Evidence for action in new settings: The importance of middle-level theory

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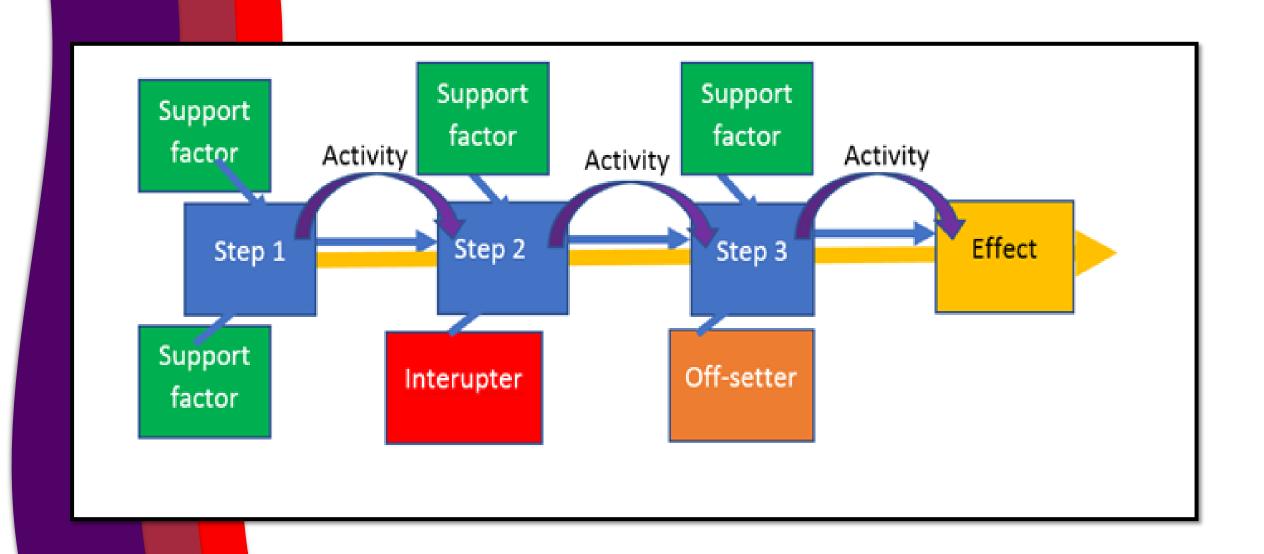
Assumption

For reliable prediction for a new setting evaluation





Thick local causal model





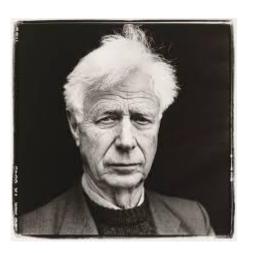
Middle-level theory tools for constructing these





Middle-level 'theory'







Plan

- 1. ToCs
- 2. Mechanisms
- 3. Markers
- 4. What we should demand of programme developers

Tool 1 Middle-level ToCs

Theories of action/change

- "... the underlying theory of action—how the program's resources, activities, and outputs lead to desired outcomes....
- ... the processes, actions, and events through which the program resources achieve the intended outcomes; they are the steps in implementing a program."

DD == Democracy dyad

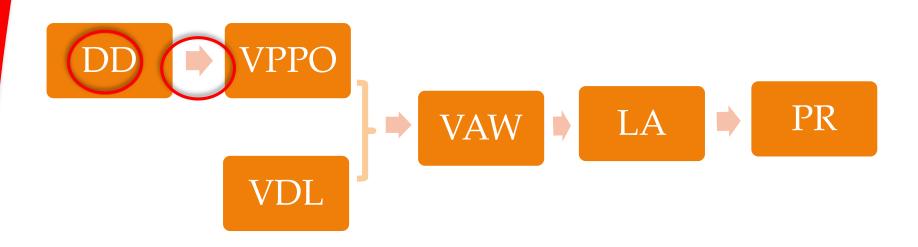
VPPO = Voters perceive powerful opponent

