He laughed at how the signifiers of betting culture were often invisible to Westerners, however, as in the case of the location of an Ebola washing station in front of betting station in Liberia in a *New York Times* photograph. One of Herskowitz's photographs documented all the international football tickets he had bought. Like most betters he had lost his investment in all of them. This is not surprising, since the standard multi-match ticket requires that all of the wins need to take place. (The lure is that the winning long-shot ticket offers a large payout.

He argued that researchers need to document neglected issue, particularly one with strong behavioral biases. For Ugandan betters this meant spending more than they normally would and ignoring how betting crowds out other expenditures. The numbers are significant, because in his study group of betters, expenditures on betting represented a median 11% outlay of income and a mean of 15%. Most of his respondents (75%) were heads of household. Even though 40% of their families knew they bet, only 25% knew how much they bet. In explaining his work on communities around Kampala on financial motivations, he dropped "economic speak" for a moment to characterize incentives as "if you want to get stuff that's big and expensive" but are constrained in ability to save or access to credit. After all, betting is one way to generate liquidity, despite its bad rate of return. In studying driving factors, researchers offered betters cash or betting tickets and designed the experimental situation so that timing might be before or after they got tickets. The prime increases demand for betting tickets by 15-25%. Participants also chose higher payouts. An experiment in which he gave them a wallet for setting money aside for betting seemed to decrease betting. Rather than frame it as "overrationalizing an activity" he saw it as "encouraging people to reflect." He reported a 10% reduction in betting among those who had underestimated their expenditures. He looked forward to testing more experimental primes to sort out budgeting and failure aggregators, improving data quality by decreasing noise in the results, refining the wallet as a physical instrument, differentiating the benefits of a tangible object from simple targeting, and doing testing in relation to other expenditures such as food.

Posted by Liz Losh at 9:19 PM



Labels: [betting](#), [burials](#), [India](#), [insurance](#), [South Africa](#), [Uganda](#)

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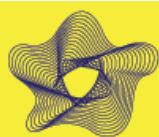
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IMTFI
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Thursday, April 21, 2016

Alumni Session Panel of the 2016 Conference



The final panel of the first day not only focused on long-term work done by returning IMTFI scholars but also emphasized the ways that multiple approaches and methodologies may involve creating media or technologies other than money itself.

These forms of creative production often entail implementing a variety of design decisions and user testing scenarios for these novel instruments. (Recently IMTFI has made its own [Consumer Finance Methods Research Toolkit](#) available online, as well as an explanatory document [IMTFI Trust and Money: It's Complicated](#), so the researcher as product designer is a paradigm that they model actively.) Although at the end of the day IMTFI head Maurer was joking about scenarios in which "a journalist, an anthropologist, and an economist go into a bar," the interdisciplinary benefits of multiple rounds of IMTFI funding and the cross-training of research cohorts has been no laughing matter.

"IMTFI's X Factor: Applying and Translating Innovative Research" was introduced by longtime social computing researcher [Scott Mainwaring](#), who has been with IMTFI from the beginning and facilitated by discussant [Divine Fuh](#) of the University of Cape Town.

The session started with "How Research Can Make a Difference Locally: The Case of Overseas Remittances in the Philippines" by [Jeremaiah Opiniano](#) who -- self-deprecating comments about his background as a journalist aside -- detailed the history of three rounds of funding for the RICART (Remittance Investment Climate Analysis in Rural Hometowns) tool, which analyzes "where overseas Filipinos from rural hometowns can best invest their money."

As Opiniano pointed out, regulations intended to inhibit money-laundering could negatively impact vulnerable countries, which he saw already affecting remittances. He explained how researchers focused on rural areas because "that is where most of the overseas migrants come from." He lauded the value of working with an economist so that quantitative and qualitative methods. He explained how his tool repurposed a World Bank survey but how being physically present in the study site was critical in order to understand practices of community engagement. Currently the group is working in [Guiguinto](#), and he showed several ways that community members were interacting in public events. For example, he discussed how members of Family Circle were "trying to discover themselves" as participants. He praised an approach that emphasizes [phenomenography](#), which maintains an empirical orientation but deeply engages with questions of human experience by focusing on differences in different people's experiences and thus looking at the locality's remittance investment climate with individual descriptions of personal understanding.

He acknowledged that his continuing study has faced several challenges, including the

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reluctance of participants, the closure of banks, and obstacles to keeping up with demands for regulation. Moreover, "some of them are friendly, and some of them are not." He affirmed the value of working with an economist "to connect the dots" by putting data sets together and tracking regressions, which depends on moving from a QUAN-qual to a QUAN-QUALbalance that incorporates how levels of socio-economic development differ by using a competitiveness index. (For more about toolkits, you can check out [this World Bank Trade Competitiveness Index](#).) His presentation was deeply grounded in pragmatic engagements, from considering how the cost of electricity and cost of the services of financial systems might be ranked to planning incentives such as raffle prizes or groceries for participants. He looks forward to sharing views on his findings as the conference proceeds.



