

The Science of Delivery and the Art and Politics of Institutional Change

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From Albert Hirschman

(Journeys Towards Progress, 1967)

- “The term ‘implementation’ understates the complexity of the task of carrying out projects that are affected by a high degree of initial ignorance and uncertainty. Here ‘project implementation’ may often mean in fact **a long voyage of discovery** in the most varied domains, from technology to politics.” (p. 35)

Between leaving and entering

...slowly but surely we have become alienated from our own people and our own environment. This alienation would have been bearable had it not been that in our case the abandonment of our own culture did not at the same time bring access to another civilization. Thus we have sacrificed what was ours but have not gained in its place anything that might be considered its equivalent; **we have lost our world, but we have not entered another...**

We have added much new cultural material, the value of which cannot be discounted; however, **it often fits so ill with our own style or is so far removed from it that we can use it at best as a decoration and not as material to build with.** It is quite understandable why we have been so mistaken in our choice. In the first place, much has to be chosen, and there has been **so little to choose from.**

Ki Hajar Dewantara, 1935 (Indonesian educator)

Overview

- **Clarifying ‘the science of delivery’**
- **Challenges**
 - Inherently hard to implement ‘complex’ projects
 - *The 21st C* development task
- **Opportunities**
 - The (Art, Politics, and) ‘Science of Delivery’ agenda
 - Increasing calls for ‘learning’, ‘experimentation’
 - ‘Fragile states’
- **Generating solution-generating systems...**
 - Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)
 - Contrasts with orthodoxy
 - PDIA-ing PDIA

Clarifying the ‘Science of delivery’

- **Science** = mechanisms + theory
 - Mechanisms = knowledge of contents of black box
 - Theory = explanations, predictions
 - E.g. how to stop scurvy: from citrus fruits to Vitamin C
- **Delivery** = implementation
 - Which varies enormously...
 - Constructing schools is ‘easy’; teaching children is ‘hard’
- Thus, a *Science of Delivery* should provide
 - mechanisms-based explanations of how and why implementation capability varies, as a guide to action

Challenges

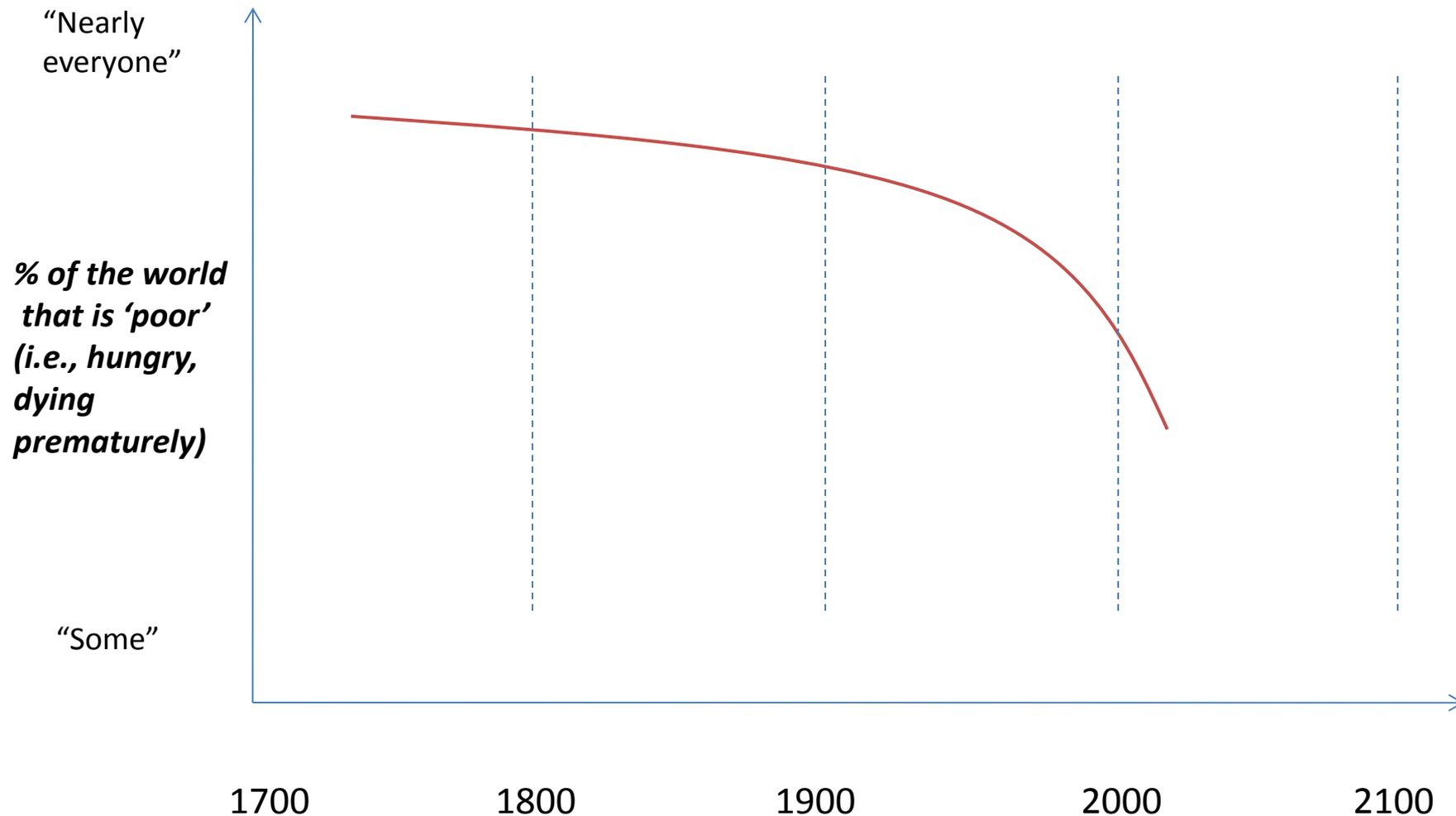
- Making implementation cool when the prestige and power is in ‘design’ and ‘evaluation’
- All projects are complex, but some are (much) more complex than others
 - Constructing schools is ‘easy’; teaching children is ‘hard’
- 20th C aid architecture largely designed to address ‘technical’ and ‘logistical’ problems
- And for the most part, has contributed to a development process that has been *spectacularly* successful
 - Kenny (2011, 2014), Pinker (2011), Deaton (2013)