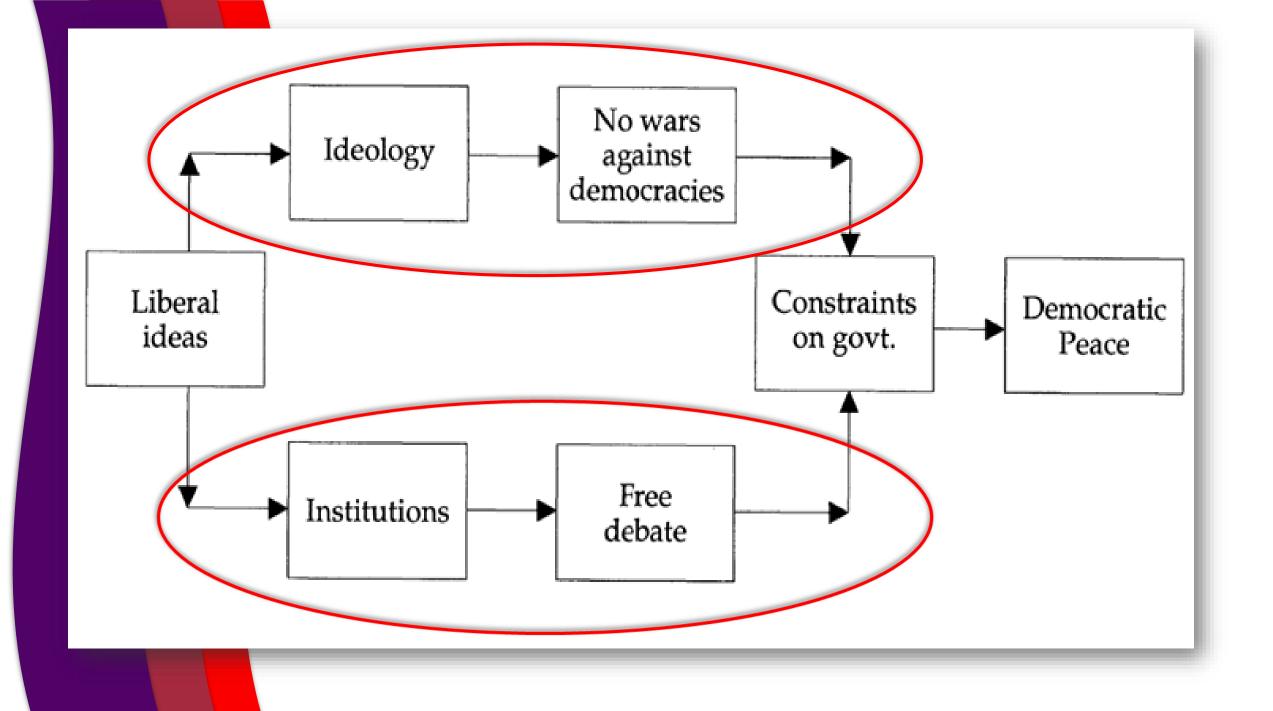
VDL = Voters dislike losing

VAW = Voters against war

LA = Leaders aim to avoid war

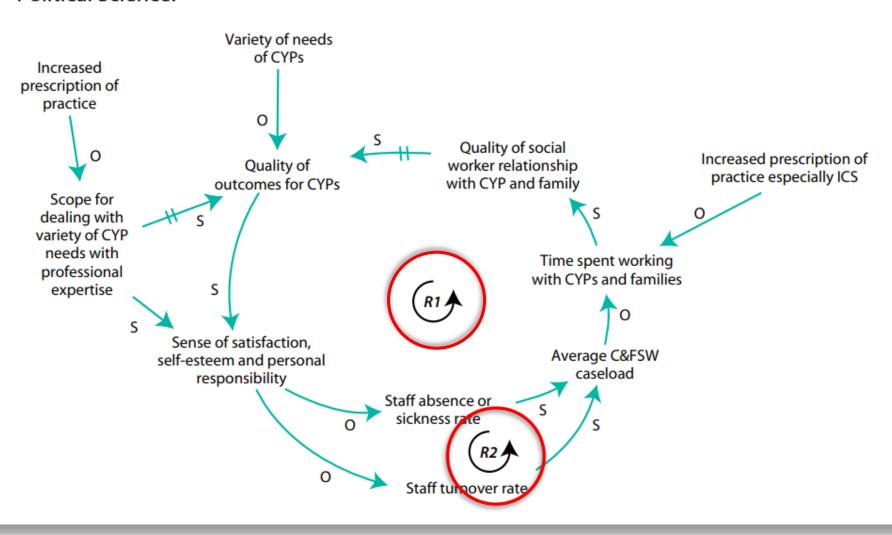
PR = Peaceful resolution





Causal Loop Diagram exploring systemic impact of efforts to improve social work through increased prescription of practice

Developed in collaboration with Dr David Lane, London School of Economics and Political Science.



SHORT-TERM RESOURCES ONGOING TEACHING! LONG-TERM OUTCOMES LEARNING ACTIVITIES OUTCOMES IMPACTS Teacher professional 20-minutes Whole-Class Improved Increased scores on development Direct Instruction to start reading skills achievement tests the class Networked computers with Improved learning in Improved classroom Increased school microphones and headsets behavior all subject areas Teachers regularly use attendance rate READ 180 instructional and teacher workstation strategies and materials Decreased disciplinary Increased motivation Time set aside in a contained in READ 180 incidents program guides 90-minute block for instruction 5 days Small-group rotations per week Students divided into 3 Cassette players with groups each spending 20 minutes rotating headsets through: Audiobooks, Paperbacks, Small-Group Direct Topic Software for Instruction READ 180 Independent and modeled reading Use of READ 180 Classroom size and arrangement adequate for Topic Software READ 180 instruction 10 minutes of Whole-Class Direct Instruction to conclude the class Teachers and administrators regularly use diagnostic tests (SRI) and Scholastic Management Suite™ for continuous assessment, placement, and monitoring Contextual effects such as the characteristics of the school district, other estructional programs in use, and external events

For each local setting









Thickening 1

Abstract/ general concepts



Specific

Figure 3: A systemic logical model for M4P enables better capture of M4P impact Systemic **Poverty** M4P Market reduction intervention change Sustainable Large scale (a) (b) (c)

