

# The Influence of Culture on the Development and Diffusion of Medical Technologies

Presentation for the 16<sup>th</sup> SPRU DPhil Day  
Victoria Blessing

[[www.thomasnet.com](http://www.thomasnet.com)]

# Example

- ▶ Mosquito net use in the Peruvian Amazon region
  - ▶ Nets provided free of charge from government
    - ▶ Polyester net, treated with insecticide
  - ▶ Inappropriately or not used due to
    - ▶ Letting through too much air
    - ▶ Transparency
    - ▶ Fast staining



[[www.bundesregierung.de](http://www.bundesregierung.de)]

# Research question

- ▶ How does the culture of health, illness and medical care influence the development and diffusion of medical technologies?
  - ▶ Focus on
    - ▶ Developing countries in comparison to developed countries
    - ▶ Medical devices

# Context

- ▶ Need for health care and medical technologies in developing countries
- ▶ Use of Western technologies so far not very successful
  - ▶ WHO estimates 50% of medical equipment in developing countries is not used
- ▶ Due to numerous factors
  - ▶ Structural factors: electricity, training, spare parts...
  - ▶ Cultural factors: beliefs, norms, attitudes...

# Context

## ► Solutions

- Develop new medical technologies in developing countries themselves
  - Develop medical technologies differently in the West
  - Adapt existing 'Western' technologies to local needs
- 
- All those suggestions imply a sufficient level of sensitivity to cultural issues

# Literature

- ▶ Technological Innovation, Health, Culture
- ▶ Literature on appropriate medical technologies
  - ▶ Emphasis
    - ▶ Structural barriers
    - ▶ Technologies connected to sexuality

# Methodology

- ▶ Case studies
  - ▶ Suitable for 'how' and 'why' questions
  - ▶ Units of analysis: two specific medical devices
    - ▶ Longitudinal
    - ▶ Retrospective
  - ▶ Set in two countries: Germany and one developing country
- ▶ Compare two case studies
  - ▶ Differences in success, trajectories, properties
  - ▶ How can they be explained by cultural differences

# Feedback, Questions, Comments

- ▶ How to choose case studies
  - ▶ Developing country
  - ▶ Medical devices