The Best of Times...

- For the average person, basic indicators of human well-being have never been better
 - most MDGs met in most places
 - higher average levels of education in Bangladesh *now* than France in *1960*
 - relative (if not always absolute) levels of “dollar-a-day” poverty declining almost everywhere
 - Rapid decline of pandemics, crippling diseases (polio), famines, wars, etc
 - Over 20th C, life expectancy almost doubled

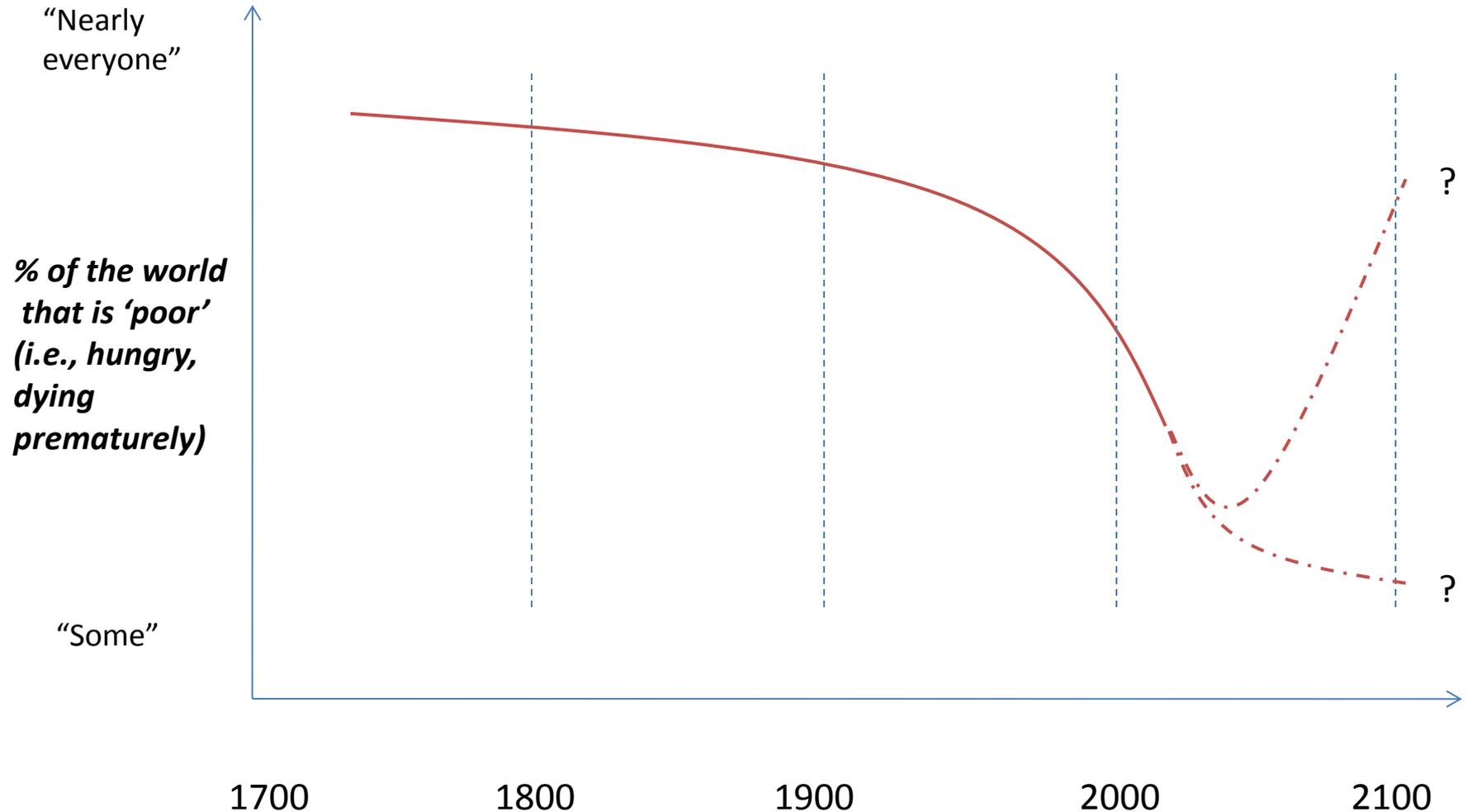
Mostly poor to mostly rich (?), 1700 – 2100