"Translating Research into Product Design: Interactive and Innovative Financial Education Modules to Improve the Financial Behavior of Targeted Populations in India"

by [Deepti KC](#) opened with a fundamental question: "do we really know the financial lives of women?" She described how she designed a study that followed the financial lives of 25 women, which used "some promotional materials and financial literacy tools", but primarily focused on changing the mode of interaction from talking to listening. In this study she found that all of the women appeared to have separate sources of income and were hiding money, mostly in the kitchen, often from husbands. Although the women's lives might include the disruptions of banknotes eaten by vermin and domestic violence catalyzed by discovery of money caches, she wanted her work to honor their ingenuity and resourcefulness. In explaining the lack of pursuit of being banked among women, she noted that banks might not accept their small savings or be perceived of as threatening and stigmatizing. Furthermore, she identified a prevalent bias that ATMs and other uses of technology were for men, which was compounded by a fear of ridicule.

She prioritized using real life stories, because she didn't want to be too preachy. By providing a meaningful "frame of reference," financial literacy educators treated the materials as prompts for discussion rather than solely didactic.

In considering questions about if financial literacy was enough, she cited an influential study done in Kenya with lockboxes. (Those who would like to consult this research by economists Pascaline Dupas and Jonathan Robinson can read their seminal article "[Why Don't the Poor Save More?](#)") Based on this previous work, she decided to design a simple lockbox and key. Significant findings concerned how many saving goals were related to a child and how 73% reported discussing household expenses with family after experiencing the interventions. She noted how this phenomenon could increase with group dynamics and how financial education was enhanced if the educator was a female authority figure that they desired to emulate. She advocated for having financial inclusion researchers "spend time with women in the field for a long time," because their desires might be "different from what we think they need." In the question and answer session, she also differentiated between "knowledge" and "trust." Check out this [in-depth profile of Deepti K.C.](#), which includes a full interview and an account of a day-long visit to one of her field sites in Bihar.



"Juggling Currencies in Transborder Contexts: Mexico/US" by Magdalena Villareal explained how "video became part of the research." She asserted the value of comparative work and human factors, since money doesn't travel by itself. She argued for valuing "social currencies" and "symbolic currency" alongside economic currencies and observed that "one national currency" operates differently in different contexts, as it is "embedded in social scenarios." In commenting on the rancorous campaign environment debating about the contributions (or costs) of immigrants from Mexico, she reminded audience members that "money often comes back to the United States," because of remittance loops. As an example, she pointed to the case study of her field site in which there were "constant interactions with Hawaii, even in mountainous regions in Mexico" which extended "to the level of how many chickens are counted" in a day or adoption of foods like pasta with mushrooms. For researchers, according to Villareal, the challenge is to capture how "flows are not registered" and "uncover the nature of money." As a producer of media, she also included her subjects in the process by "showing the people part of the footage and having peoples' responses to the footage."

Posted by Liz Losh at 3:29 PM



Labels: [India](#), [Mexico](#), [Philippines](#)

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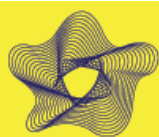
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Friday, April 22, 2016

Trust Funds: Session Four of the 2016 Conference



"In ____ We Trust: The Contingencies of Social and Financial Protection" with discussant **Kate McKee** of Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (**CGAP**) began the session by polling participants about their trust relationships with banks, insurance companies, credit card companies, and spouses. She also built on earlier discussions about the differences between "knowing how" and "knowing whether" by pointing to issues about lack of choice, the disconnect among clients with efficiency discourses from industry, the "layering" of digital effects, and the understanding that the continuing "role of the state is quite important" as an entity that can "drive" efforts.

"The role of mobile money in social protection networks in two rural areas of Colombia" by **Maria Elisa Balen** and Andrea Beltrán from the Universidad Externado de Colombia started with an explanation of how sixty years of conflict had produced over six million internally displaced people. Using the analytical triad of market, state and family, the research team focused on "social protection practices" in two field sites: Montes de María in the north and Putumayo in the south. The northern region has been suffering from a decline of tobacco production, and in the south the ups and down of illegal coca crops have been disruptive. Thus the family has to "reconfigure over a large distance." Two additional features are significant: "the state has become more present," and "mobile money becomes an interesting object of study."

The methodology of the study, which used snowballing ("someone who knows someone") and different entry points, avoided "normative perspectives of what family is" and was structured around "two decentralizations." Researchers looked at practices from a past-present-future perspective (including accounting for "how they think the future will be" and "how they want the future to be") and viewed money with "an approach allowing for diversity in conflict zones" and in the context of "other goods and services." The research team used tools like storytelling, drawing (including family maps), and workshop participation.

Participants faced a number of challenges in an environment in which regulation is designed to protect a platform being open to everyone but has yet to be enforced. Often bank intermediaries change very often, and the distribution of cash transfers also changes. When populations in those environments "don't know who they are dealing with and what they have to do to be more stable," the resulting volatility can be very relevant. Regional differences matter as well. For example, in the north the availability of cash transfers for two or three years has shaped uptake patterns. Researchers also looked at how participants treated different amounts of money differently. Among their major findings, researchers found 1) the amount of money in circulation changed in both directions, 2) money is often part of a wider web of exchange, and 3) mobile phones are present in family practices but don't appear to be influencing "technological spillover."

