OCP Policy Center Conference series

From thinking to practice : real world application

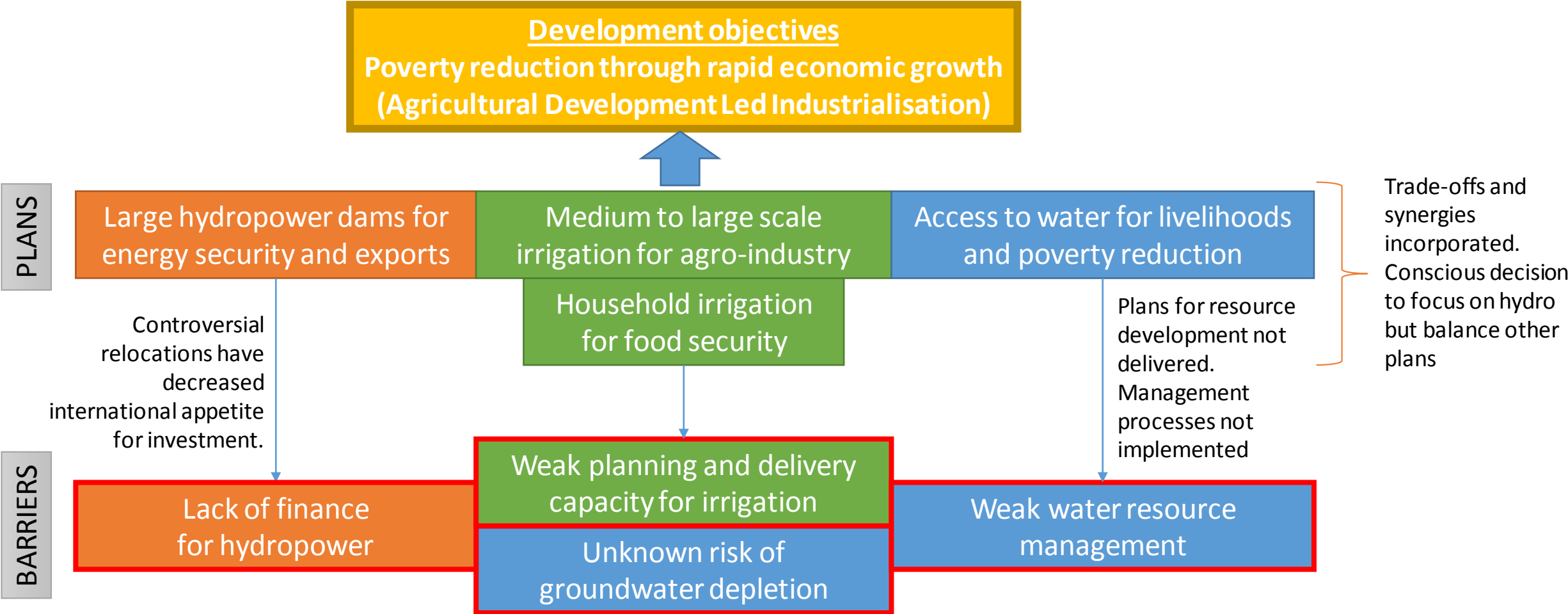Daniel Yeo

11-13 June 2014

Nexus schmexus...

- What do we mean by "implementing the Nexus"?
- "Nexus" as a set of wicked problems..
  - ... like all public policy
- Framing and context matter...
  - ... but are not equal

- Suggested approach
- Language training

"The search for scientific bases for confronting problems of social policy is bound to fail because of the nature of these problems... **Policy problems cannot be definitively described.**"

"Problems cannot be definitively described"

Development objectives
Poverty reduction through rapid economic growth
(Agricultural Development Led Industrialisation)

PLANS

Large hydropower dams for energy security and exports

Medium to large scale irrigation for agro-industry

Household irrigation for food security

Access to water for livelihoods and poverty reduction

Trade-offs and synergies incorporated. Conscious decision to focus on hydro but balance other plans

Controversial relocations have decreased international appetite for investment.