Adapted from *The Escape from Hunger and Premature Death, 1700-2100*
by Robert Fogel (Cambridge University Press, 2004)

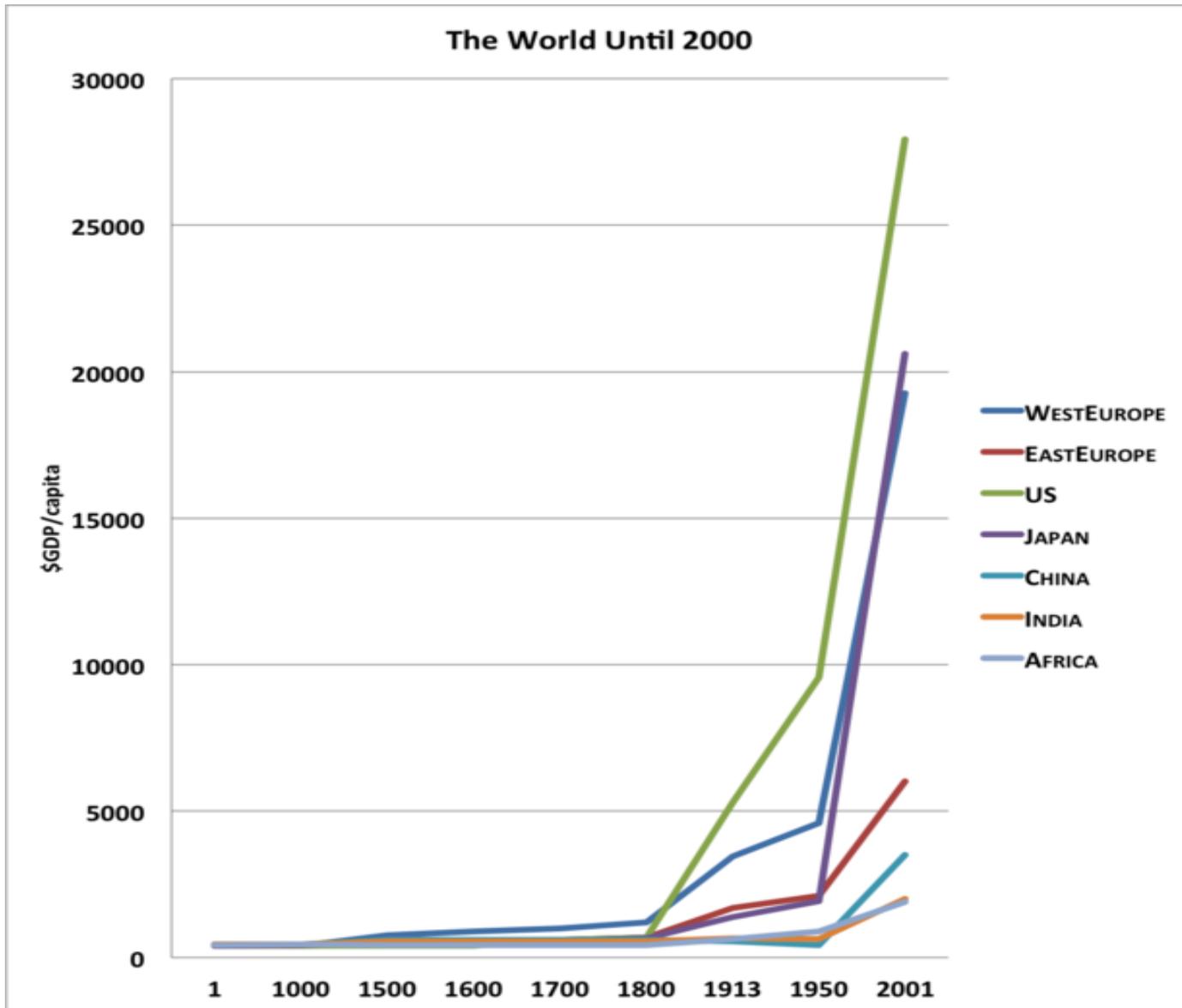


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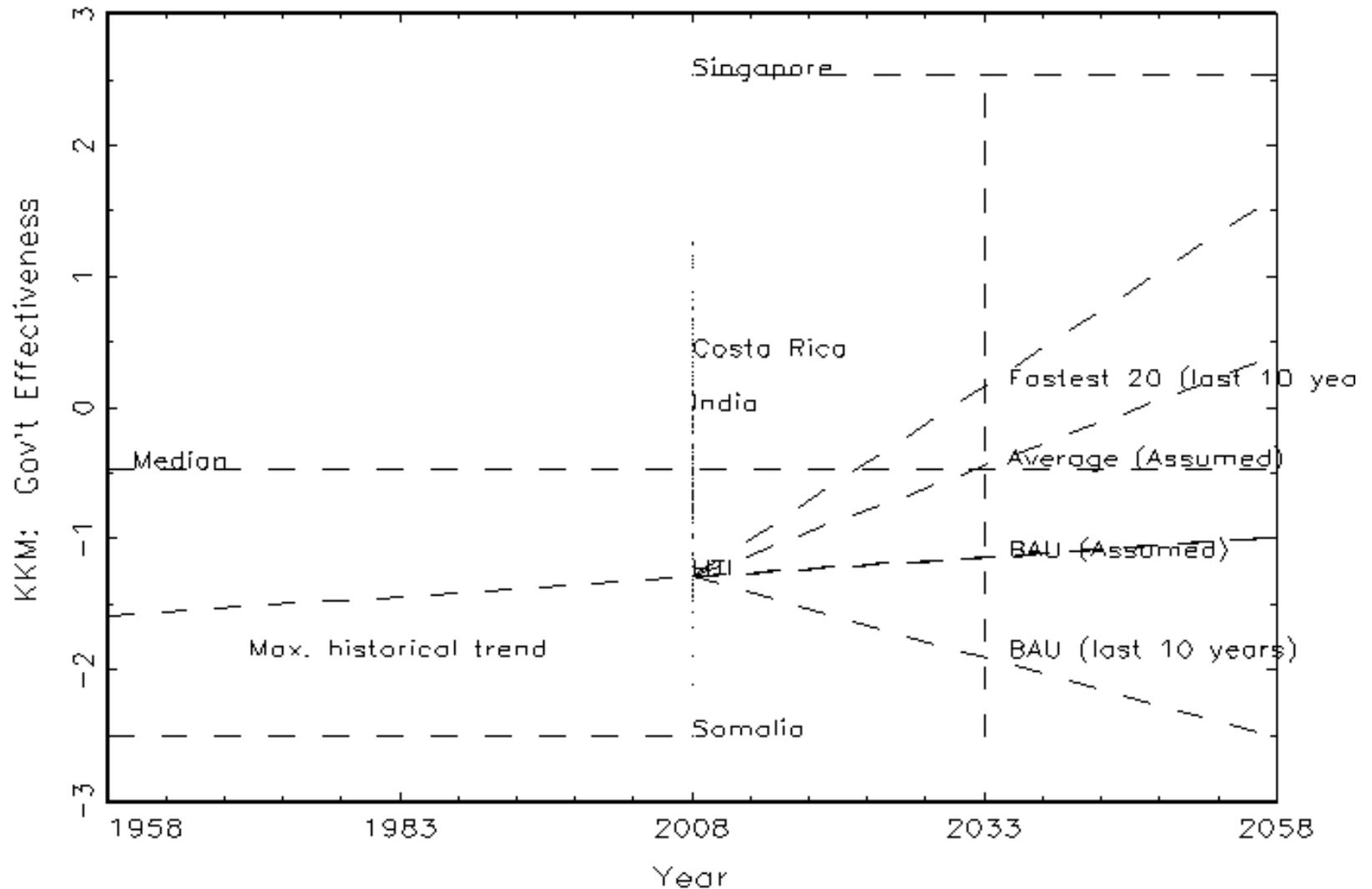
But 'divergence, big time'...



...and 'low capability' organizations (QoG data):
few successes; *most countries going backwards...*

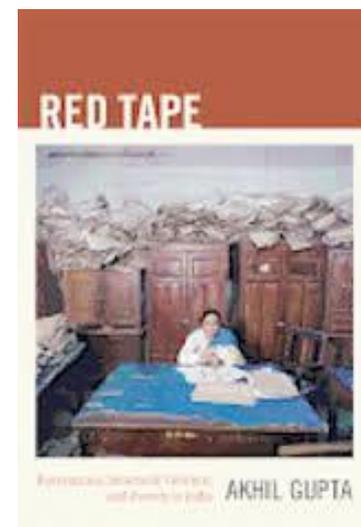
Classification by levels of Quality of Government in 2008		Classification by pace of change in (normed) Quality of Government, 1998-2008				
		Falling fast: (below -0.05 annual growth)	Stagnating (slow change, negative or positive)		Rising fast Above 0.05 annual growth	Row totals
			(Falling) below 0 but above -0.05 annual growth	(Rising) at or above 0 but below 0.05 annual growth		