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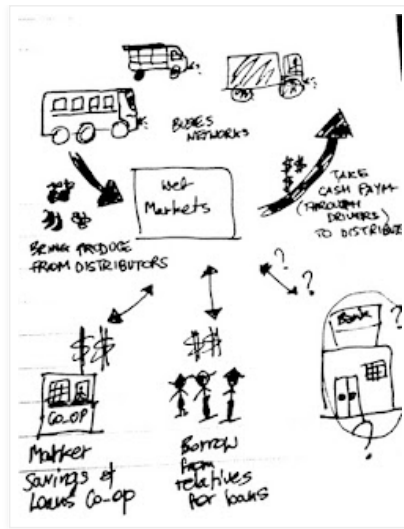
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"Dimensions of Electronic fraud and Governance of Trust in Nigeria's Cashless Ecosystem" by Oludayo Tade of University of Ibadan and Oluwatosin Adeniyi of University of Ibadan looked at "what trust means" and "how trust-building can be done" by examining financial fraud in the digital sector and how it might be facilitated by the trust fostered by intimate ties. They also observed a generational dimension in opportunities for deviant behavior in this "peculiar ecosystem," because of the existence of a "huge population of young people" that is "also dynamic" in which Nigerian youth may "deploy their energies" for "the right and wrong reasons." In considering the dimensions of e-fraud and how trust issues may stymie adoption of new technologies, they reminded the audience that the "internal dimension" in which a conspiracy by staff of the bank may compromise the data of the bank or improperly use technical know-how to make cash transfers. With 21.69 billion lost to 3,756 fraud cases in 2013 alone, policies pushing cashlessness can stimulate greater anxiety. When "trust underlies customer-bank relations," breaches cause avoidance behaviors and disrupt financial ecosystems. Fraud strategies may also involve love/fiancee, wife/husband, and son/father dyads, although transaction alerts can foil schemes, particularly for ATM card withdrawal fraud.

At this stage of the primarily qualitative study, content analysis has been done and crime narratives have been analyzed. For example, they presented The Eatery Case as an instance of "un-credited lodgment." Many scams promise to return money in two weeks time and are facilitated through text messages. They also note the "other side" of fraud in terms of governance, and how from the side of business and government, access to subscription services can be compromised

In the question and answer session the team emphasized the importance of specific context in "what you mean when you think about the unbanked." Insights from the field indicated that people were deeply invested in formal banking, and that the rhythms of life in "normal local markets" were still structured around the informal collection of daily contributions from traders. They noted that in making trade-offs, an incentive for becoming banked might be to avoid being susceptible to "increased physical attacks" and "robbery at home," in which victims would lose not only their property but also their lives. Transferring risks to a formal banking center could limit this danger. Additionally, they pointed to the affordances of existing programs for students to open accounts, which "enables you to receive money from home." They also observed that as people travel "we need to design packages that addresses customer characterizations."



"Intermediaries, Cash Economies, and Technological Change in Myanmar and India" by [Janaki Srinivasan](#) of the International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIITB) and [Elisa Oreglia](#) of SOAS at the University of London examined why intermediaries might be valuable rather than vilified.

"We have most of our fieldwork ahead of us," Oreglia admitted and expressed her enthusiasm for IMTFI critique, because she and Srinivasan were "looking for feedback." She began with a story of a tea trader from the northern part of Myanmar. "In many ways she is the kind of intermediary who is portrayed as the 'bad guy' in markets." Enthusiasts for disintermediation might see her as taking "advantage of farmers who may be ignorant of prices or unable to travel" and morally compromised by her assumptions that "farmers are really dumb." In a system in which traders may "give money and clothes" that create obligations from farmers who "have to sell to us because they are indebted to us" she appears as a suspect character. But Oreglia argued that the story is "much more complicated," particularly when "cash persists as do intermediaries" despite the potential "escape" offered by mobile money. Yet "even when the same operation would be cheaper and faster" if done directly by the farmer himself, many prefer existing social, cultural, and economic norms.

Srinivasan noted how "markets that are dominated by cash" raise interesting questions about the role of intermediaries and "what value are they bringing to the market," "what value do these transactions bring to the idea of value as situated in a place," and "what constitutes value in two different places." She emphasized the importance of how different countries manifest different patterns of adoption: "mobile money is about to take off in Myanmar," but in India "mobile phones has been around for a while, but mobile money is relatively recent." Although she granted it can be challenging to map how intermediaries are able to add value or disrupt value in a summer of fieldwork, she will be looking at a site that she has worked at previously in Kerala in a study "which is itself a revisit" of an influential study by Robert Jensen who did survey work over the course of five years. (IMTFI blog readers can peruse the article for themselves from this link to ["The Digital Provide: Information \(Technology\), Market Performance, and Welfare in the South Indian Fisheries Sector"](#) and read an account of Srinivasan's first IMTFI presentation with [Jenna Burrell](#) and [Richa Kumar](#) [here](#))

Srinivasan believes that terms like "producer" or "seller" may actually be more complicated categories characterized by differences of investment, size of fishing crafts and operational costs, and even various types of fish. Thus "the story of a sardine" may be different from the story of another fish. In particular, the role of the auctioneer may be important as well as issues of religion and gender that differentiate Janaki's field site in the Christian south and Jensen's in the Muslim north. Although the middleman is "the person that everyone wants to remove," she asserts that collective organizations can have more benefits than autonomous entrepreneurs and that the rise of co-ops in the sixties and seventies had undermined the power of the previous "fairly exploitive relationship." Using an auctioneer who was paid by the co-op was often valued "to get the best prices for the fish," although a system of transparent auctioning facilitated that, because it was "a system that people have come to recognize and trust." In asking "what does this have to do with technology," she noted that "the auctioneer always had a

mobile phone." Accounts were settled daily and sometimes settled weekly. Of course, in 2012 there was "no mobile money to speak of," so Srinivasan was looking forward to revisiting to "see how the intermediary deals with" the new platform.

