

Embracing complexity in development cooperation

The impossible love story between
Development Planners and
Scientific Brokers in three episodes

First episode Says the development planner:



- ↳ Let's stick to the plan
- ↳ Which, where complexity ?
- ↳ Complexity leads to chaos
- ↳ Complexity is a free cart for sloppy planning and irresponsibility towards concrete results

Today's development cooperation ...

- ↳ Management by gut feeling and personal believes
- ↳ Management by procedures
- ↳ Management by fads, buzzwords and jargon:
(the latest in my mailbox are 'systems' and 'resilience')
- ↳ ...budget support, MDG / SDG, management for results, RBF, private sector support, decentralization, participation, "no business as usual", "white paper approach"...

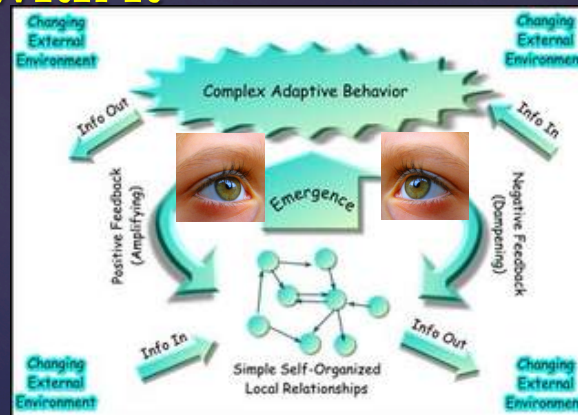
... might take complexity not all that serious...

Second episode: Complexity is real

Everybody is confronted with complexity

- ✂ Multi-stakeholder interactions
- ✂ Multidimensional problems
- ✂ Unpredictability: what can go wrong, will go wrong... (*what cannot go wrong as well...*)

Complexity is real, we have to live with it

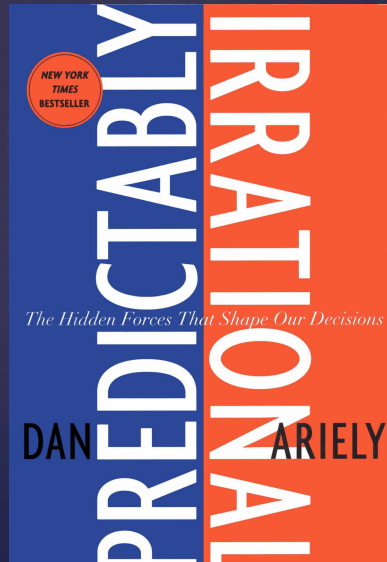
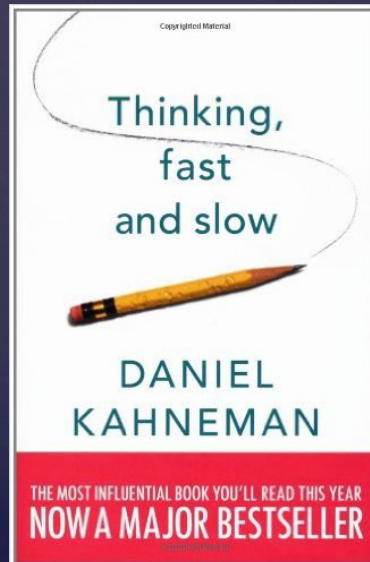


Though it might be a difficult partner

Complex systems : good to know your partner

- ⌘ Complex system = a whole of parts and their inter-relations
- ⌘ Systems behave 'conservatively': they fall back into their natural equilibrium "Resilience"
- ⌘ Intervening in complex situations is characterized by unpredictable effects
- ⌘ Decisions in complexity are often counter-intuitive

Good intentions are not enough



Complexity should not frighten, but:

- ⌘ Not taking up complexity either leads to irrelevance and non sustainability, or to big mistakes
- ⌘ Dealing *better* with complexity is feasible – tools exist
- ⌘ Expertise can reduce uncertainty

Third episode: How to deal with this new partner?