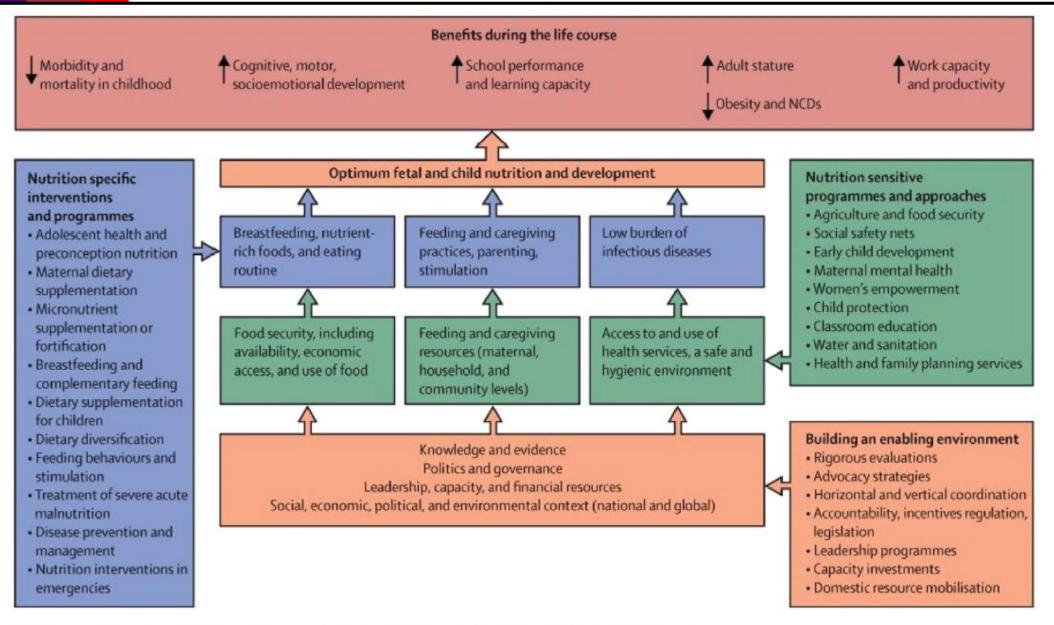
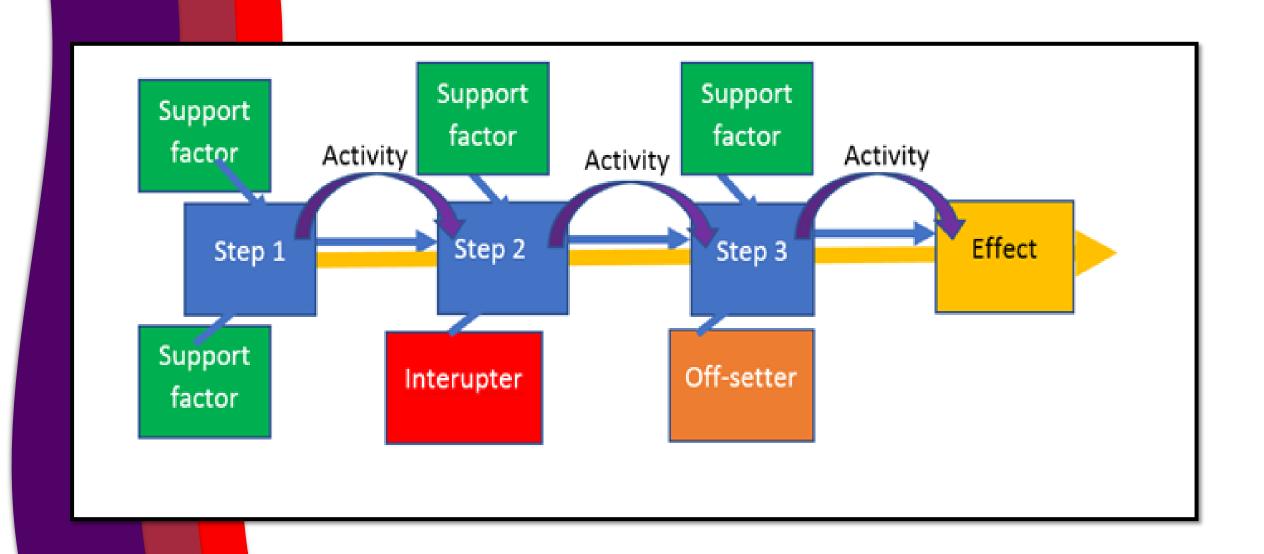


Figure 1. Framework for actions to achieve optimum fetal and child nutrition and development.[21]

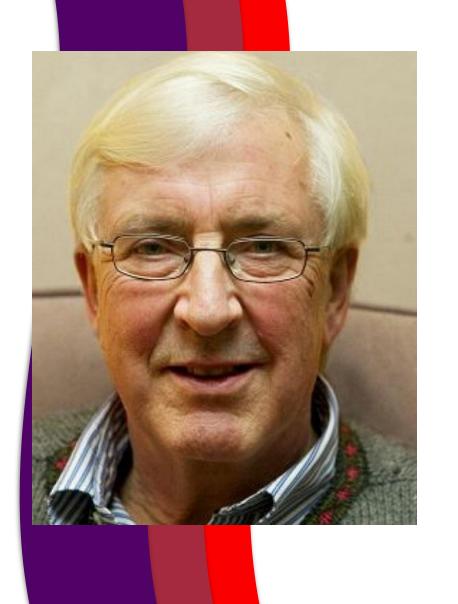
Thickening two

At each step, fill in

- Support factors
- Derailers/ interrupters
 - Off-setters



Tool 2 Middle- level 'Mechanisms'