Oreglia noted three previous financial crises in Myanmar and instances of demonetization. She explained that the field site was in an area of ethnic minorities and small market towns with Burmese-Chinese and Burmese-Indian residents, as well as tribal people, so ethnicity could also play a role not only in trust but in loyalty. The region might "trade with the rest of the country," as well as with China and Thailand, using its economic base in agricultural products. In the illustration above she shared the roughness of field notes, in trying to map out how money travels, including on bus networks. and the many financial movements of small traders who tended to borrow money from financial traders. Unlike the Kerala case, co-ops were used mostly by women traders. Goldsmiths who were all around the market and tended to be Chinese, Those of Chinese ethnicity "did business with everyone," although she emphasized the fact that "loyalty is not necessarily trust." Her tea traders relied on farmers not having many choices, but the technology that has proved to be most transformative is not mobile money. Rather she claimed that cheap motorbikes from China were offering now access to other lines of credit, because farmers could travel to other villages much more easily. Nonetheless most "still rely on these traders," and "ethnic ties have big part to play."

Bothe researchers said they strove to "rescue intermediaries from disdain" and the "contempt they are held in." To learn more about the disintermediation debate, you can visit this profile of Janaki Srinivasan to read an extended interview with her and see images from her Kerala field site.

Posted by Liz Losh at 1:14 PM



Labels: [Colombia](#), [fraud](#), [India](#), [intermediation](#), [Myanmar](#), [Nigeria](#)

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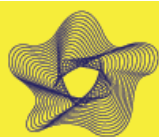
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Friday, April 22, 2016

Economies of Scale: Session Five of the 2016 Conference



In the second panel of the day "Small Size Big Impact? Management of Financial Opportunities and Constraints by Micro-entrepreneurs and Small Merchants" with discussant [Olumide Abimbola](#), Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology focused on the so-called "SME" sector with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises and led off with "[Influence of Mobile Money on Control of Productive Resources Among Women Micro Entrepreneurs Participating in Table Banking - Nakuru, Kenya](#)" by [Milcah Wavinya Mulu-Mutuku](#) and [Castro Ngumbu Gichuki](#) of Egerton University. Mutuku discussed [Kenya's Vision 2030](#) and how the aim is to transform Kenya economic, social, and political pillars. The research team decided to focus their study on the "social pillar," with an emphasis on the reduction of gender disparities and boosting of access to control around productive resources for women. They narrowed in on the business of "table banking," where money is put on the table and people borrow from the pool of currency, a practice that has even received [presidential endorsement](#). As illustrated in the photograph above, audience members were encouraged to look at the entire assemblage of materials on the crowded table and to notice differences between documents, such as the differentiation of light blue passbooks from beige ones, which might indicate two different types of transactions. Researchers also visited [Safari.com](#) mobile money services.

The methodology was characterized by three stages of data collection 1) questionnaire (data collected; analysis on-going), 2). focus group discussion (May, 2016), and 3) in-depth interviews (June & July, 2016). The culminating event would be a results dissemination workshop on September 2016. In surveying informants, they discovered that the issue was "not that they don't know about competing companies like Airtel," but getting accustomed "to a particular service for business." They also discussed how not all [Safari.com](#) services remained popular, because "they stopped using [Lipa Na M-PESA](#)," because the convenience of till numbers was offset by unanticipated service charges."

Although their intention was to study women's groups, they discovered significant levels of participation by men in the groups. For example the Peniel Young Women Group had a male treasurer and secretary and a 13-10 gender ratio, The Faith Women Group also had a male treasurer, Hosea, who introduced new ideas to the group, such as acquiring land. The benefits of being in these groups could be amplified by technology as well as gender diversity, so that table banking + mobile money might lead to a "transformation of life, as in the case of one of their subjects, Mary, who now encourages customers to use normal person-to-person money transfers. She wants customers to pay using mobile money and then transfers funds to her bank account, which makes her more able to important her goods from Uganda. With table banking and mobile money, her wealth has grown from 2 dollars to 700 dollars. According to researchers "when men are added," there might be "even higher benefits." So they asked, in focusing on empowering women

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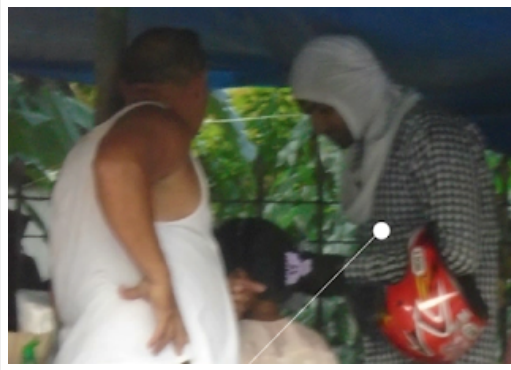


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alone, "are we missing something?" As Hosea exclaims in the end of their presentation, "women's eyes were open long ago, and the men's eyes are still closed."