Working in and with complexity

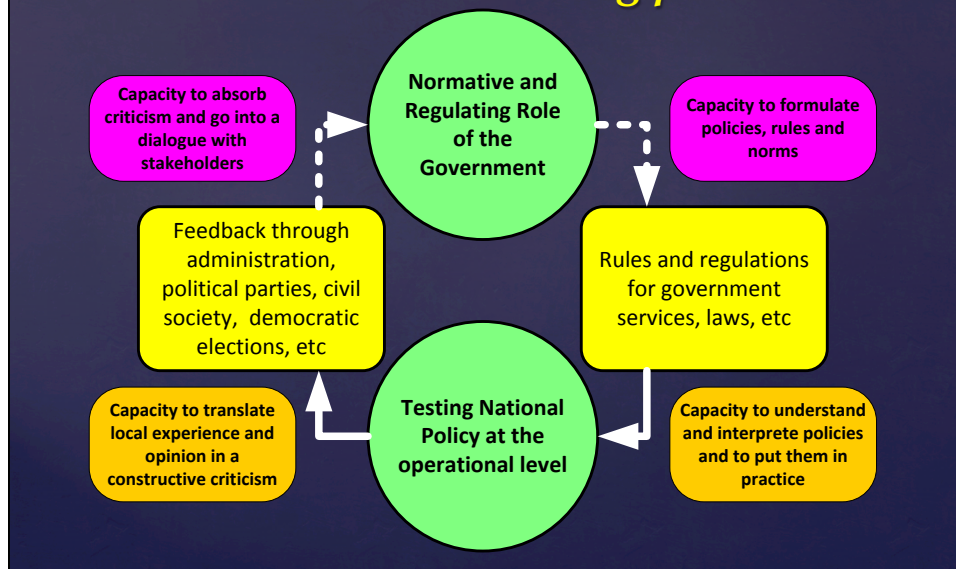
Management in uncertainty:

- ↳ Locally-led decisions - Trial and error – Learning
- ↳ Flexibility and creativity
- ↳ Analytical reflection *and synthesis* : the more scientific approach

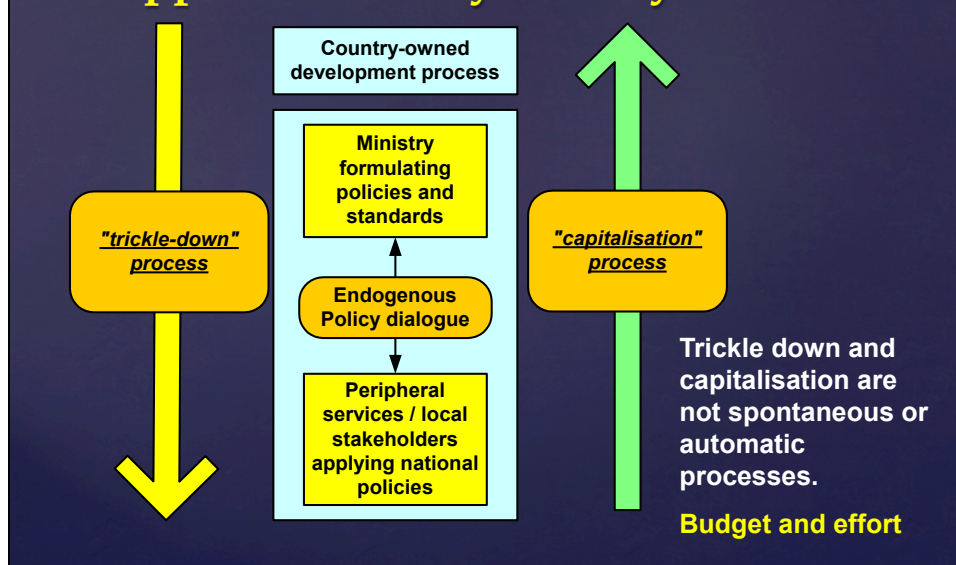
A more scientific approach ?