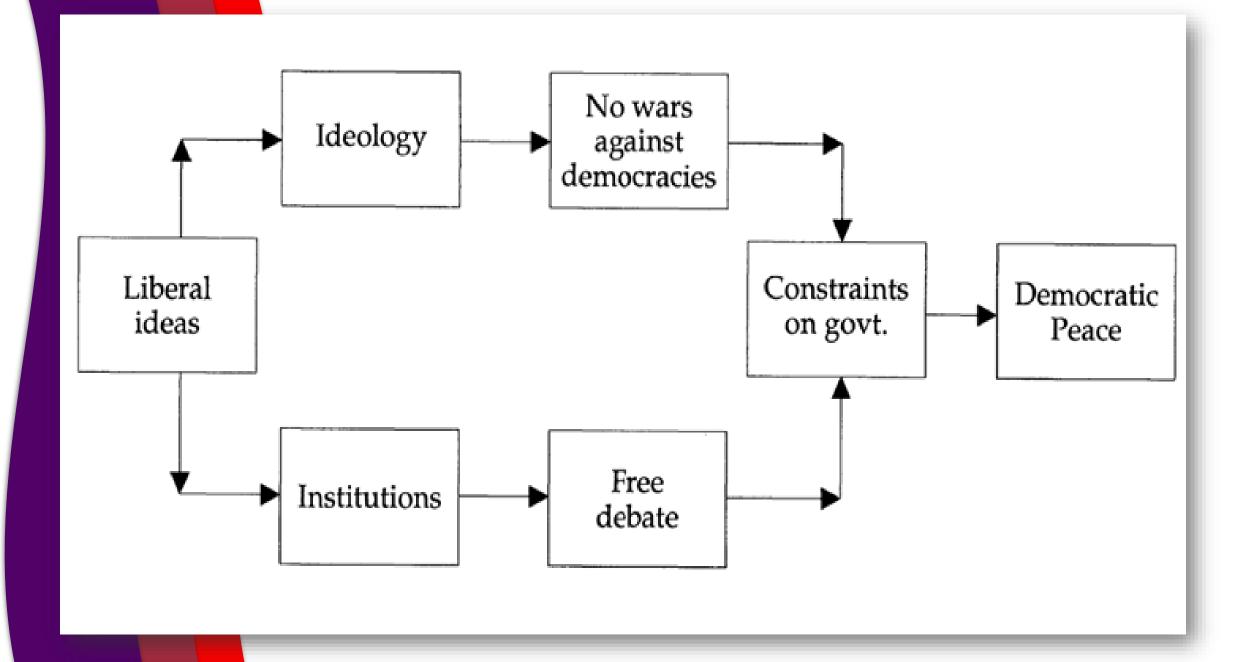


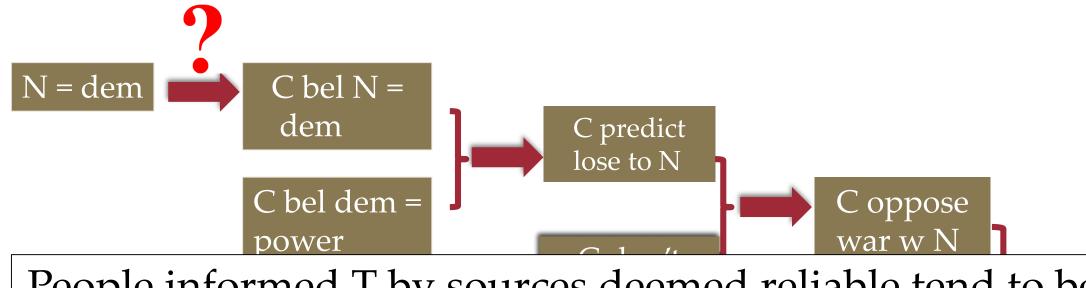
Roughly speaking, mechanisms are frequently occurring & easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences.