High: (above 6.50)	Countries	BRN, MLT	SGP	BHS, CHL, ISR, KOR	TWN	
	Number	2	1	4	1	8
Medium: (above 4.00 but below 6.50)	Countries	ARG, BGR, BHR, BOL, CRI, GIN, GMB, GUY, HUN, IRN, JAM, LKA, MAR, MNG, MWI, NIC, PAN, PHL, POL, ROM, SUR, SYR, THA, TTO, TUN, ZAF	BGD, BRA, CUB, ECU, EGY, GHA, IND, JOR, MDG, MYS, OMN, PAK, PER, QAT, UGA, URY	AGO, ARE, BWA, CHN, CMR, DZA, ETH, KWT, LBN, MEX, SAU, VNM, ZMB	COL, IDN, TUR, TZA	
	Number	26	16	13	4	59
Low: (below 4.00)	Countries	CIV, COG, DOM, GAB, GTM, HTI, KEN, LBY, PNG, PRK, PRY, SLE, SLV, SOM, VEN, ZWE	BFA, HND, MLI, MOZ, SEN, TGO, ZAR	ALB, IRQ, MMR, NGA, SDN	GNB, LBR, NER	
	Number	16	7	5	3	31
Totals		44	24	22	8	98

...for many (e.g., Haiti), glacial progress...