Plans for resource development not delivered. Management processes not implemented

BARRIERS

Lack of finance for hydropower

Weak planning and delivery capacity for irrigation

Unknown risk of groundwater depletion

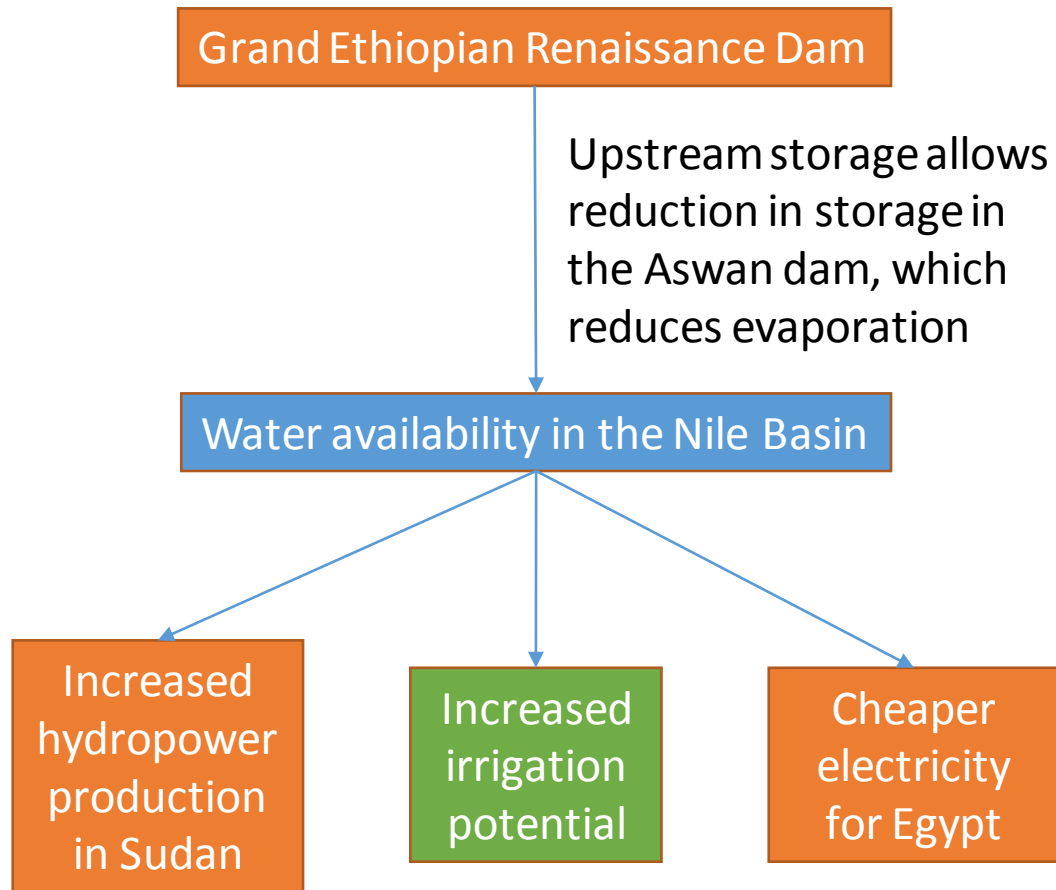Weak water resource management

Getting things to happen takes delivery AND planning

"Moreover, in a pluralistic society **there is nothing like the indisputable public good**; there is no objective definition of equity; policies that respond to social problems cannot be meaningfully correct or false;"
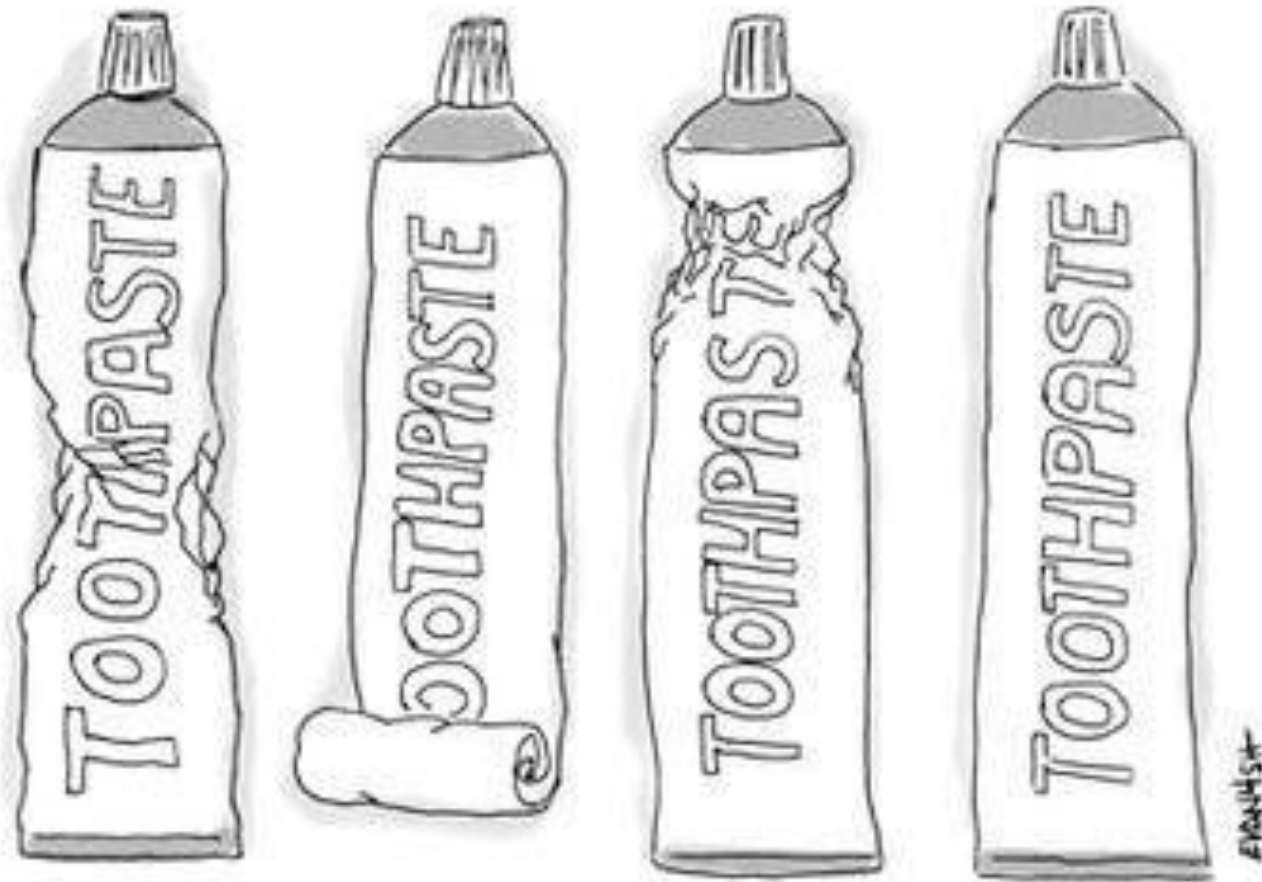
"No indisputable public good"

Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

Upstream storage allows reduction in storage in the Aswan dam, which reduces evaporation