Elster-type 'mechanisms'

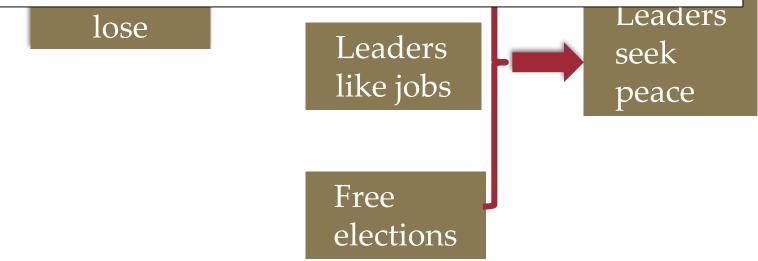
- Dispositions/ behaviours that are common in individuals or institutions (sometimes location relative)
- Highly defeasible
- May need triggering
- What happens when they operate depends on the context

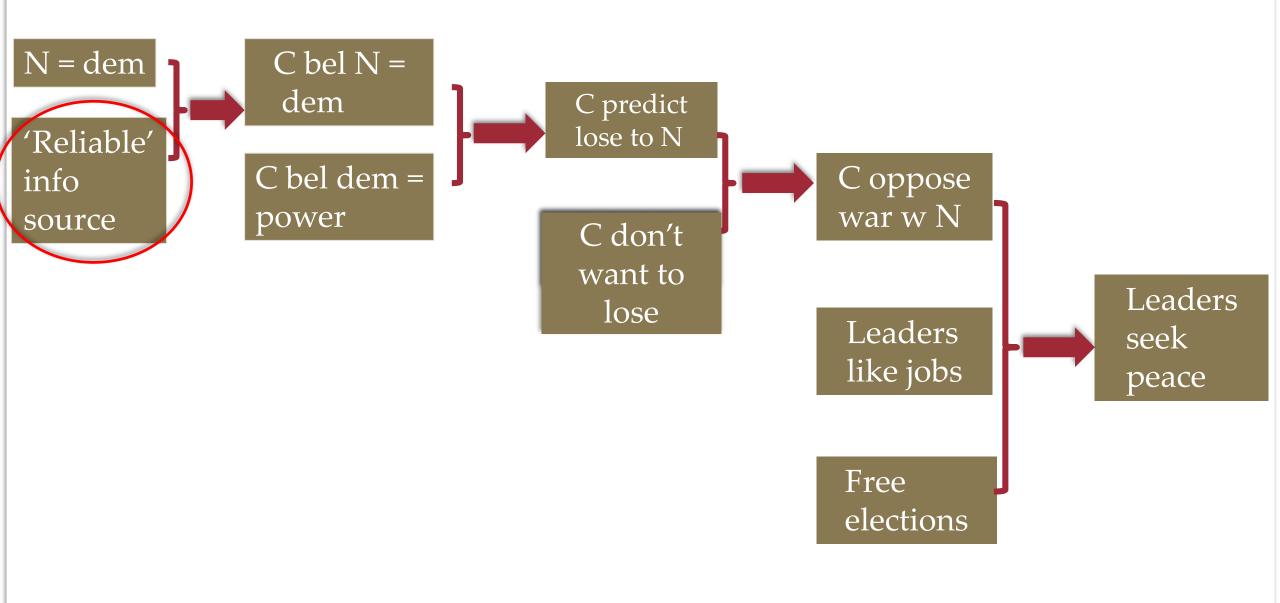
Knowing what mechanism should operate at each step = a powerful tool for context-thickening a middle-level ToC