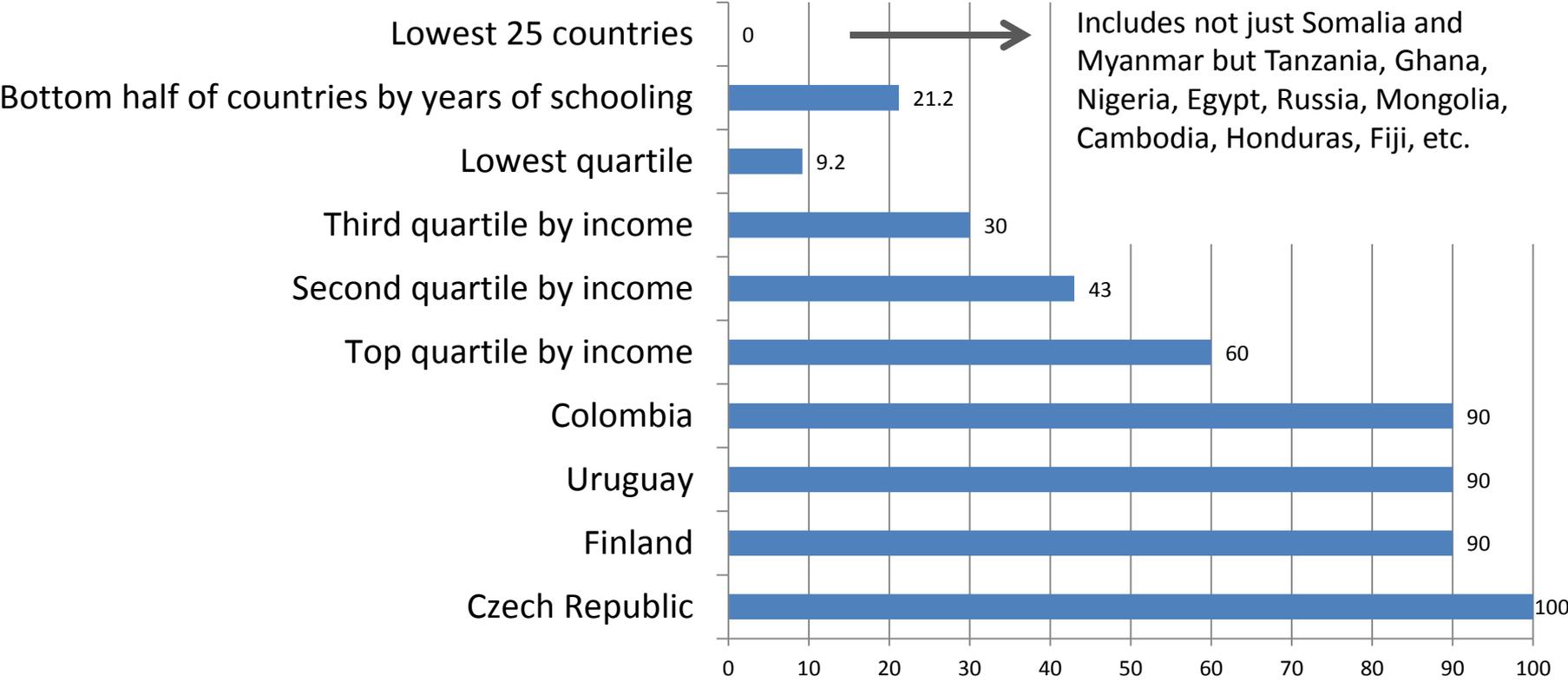
... even on 'simple' tasks

- The capability of states to implement core responsibilities remains (disturbingly) low
 - 'Simple' tasks (logistics)
 - Delivering mail, dispensing drivers licenses
 - 'Moderate' tasks
 - Social protection programs (Gupta 2012)
 - 'Complex' tasks
 - Land reform, Criminal justice, Regulation
 - Stagnating, declining 'quality of government'
 - Unfinished historical tasks...



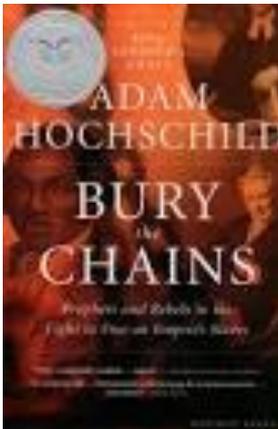
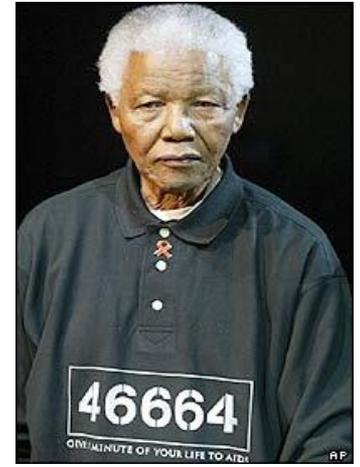
Delivering the mail (literally)—testing the post office in 157 countries

Percent of 10 misaddressed letters coming back to USA within 90 days



Source: Chong, et al (2012)

Ending slavery, colonialism; expanding civil rights, women's suffrage...



'The problem we all live with'



Opportunities: Responding to *the* 21st C Development Challenge, which is...

- **Building robust, legitimate public institutions for managing these seismic transformations**
- Writ large, 'Development' has been – and likely will remain – a highly non-linear, widely uneven, deeply contentious political process
- This is the big picture *context* in which we all work, and to which we contribute every day
 - **The more 'Development' succeeds (or fails), the harder it gets**
 - Because modernity is mostly a package deal

What to do?