- ↳ Get your definitions right!
- ↳ Analyse and model your system
- ↳ Development, development cooperation, set-up of interventions

Development is a cyclic societal learning process



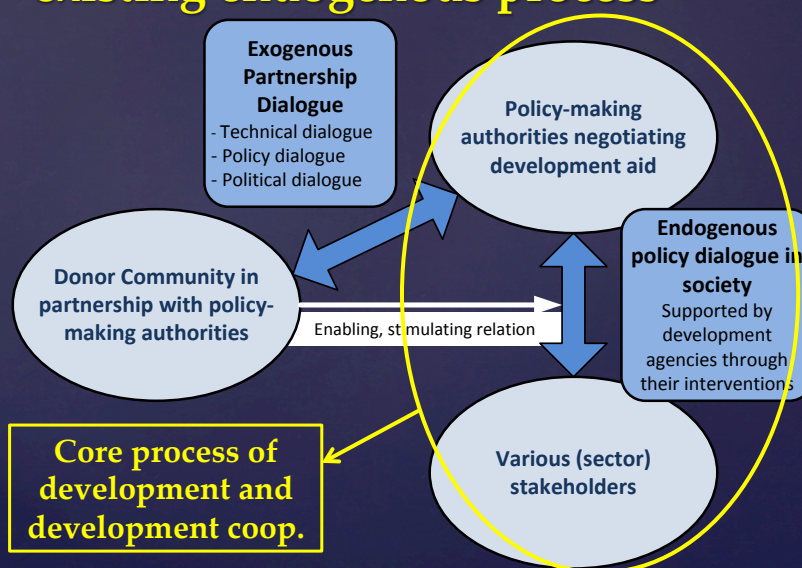
Development = Endogenous process, applicable to any country

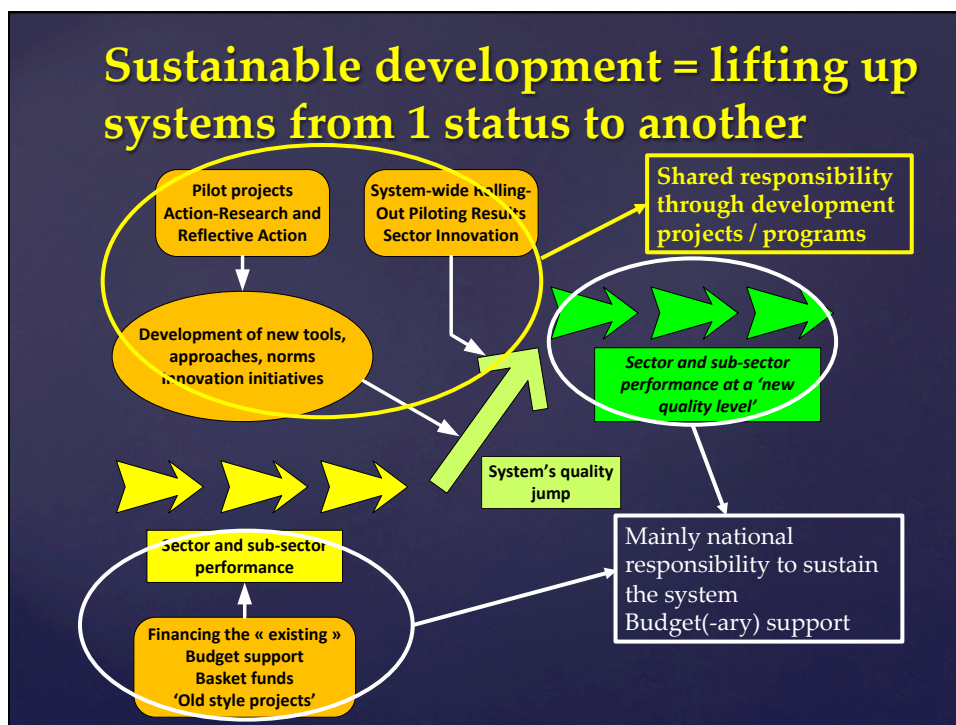


Development cooperation = Inevitably working in a complex reality

- ⌘ Development cooperation = *accompanying* development processes of supported countries / institutions
- ⌘ Development cooperation = facilitating change in very complex systems
- ⌘ Development cooperation is *applied social science*

Development coop. = stimulating the existing endogenous process





Moving towards an effective programme approach ?