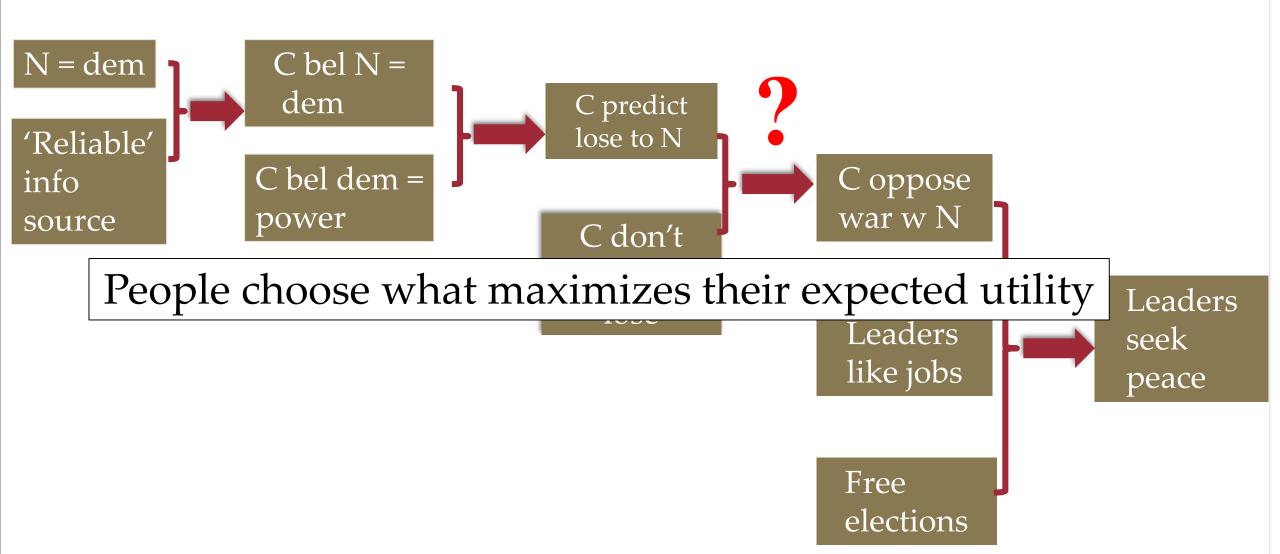


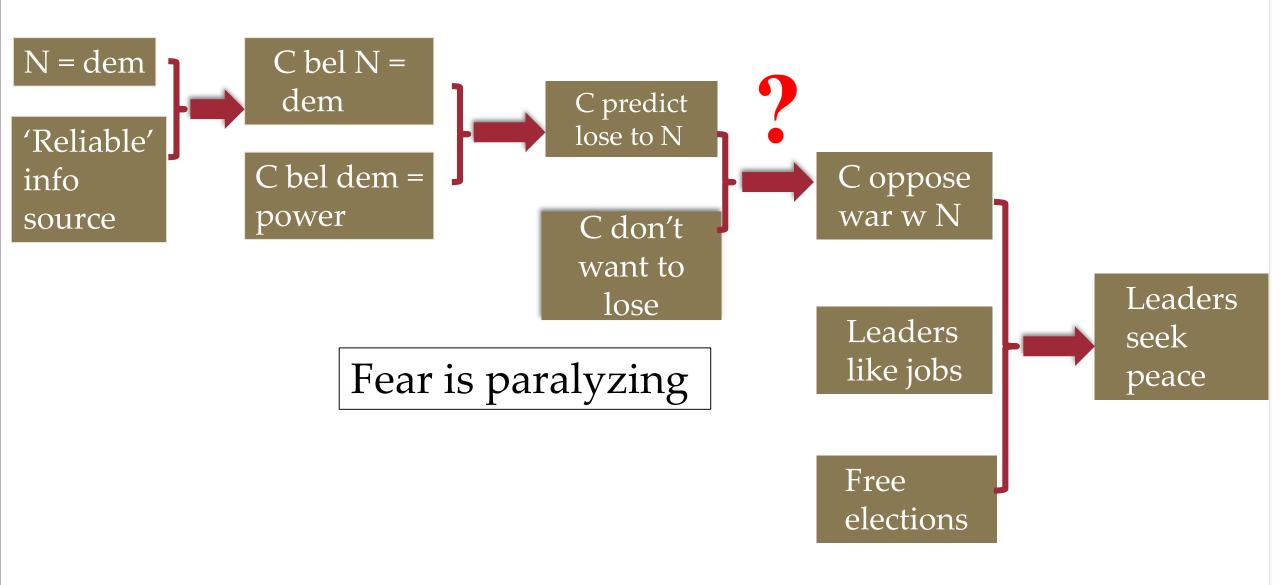


People informed T by sources deemed reliable tend to believe T









Where can these mechanisms produce the requite pathway?

Tool 3 Markers

social systems: afford causal pathways