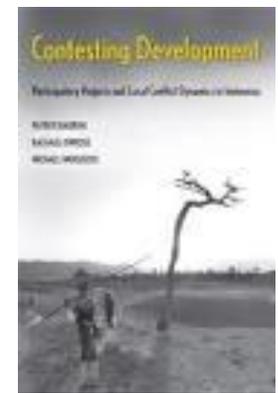
- But do we (does anyone) know how to build robust, legitimate public institutions?
 - Current approaches not very encouraging
 - see Matt Andrews (2013) *Limits of Institutional Reform*
 - Engaging diversity itself requires a more diverse array of ideas, evidence and strategies
 - Problems unlikely to have known or knowable (ex ante) solution

Pervasive operational problem

- CDD, justice, governance (et al) projects inherently very complex, thus:
 - Very hard to isolate ‘true’ impact
 - Very hard to make claims about likely impact elsewhere
 - Crucial to understand *how* and *for whom* (not just *whether*) impact is achieved
 - Experimentation not experiments
 - ‘Institutions’ as languages, music, religions
 - Getting inside the proverbial ‘black box’
 - Process Evaluations, or ‘Realist Evaluations’, can be most helpful

Summary of findings

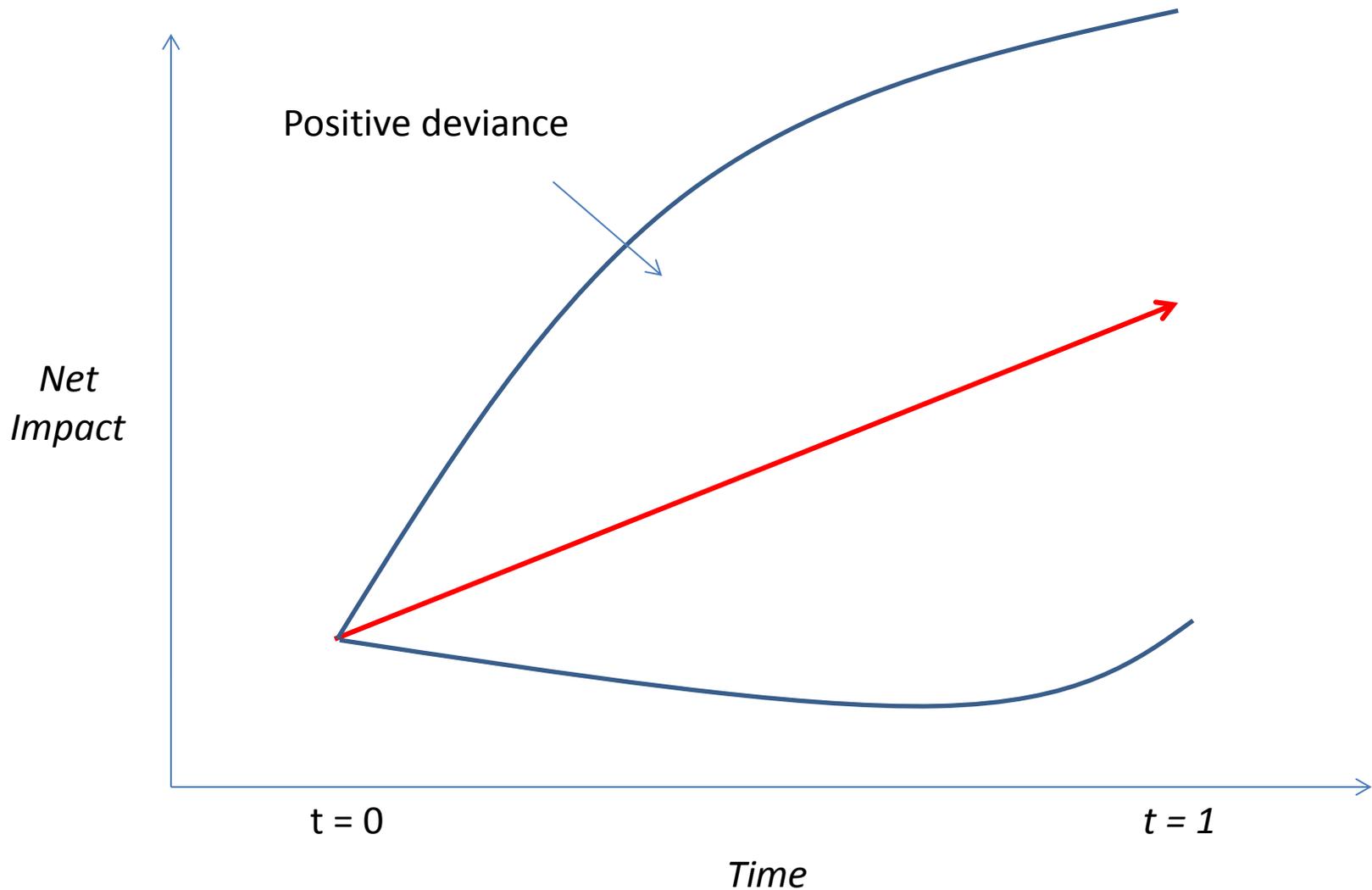
(Barron, Diprose and Woolcock 2011)