"**Informal Loan Trap: Bombay 5-6 and its Effect on Tacloban Micro-entrepreneurs**" by Rosalita M. Dula and Marilou Pelenio Grego of Eastern Visayas State University looks at loans and informal arrangements in the Philippines. **Tacloban city** is a regional capital that was recently devastated by a typhoon. Local lore attributes the presence of Indians to conscripts who jumped ship during the British occupation of earlier centuries. Today the "Bombay 5-6" wear distinctive checked shirts and zip through the city on motorbikes, which allow them to pass through alleys, escape ambushes, and not stay in the areas for too long as "walking cash dispensers." The micro-entrepreneurs who serve as their client base may sell fruit, root crops, street foods, and other products and services such as watch repair. As ambulant vendors, they need capital to set up for the next day Dula cited prior work on the group in studies of informal financial survival in business by **Mari Kondo**.

Grego explained the methodology of the study. She also narrated accounts of interpersonal dynamics, which might include pleading and negotiating the issue of default (which might be more common with formal bank loans despite their low interest). With these informal loan operators, women can easily begin a relationship. In contrast, with banks they feel the problem "of starting a business with only a dollar." Dula and Grego lauded these entrepreneurs for being highly innovative, although profit was often used in household expenses rather than business growth or expansion. Money lenders reach out to ambulant vendors and keep books very informally, so that "a piece of a notebook and a whole lot of trust" constitute the basic elements of the exchange.



The final panel of the session was "**Assessing Unmet Needs of Small Merchants in Adopting Digital Payment Systems in Southern Ghana**" by Clement Adamba of the University of Ghana, who began by crediting Onallia Esther Osei and Rebecca Sarku for their dedication to the project. Unfortunately these members were unable to get visas to the IMTFI conference, despite their important contributions to the study that comprised home-based enterprises, roadside businesses, and work conducted in the back of shops. They focused on 1) 30 respondents who were SMEs on Osu Oxford Street, 2) 90

respondents from Makola, one of the oldest markets in Accra, which is dominated by imported foods, 3) 30 respondents from old Accra in Ga Mashie, the former capital of colonial government, and 4) 50 respondents from a rural district, the Adawso Roadside Market. Each site also included at least one FGD and one IDI. Most respondents were women, with a gender ration of 154 to 46. 28% of respondents had used digital payment platforms, but 8.9 % had dropped out, and 25% were currently using. Factors included 1) illiteracy and ignorance, 2) poor communication networks characterized by waiting ("we cannot afford to go and wait for two hours"), 3) security and lack of trust, 4) language barriers that might be exacerbated by lack of transport, and 5) the fact that holding cash has more power than holding a card or invisible wealth on a phone. This show of cash was strongly linked to self-esteem. Respondents explained that "we want to count our money after a day's work". They look forward to ongoing fieldwork.

In the lively question and answer session, a variety of innovative research questions were discussed, from deploying mystery shoppers to potentially going into business themselves to move toward more participation and less removed observation. There was also considerable debate about the dynamics of interest rates as incentives or disincentives of pursuing particular credit strategies.

Posted by Liz Losh at 2:19 PM



Labels: [entrepreneurship](#), [Ghana](#), [informality](#), [Kenya](#), [mobile money](#), [Philippines](#)

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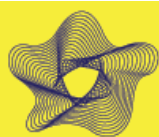
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Sunday, May 1, 2016

Taking and Staking: Session Six of the 2016 Conference



The final panel of the conference was devoted to "Up(S)takes of New Financial Tools and Technologies" with discussant [Sonia Arenaza](#) of the [Better Than Cash Alliance](#) of the United Nations Capital Development Fund. Arenaza praised the from-the-ground perspective of panelists that provided "a human and social dimension" for developing digital financial services for underserved populations with the aim of creating a more "inclusive digital ecosystem" that considers social dynamics and ways to "broaden" connective chains.

In "[Separate self, interdependent self and new financial technologies - Lessons from rural southern India](#)" Venkatasubramanian Govindan of the French Institute of Pondicherry described research in the field in Tamil Nadu as rural southern India undertakes a "massive effort to bank the unbanked citizen" with a focus on women and Dalits. The Prime Minister's ambitious [Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana](#) (PMJDY) initiative, which combines access to accounts with biometric authentication, attempts to launch new financial inclusion efforts on a massive scale. (For more on PMJDY, see [this IMTFI interview with Dan Radcliffe](#), which provides more information about this time of rapid change in India.) As Govindan explained, existing systems for smart cards and cash delivery -- combined with [NREGA](#) (the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005) -- have created bureaucracies that aren't always easily accessible to villagers or comprehensible to their lifeworlds.

National banks may have obligations and relationships, but the role of villagers is "reduced to a minimum." Because they have had "no contact at all with the banks," which they perceive of as "distant," they "immediately withdraw payments." There also may be many logistical snafus in doling out resources. As the photograph above indicates, Govindan showed a video with villagers lining up for fingerprint authentication using a mobile machine in which a young woman is finally successful in completing the vetting process after frustrating glitches. (For more on the problems with authenticating identity in the new [e-Aadhaar](#) system, see [this IMTFI blog post about the research of Mani Nandhi](#) working with rickshaw pullers in Delhi.)

Govindan lamented the fact that with these ubiquitous computing devices there may be "problems with maintenance" and "few sites" capable of repairs. In the litany of other woes, he also mentioned insufficient cash, short battery charge life, inadequate transfers of the BC, and limited amounts on transactions. Furthermore, there may be caste conflicts governing who can hand cash to whom, which can be exacerbated when banks assume there are no distinction issues about accepting payment.

