how change happens

DUNCAN GREEN
Origins of the book – a lightbulb moment in India
POWER AND SYSTEMS
Where to start: Understanding Power
4 Powers model (Rowlands 1997)

- Power Within
- Power With
- Power To
- Power Over
Using Power Analysis
DANCING WITH THE SYSTEM
A lot of aid projects and activism look like this
But this is the world we often work in
Key Features of change in systems

• Critical Junctures
  – Large scale (wars, crises, changes of leadership)
  – Small scale (conflicts in Tikamgarh)

• Path Dependence
  = big problem for traditional planner approaches

• Which is why we need a new approach!
A Power and Systems Approach

- How we think/work
- The questions we ask (and keep asking)

“I think you should be more explicit here in step two.”
How we think/feel/work

• Curiosity – Study the history; ‘learn to dance with the system’
• Humility – embrace uncertainty/ambiguity
• Reflexivity – be conscious of your own role, prejudices and power
• Include multiple perspectives, unusual suspects, be open to different ways of seeing the world
The questions we ask (and keep asking)

• What kind of change? (Policy; Practice; Norms)
• What precedents can we learn from?
• What kinds of power are at work here, how can it be redistributed to the less powerful?
• How will we know if change is happening – feedback loops and course corrections?
Aids to Navigation: what kind of change is required?

Rao and Kelleher, ‘Gender at Work Analytical Framework’
Aids to Navigation 2: What kind of action?

Confident on Intervention

- Fast feedback and response
- Linear planning + regular evaluation

Not Confident on Intervention

- Not at all sure you understand context
- Positive Deviance

- Fairly sure you understand context
- Experiments + iteration
Zooming Back Out, What is all this About?

THE GREAT ESCAPE
health, wealth, and the origins of inequality
ANGUS DEATON

FULL
EMPTY
How can research help promote empowerment and accountability?

In the development business, DFID is a research juggernaut (180 dedicated staff, £345m annual budget, according to the ad for a new boss for its Research and Evidence Division). So it’s good news that they are consulting researchers, NGOs etc tomorrow on their next round of funding for research on empowerment and accountability (E&A). Unfortunately, I can’t