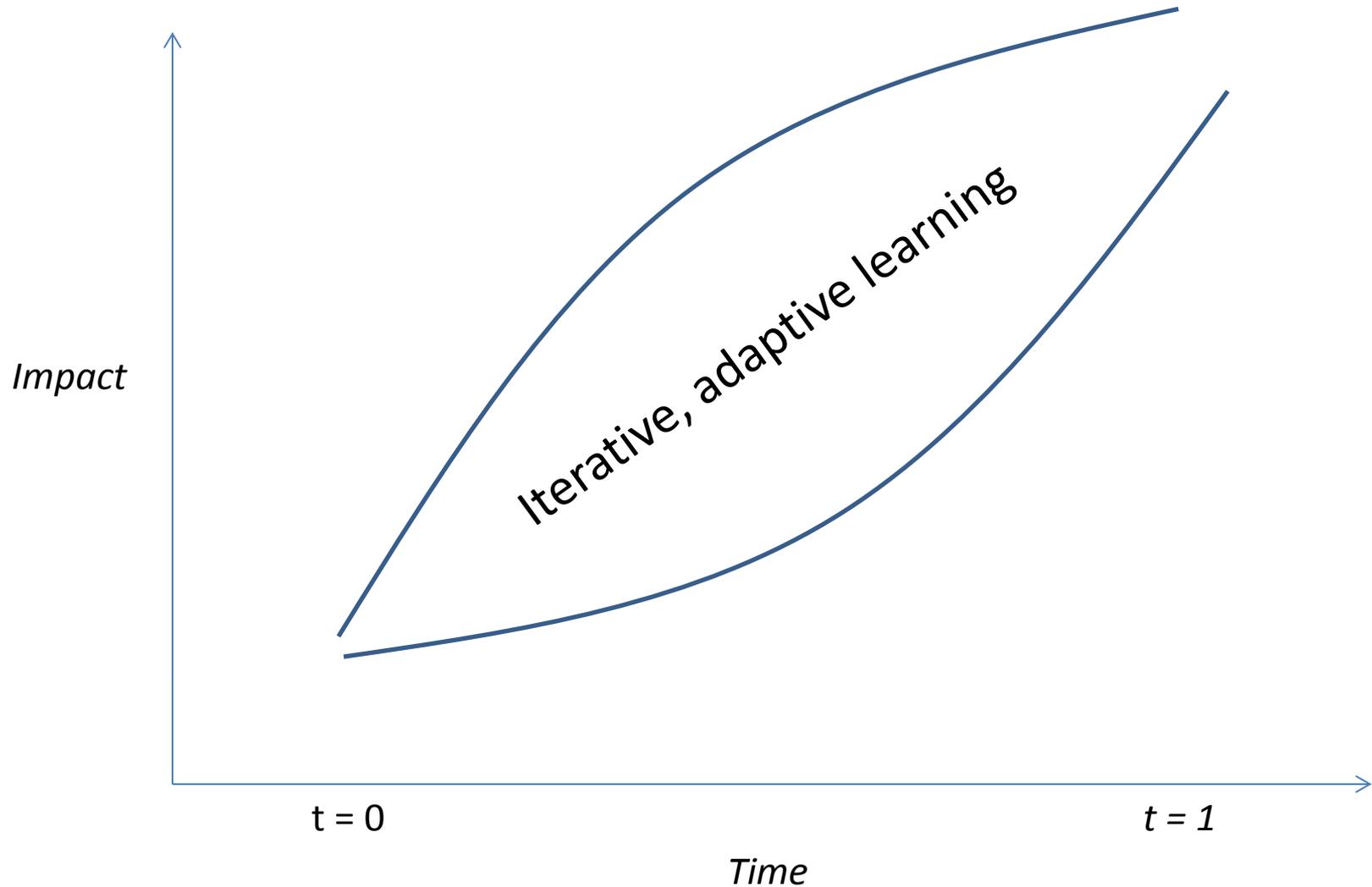
Type of Impact		Context Capacity			
		<i>Low</i>		<i>High</i>	
		Program Functionality		Program Functionality	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Direct	Forums (places)	--	++	--*	0
	Facilitators (people)	0	0	0	0
Indirect	Group Relations	0	++	+	+++
	Behavioral	0	+++	0	+
	Normative	0	+	0	+++