- In complexity science, development sectors are (simply) sub-systems of society: elements in interaction constituting a complex emerging whole.
- They are **not** problems, **not** activities, **not** areas of intervention and **not** fields of interest of a donor, to name a few 'alternatives'...

Moving towards an effective programme approach ?

Development projects are interventions that accompany national development processes in a number of broad problem areas or sector strategies with **the general objective to strengthen the sector (= the (sub-)system)**.

17

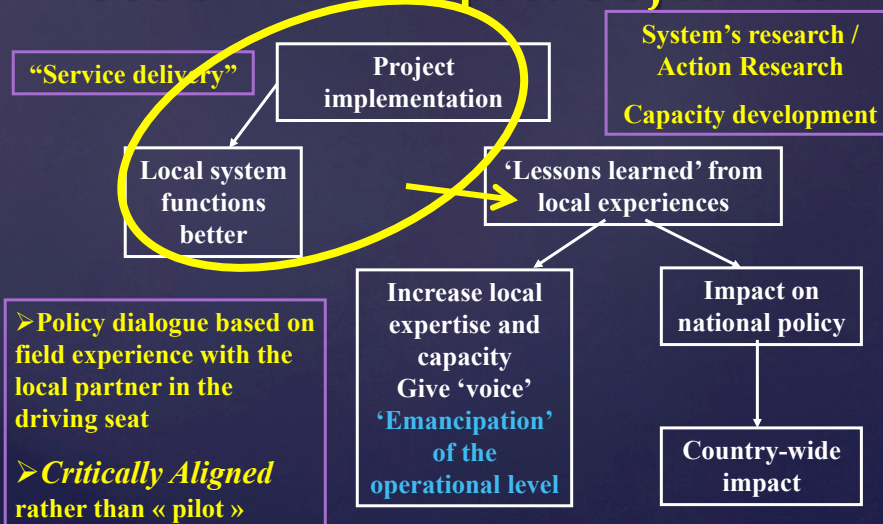
Moving towards an effective programme approach ?

Development Programmes comprise several interventions (projects – (sector) budget support – pooled funds – basket funds – scholarships) that :

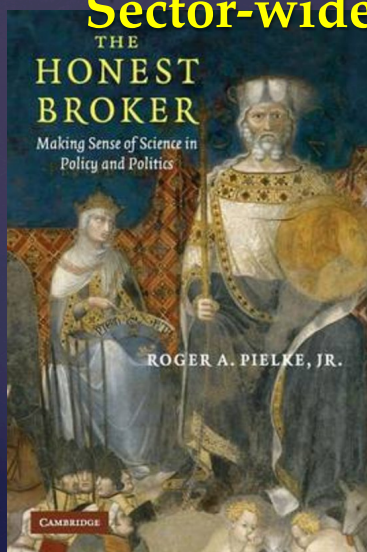
- ⌘ constitute a coherent whole,
- ⌘ with explicit synergies and
- ⌘ one common objective to reinforce a (sub-)sector

18

Programme Aid Strategy with Sector-wide Impact Objectives



Programme Aid Strategy with Sector-wide Impact Objectives



The Honest Broker of Policy Alternative:

- Scientific
- Alternatives
- Relativity
- Multiple points of view
- Complexity

Changing systems as life-long partners



Embrace complexity and beauty will emerge. We do not know which beauty though...
(... but the rigidly planned-for one is very unlikely....)

And they lived
happily ever after...