By exploring "the effects in terms of saving practices" and the "public dimension" of private financial practices, like other IMTFI researchers, Govindan emphasized the impact of "mistrust and rumors." He also highlighted the advantages of other saving

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practices, including ROSCAs (rotating savings and credit associations) and lending to others. In particular, he emphasized the fact that over 70% of saving was through acquisition of gold. (For more on gold economies among the poor, see this [in-depth profile of Nithya Joseph](#).)

He also shared a number of everyday practices of financial upkeep in an environment in which keeping bills is very uncommon by thinking about "the effects" of different financial inclusion efforts "in terms of worldview." He noted that financial calculations were often significant in planning for ceremonies, particularly ceremonies of marriage, puberty, and housewarming. A key life event might drain 4-8 years of household income, but such investments were critical in building respect (raiyatai). He noted how the "continuous chain of reciprocity" and local understandings of "accountability and debt payment" were important. He also stressed the importance of "mental accounting" among people with "little written culture" and how structures in which one person would be in charge of the family memory, including its financial memory, functioned. He closed by reiterating how the gap between financial inclusion objectives and people's practices had to be acknowledged, particularly "how people translate" when new initiatives are launched. A second round of household surveys is planned for the next phase of research.



"Cross-border Transfers as a Strategic Tool to Promote the Diffusion of Mobile Money in Rural Areas. The Case of Burkinabe Diaspora Living in Ivory Coast" by Solène Morvant-Roux of the University of Geneva, Simon Barussaud of the University of Geneva, and Dieudonné Ilboudo of the National Centre of Scientific and Technological Research in Ouagadougou (CNRST/INERA) examined mobile money diffusion and its role in the economies of transnational migration.

The research team -- not all of whom could come to UCI -- began by providing an outline of their presentation, which followed the conventional social science template of "background," "methodology," and "findings" as its basic structure. [Morvant-Roux](#) presented the existing empirical evidence on mobile money diffusion and usage on the domestic level before moving into their own case studies examining urban-rural transfers, where they were looking for international transfers between Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. Researchers hypothesized that the introduction of mobile money in 2014 might be attractive to participants in the longstanding migration dynamic because of poor roads, spotty Internet services, and weak security, but they were wary of assuming patterns of usage that were solely instrumental. They planned their study by looking at the provision of mobile money services in comparison to other services, and they wanted to consider both the supply side and the migrant side of adoption potential. They also considered age, gender, location, and mobility as explanatory factors, as well as an analysis of the broader socio-economic and socio-political context. For migrants, "maintaining ties to one's own country" might be complicated, and the "emergence of new brokerage dynamics" might take surprising turns.

Barussaud explained how they conducted the survey first in Ivory Coast and then in Burkina Faso during January and February. He described how they undertook to survey a "broader view" of mobile money diffusion by deploying a mixed methods approach, which included 250 interviews, 337 transfers, focus groups, and analysis of secondary data. They chose the first field site based on immigration data. It was a site dominated by coffee plantations, where foreigners in area accounted for 45% of the population. The second area was chosen based on the first, as the origin point of significant chain

migration. By identifying two major hubs, they hoped to better understand family configuration (which was transnational and often polygamous and constituted with an average of 12 members) and economic activities related to the 80% of migrants laboring on cocoa and coffee plantations, although there had been attempts at diversification with farming rubber trees and palm nuts. The picture of financial practices showed low formal inclusion at a level of less than 20% of participants and the characteristics of income seasonality.

Researchers focused on recent and regular transfers, at a typical rate of 5-7 per year, as part of the rhythm of migration patterns that were now over 20 years in the making with a number of second-generation migrants in the mix. Data collection tools included discussions with migrant workers and spouses and family members (155 family members in Ivory Coast and 100 in Burkina Faso), as well as geographical methods including geopositioning and light surveys. They also looked at census data and the typology of remittance service providers, to understand the supply-side dynamics.

International companies (like Western Union and MoneyGram) had been providers since the early 2000s, but these companies relied on Internet technology and consequently had a very reduced network. West African companies (like Wari, and Quick Cash) were able to take advantage of GSM technology and had been subregional economic players since 2010. The third set of actors on the supply-side had been the newer M-wallet services. Because mobile money induces a spatial diffusion of financial and transfer services, researchers wanted to look at the difference between 2012 and 2015 in mobile money diffusion. Uptake was often frustrated by a number of factors, including the difficulties of cashing out, spatial disparities, interoperability challenges that could lead to network disturbances, and the exclusion of women. In addition to gender gaps and generational gaps, there were also issues of illiteracy and mastery of technology, as well as trust gaps and innovation reluctance.



The sessions with the in-process researchers ended on a playful note with "[Exploring Rosca Dynamics with a Cambodian Factory Worker Board Game](#)" by Andrew Crawford of Monash University who had been working with IMTFI to create a game about Rotating Savings and Credit Associations. Crawford has a history of thinking about entertainment and affect in financial inclusion efforts. For example, you can read about his work on promoting financial literacy through television comedy, particularly on buses, [here](#).