Water availability in the Nile Basin

Increased hydropower production in Sudan

Increased irrigation potential

Cheaper electricity for Egypt

Egyptian domestic perception
- Domestic political instability
- Government must be strong on the Nile
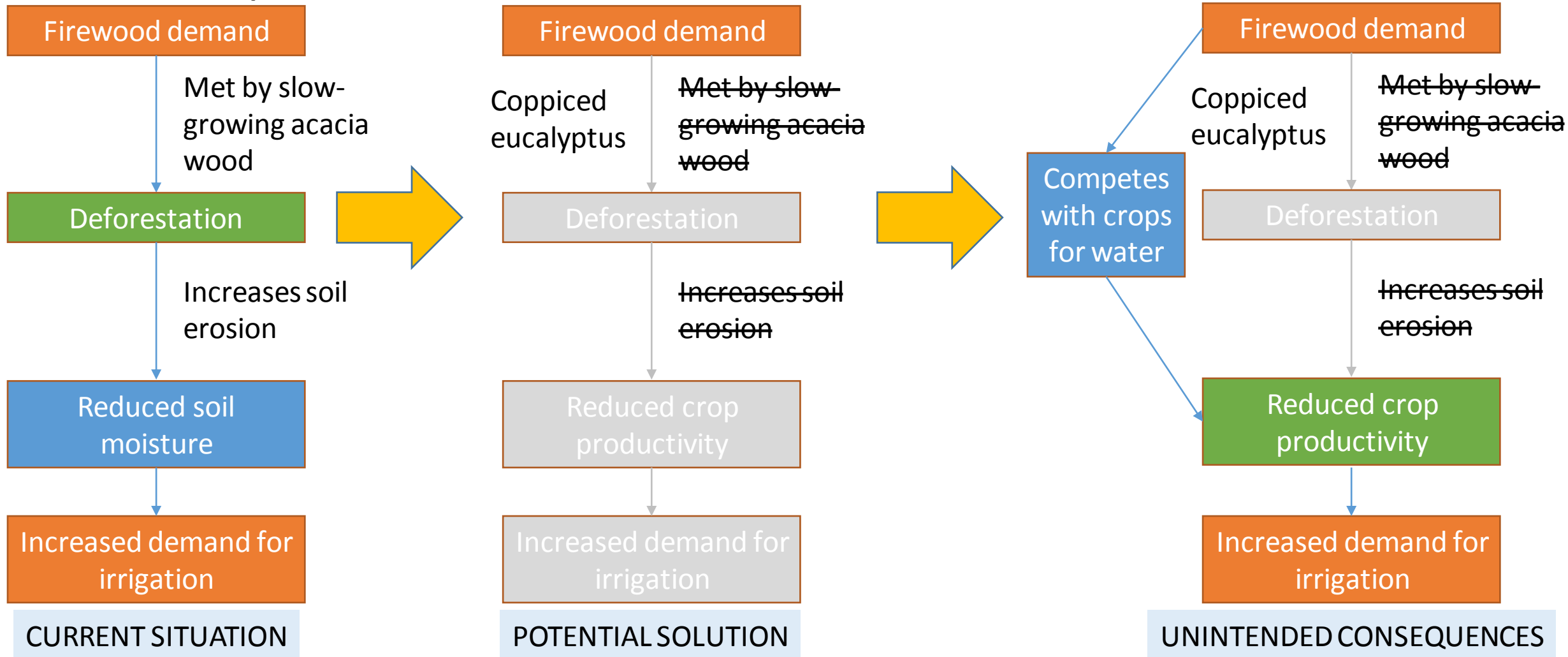- 'Common enemy' tactic?

Ethiopian national pride
- Resist international inputs – 'our' dam
- IPoE reports conflict with domestic study regarding key points