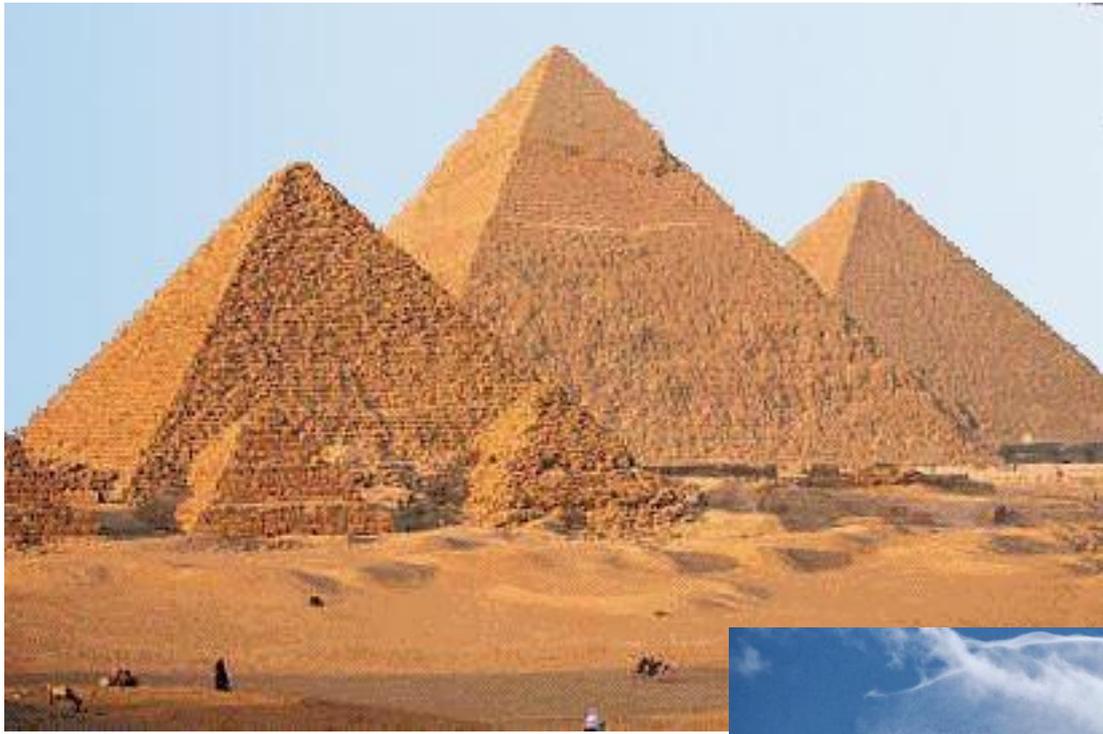
* While we noted higher rates of KDP-triggered conflict in high capacity areas, such conflict is much less likely to escalate and/or turn violent. Hence negative impacts are greater in low capacity areas, where program functionality is poor.

'Complex' projects: widening variance over time, space, groups



Learning from intra-project variation





Which way up?
RCTs vs QICs



Eppstein et al (2012) "Searching
the clinical fitness landscape"
PLoS ONE: 7(11): e49901

Elements of alternatives...

- Academic literature
 - “Projects as policy experiments” (Rondinelli)
 - “Learning organizations” (Senge)
 - “Good-enough governance” (Grindle)
 - “Just-enough governance” (Fukuyama and Levy)
 - “Deliberation, not blueprints” (Evans)
 - 21st C developmental state
 - “Best fit, not best practice” (Booth)
 - “Second-best institutions” (Rodrik)
 - “Positive deviance” (Pascale et al)
 - “Complex adaptive systems” (Ramalingam, Barder et al)
- Operational initiatives
 - Results Based Management
 - Cash on delivery aid (CODA, GPOBA), et al

Four Principles of PDIA (Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation)

1. Local Solutions for Local Problems
2. Pushing Problem Driven Positive Deviance
3. Try, Learn, Iterate, Adapt
4. Scale Learning through Diffusion

See: Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett and Michael Woolcock (2013) 'Escaping capability traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)' *World Development* 51(11)

In summary: how PDIA differs

	“Big D” (e.g. WB, agencies)	“small d” (e.g. NGOs)	PDIA
What drives action?	Solutions (“institutional mono-cropping”, “best practice”, AMTTBP)	Solutions (variety of antidotes – e.g. “participation” “community driven”)	Problem Driven—looking to solve particular problems
Planning for action?	Lots of advance planning (implementation of secondary importance)	Boutique, starting very small with no plans for scale	Authorization of positive deviation, purposive crawl of the design space
Feedback loops?	Monitoring (short, on financing and inputs) and Evaluation (long feedback loop on outputs, maybe outcomes)	Casual, geared to advocacy not learning	MeE: integration of rigorous “experiential” learning into tight feedback loops
Scale?	Top-down—the head learns, implementation is just muscle (“political will”)	Small is beautiful... Or, just not logistically possible	Diffusion of feasible practice across organizations and communities of practitioners

In 'fragile states', how might PDIA...

- **Inform theory?**
 - Explain attraction, durability but limits of BAU
 - Distinguish different types of problems, contexts
 - Articulate alternative principles
- **Contribute to general allocation decisions?**
 - Beyond CPIA < 3.2
 - Toward types and trajectories of 'fragility'
 - On the basis of broad data + specific country cases
- **Be a guide to country-specific policy/practice?**
 - Solomon Islands, Sierra Leone
 - South Sudan
 - Afghanistan

Solomon Islands

- RAMSI: \$millions spent on state-of-the-art courthouse, jail, training of judges, police...
- ...vs 'Justice Delivered Locally', a decentralized system of island courts responding to everyday justice concerns of everyday people



More details at...

- Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett and Michael Woolcock (2013) 'Escaping capability traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)' *World Development* 51(11): 234-244
- Lant Pritchett, Michael Woolcock and Matt Andrews (2013) 'Looking like a state: techniques of persistent failure in state capability for implementation' *Journal of Development Studies* 49(3): 1-18
- Lant Pritchett, Salimah Samji and Jeffrey Hammer (2012) 'It's all about MeE: using structured experiential learning ('e') to crawl the design space' Working Paper No. 104, WIDER (December 2012)
- Michael Woolcock (2013) 'Using case studies to assess the external validity of "complex" development interventions' *Evaluation* 19(3): 229-248