Crawford began by thanking those at the IMTFI conference who had during lunch played the *Tong Tin Game*. (See below for a photograph of play testing at the IMTFI conference.) He noted the distinction between more static ROSCAs and bidding ROSCAs, that already incorporated some elements of gamification. (For more explanation of how gamification works, see this [online course from U Penn professor Kevin Werbach](#).) In a bidding ROSCA each member contributes a monthly deposit and a lump sum can be paid out to one member who needs access to credit and who bids the highest interest rate. From this structure can emerge poker-like dynamics of anticipating risks and bluffing. The idea for *Tong Tin* grew out of an original IMTFI workshop in 2014. Crawford showed video of IMTFI researchers listing their different needs that were translated onto cards, including money to travel to a wedding on other side of Cambodia, a husband who lost his job, a daughter who was pregnant, an opportunity to buy land, a husband was jailed, an a husband's medical expenses. (The concept of playtesting is central to the game design process for both commercial and so-called "serious games" created by nonprofit organizations and independent developers. See this [list of best practices](#) for playtesting to see how Crawford has integrated these principles.

The rules of the game represent how people are incentivized to participate by the

potential to make a high return, To reflect the economic environment of the garment factory the board is shaped like a button. On the 28-day circle representing the workers' factory month there is a square with a payday, a square with the ROSCA meeting, and other types of squares corresponding to green, red, and blue cards. The player begins the game with 100 dollars. In addition to payment on the payday, players may also have opportunities to buy assets like a chicken or experience setbacks like a dental crisis. Blue squares can move you either backward or forward.

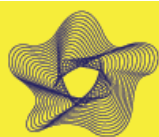
Approximately 70% of Cambodian factory workers are involved in Tong Tin groups, which offer additional opportunities to earn capital. Among factory workers, both cashing out and stealing occurs, but there is still a strong trust element. In the game you can help people and experience the dynamics around borrowing (including consideration of interest rates, indebtedness, and emergency funds) and strategize about savings and investment (considering factors like a high rate of return, storage of savings, and the ability to cash out). The game also models trust and loyalty in rates and flight risks and asset purchasing with borrowed funds. It is designed to educate young people about ROSCA risks and benefits.

In addition to its didactic purposes as "a good way to understand the system," using a game also has many benefits to research. According to Crawford, "people don't want to talk about personal finance," but the "game format allows you to collect data" more naturally. He also showed video of playtesting with Cambodian workers, as the frame above taken from his footage shows. He organized 5 sessions of playtesting with his prototype, using 30 minutes of play with 8 players, 30 minutes of focus groups, and 30 minutes of one-on-one tablet surveys. Because factory workers had little time to spare, short sessions were critical for gathering data. He noticed some interesting quirks in the field site, including people's reluctance to draw cards from the top. He observed that a reliable chief player was critical to the game, as a figure for providing insurance as well as keeping hold of money.

Crawford still plans some revisions based on his findings. In working with the prototype he realized that he had underestimated the cost of a pig stock. He also noticed problems with using clip-art illustration with stock images. As one informant noted of a conventional portrayal of a thief: "the white guy stole your money." He has been partnering with [Winrock International](#), which is already in the region working on human trafficking and shares his enthusiasm for helping people learn "how to grow their assets instead of going to Thailand." He has concluded that more research from behavioral studies in anthropology and behavioral economics will be helpful and is planning use in schools in both developing and developed countries, so that more affluent young citizens might gain empathy for the challenges of managing money in developing country, and hopes to develop mobile apps with the game as well. For those interested in the possible etymological origins of his "Game to Reap and Sew," check out the eighteenth century investment scheme [Tontine](#).

The lively question and answer session emphasized the problem of "the one percent" in developing countries as asymmetrical stakeholders in inclusion efforts and critical reflection on the ethics of participation for researchers in countries in which wealth distribution is so uneven.





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Sunday, May 1, 2016

Cashing In: Keynote and Final Comments of the 2016 Conference



Video of Keynote Address: "[Buckle up! An Eclectic Journey of Mobile Money in Kenya \(and Beyond\) - Insights & Impacts of Research](#)" - now available on IMTFI's YouTube channel.

Ndunge Kiiti, Visiting Professor, CIIFAD, Cornell University, delivered a moving final keynote to the conference in describing her "research journey" with IMTFI. As someone who has followed Kiiti's progress over the years, starting with [this blog post](#) from 2011, I agree that it's been an inspiring voyage to observe. In covering IMTFI since its inception, albeit as a relative outsider who specializes in e-government and e-learning rather than e-finance, I've been particularly impressed by the innovation and creativity of researchers who have received multiple-rounds of funding and the ways that their curiosity has let them to new research questions. [Visiting field sites and doing in-depth interviews](#) with researchers last year made me aware of the limitations of conference blogging, but even in the conference setting it is clear the Kiiti is thinking about vulnerable populations capaciously, collaborating with researchers in many disciplines, challenging the biases of the industry, and transforming the possibilities for [high-impact practices](#) in higher education here in the United States.

She began by explaining why her expertise in Kenya might be particularly useful for thinking about large scale adoptions of mobile money more generally. In addition to having moved through a series of paradigms ("transfer," "platform," and "digital ecosystem"), planners for the Kenyan e-money economy benefitted from networked device ubiquity in the context of a robust legal and regulatory framework and a wealth of market research. The Kenyan case is also compelling by virtue of its sheer volume: up to 50% of mobile money transactions (\$10 billion) on a global scale with approximately 26+ million subscribers using networks with 127,000 agents. With the value of transactions approaching 55% of the GDP, Kenya surpasses other developing countries. (Tanzania is in second place, Botswana in third, and Zimbabwe in fourth.) Researchers have also benefitted from synergies with humanitarian affairs and relief aid, because cash transfers have been used for philanthropic purposes, including for domestic fund raising.