- Sees this as a further stalling tactic by Egypt

Shared analysis helps, but science will only take you so far

"and it makes no sense to talk about 'optimal solutions' to these problems...Even worse, **there are no solutions in the sense of definitive answers**."

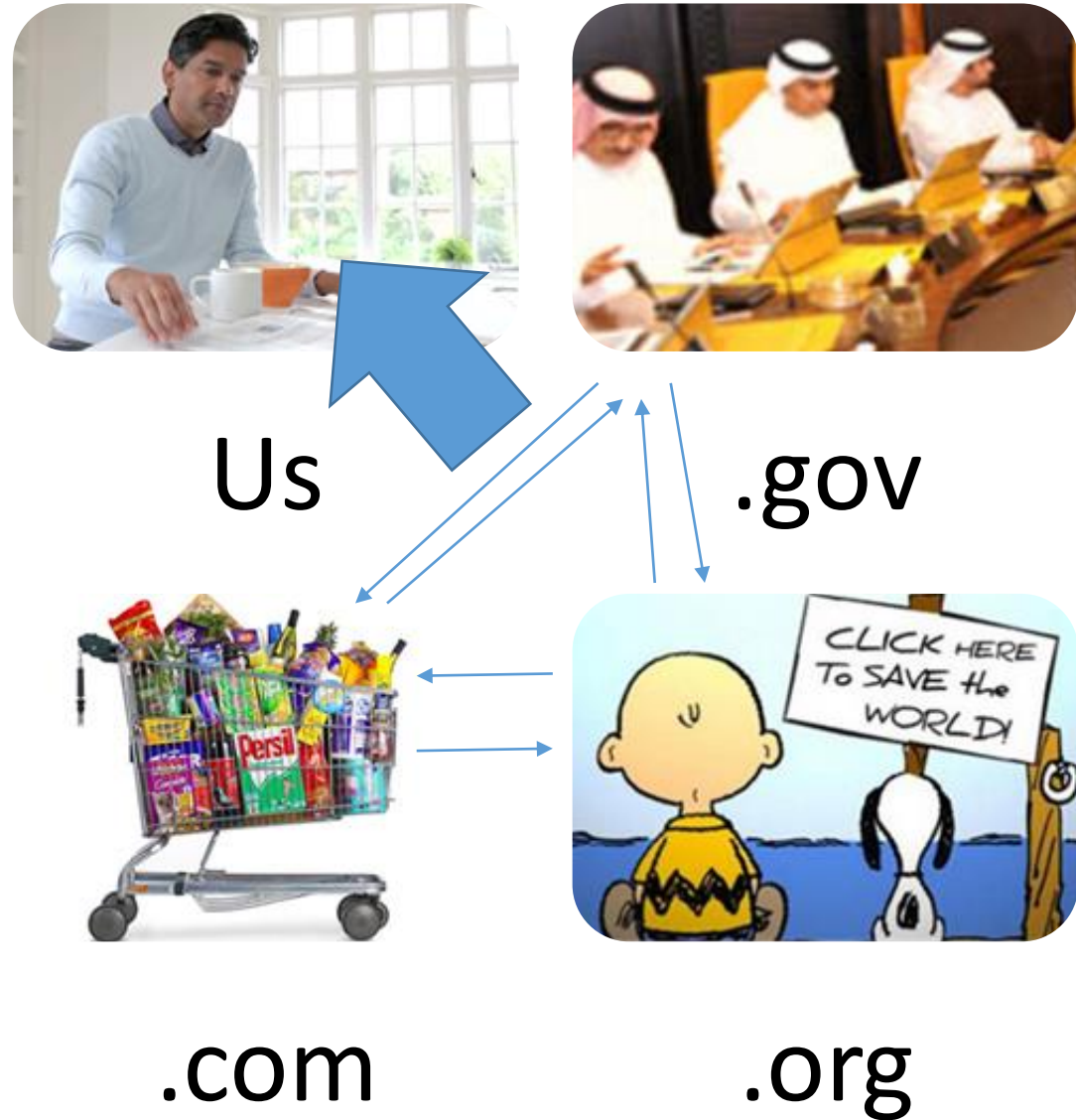**How does 'the system' make the 'right' decisions in the face of hard choices?**

Trade-offs and synergies across:
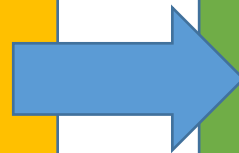- Time
- Space
- Scale

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Shift to the HOW not just the WHAT

How decisions are made and implemented

not just **what** decisions are made

Change your world view…

- 'Perfect' up-front analysis

- Policy entirely based on science

- Decide > Implement

- 'Good enough' decision making

- Informed by range of evidence but filtered by politics

- Best guess > Try > Refine

Practical suggestions…

- **Improve 'good enough' decision-making** – expose complexity whilst simplifying decisions

- **Address *systemic* bottlenecks to delivery** – targeted interventions rather than generic 'capacity building' or one-off projects

- **Living delivery system** – need adaptable solutions and learning mechanisms

~~Best Practice~~	Solve specific problems in local contexts
~~Design projects and implement~~	Positive deviation and experimentation
~~Ex-post evaluation~~	Ongoing and experiential learning
~~External expertise~~	Broad set of agents

Speaking another language…

- Policy makers are not passive recipients of your wisdom. They are <u>active</u> agents in a <u>political</u> system.
- Learn what *really* matters to them and what *really* drives decisions (*CLUE: It's not 'the nexus'…*)
  <u>Why do water, energy and food matter?</u>
- Translate your issue into their language (*Maybe, just maybe, your approach or frame is irrelevant…*)
- Speak to scale – public policy is about decisions for scale, at scale. Not scaling up projects.
- Get to the point.

Getting to change

- Need systemic, transformational change in *governance*
  - **CAPABILITY** not just accountability and responsiveness
- Doing better things – enabling better decision making
- Doing things better – accelerating delivery
- *Iterate and evolve* not *plan and implement*
- Crossing boundaries is hard – learn the language

Thinking to Practice

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Applying complexity

The Water-Food-Energy Nexus in Global Drylands: Bridging Science and Policy

Daniel Yeo, Global Green Growth Institute Ethiopia, 13 June 2014

Frames within frames…

- Water is needed for life – but water supply is relatively easy (?)
- Other water matters because of food, industry and energy
- Ultimate frames are food security and economic growth
  - Tony's frame – food and the role of water in it. Farmer livelihoods
  - My frame – economic development and sustainable growth
- They matter to elites because of **political legitimacy**