She cautioned against embracing "big data" too quickly, however, because of tensions around the ethics of access. "Are we creating more vulnerability?" she asked in balancing usage against privacy. She emphasized how many of her populations lived in conditions of precarity, as she described how working with women's groups (including with 14 women who were blind) led to an interest in studying people with visual

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impairment. She also described her work with the “Jua Kali” (informal business sector), which is highlighted in the below video.



In the process she has traversed many disciplines, including social sciences (encompassing anthropology, gender studies, psychology, sociology, and political science), humanities (encompassing linguistics), natural sciences (encompassing biology), formal sciences (encompassing computer science and statistics), and professional applied sciences (encompassing agriculture, business, communication, education, law, and social work). She encouraged participants to draw their own interdisciplinary maps as well.

She identified many building blocks to her scholarship: research process, conferences/workshops, academic forums (as someone who teaches), information dissemination, consultative roles, and even informal dialogue. The outcomes from such a polymorphous approach could be particularly fruitful: investing in people and building capacity, recognizing that grassroots has the ability to inform policy, curricular development, and facilitating a global network that recognizes development as a process of reducing vulnerabilities and developing capacities (in which she cited [Ravi Jayakaran](#)).

She lauded openness to pilot testing as a way to go beyond learning theory to thinking more broadly about methodology. As an example of the challenges of capturing data, she described how one focus group of artisans might still be making necklaces or working on soapstones, because "they can't stop for a minute." Thus data gathering also involves diverse skills in listening and building rapport. She also discussed the importance of taking her students from [Houghton College](#) to Kenya to perform fieldwork in the three studies. Students wrote senior honors theses, used their experiences to get jobs in Washington D.C., and developed as future professionals by being forced "to think out of the box." She noted that she "always used workshops" as well, particularly as venues for engaging policy makers. At Kenyatta University, a powerful skit by visually disabled had an impact on Safari.com representatives. One of her workshop participants, Dennis, was visually impaired and yet worked as an M-PESA agent. She is also collaborating with a University of Nairobi professor in trying to develop products. As a visual aid, she described always carrying the [Kenyan Constitution](#) with her, as proof of "things our government has committed to."

As an example of her public advocacy, she asserted that participating in roundtables sponsored by *The Guardian*, such as this one on "[Giving women control over their finances](#)" could reap multiple benefits, as might attending expert meetings for [UNCTAD](#) (the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), which she does as well. In speaking in Geneva about how remittance dynamics might have a gender component, she sees herself as making sure "our research is not getting lost." Although IMTFI researchers often build close relationships with their informants on the bottom of the pyramid, she wanted to "challenge all of us" to "keep a foot in the macro" in our information dissemination activities. She insisted that it was necessary to become fluent in many genres and media to get the word out, including news articles, videos, newsletters, blogs, and even museum displays, such as the display at the British museum, which was curated by Ellen Feingold, about [Money in Africa](#). In grappling with issues about injustices and human rights, she argued for frameworks that require many disciplines and many communities. As she insisted, we are all "part of a bigger family." In closing, she thanked IMTFI for forging more "family" ties, including with Mesfin Fikre Woldmariam of Ethiopia, for sharing strategies for "investing back in our countries"

for "marginalized people in our communities."



After the keynote, IMTFI director **Bill Maurer** was given the podium for closing comments, which -- despite the "difficulty of summing up" -- he condensed into "four short points and challenge." For Maurer the takeaways from the conference were fourfold:

1) He praised the value of comparison when participants can hear "from so many cases" and "many countries," where financial participation takes many forms, including "different traditional practices" and "different new practices," thus allowing them to "take concepts that emerge in one field site and use them analytically in another field site." Such concepts could be generated from informants or even be borrowed from business, as in the case of the term "ecology of services." This comparative perspective might be dense and layered and never pristine like the yak trails in the presentation on Nepal. Rather than one-to-one comparisons, the frameworks might include access points, network coverage, device proprietors, and "interrelationships and feedback loops."

2) He expressed appreciation for the group's "healthy skepticism about financial inclusion and inequality," which "erupted into the discussion today" about "what we think we are doing when we try to include people," because "one size really does not fit all. For Maurer, "a responsible financial inclusion" involves thinking with that skepticism through "strange pathways and intersections."

3) He thanked participants for their candor and willingness to share their "own stories," including a presenter sharing her experience of losing her debit card. He noted that "we are ourselves" are "a rich font of data about money and technology." Willingness to "reality check" financial inclusion myths with the facts of researchers' personal lives keeps professional lives honest and may check the urge to express only "the right thing to say." After all, IMTFI research is about "what you were actually doing at home" or "the things your husband doesn't know about."

4) He lauded the crosstalk, particularly in citing other projects, and asserted the value of a "community of inquiry that is shaping the debate" by "building on conversations."

The challenge, as Maurer saw it, was that "we get really good at trucking in complexity, but the challenge is getting it heard." He pointed to "these instances where we have been able to break through" and thus "move the needle by bringing our complex stories" from an "incredibly diverse group" participating in a longstanding mixed method interdisciplinary forum. In closing, he restated that his challenge was "not only to finish your projects," but also to "think about how you can translate that insight into impact."

Posted by Liz Losh at 6:01 PM



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