Figuring out what the local system is like and what pathways it affords is

Difficult

Costly

Markers can suffice

System markers

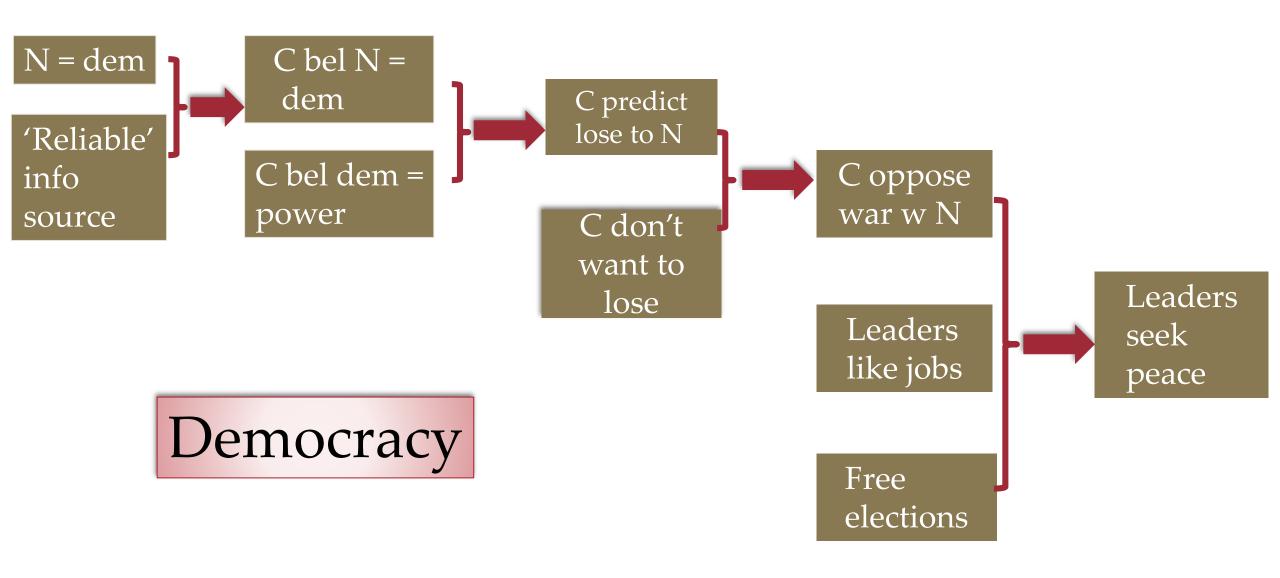
Manufactured items come with labels, logos





• God-made structures are often recognisable 'from the outside'

What about social systems?



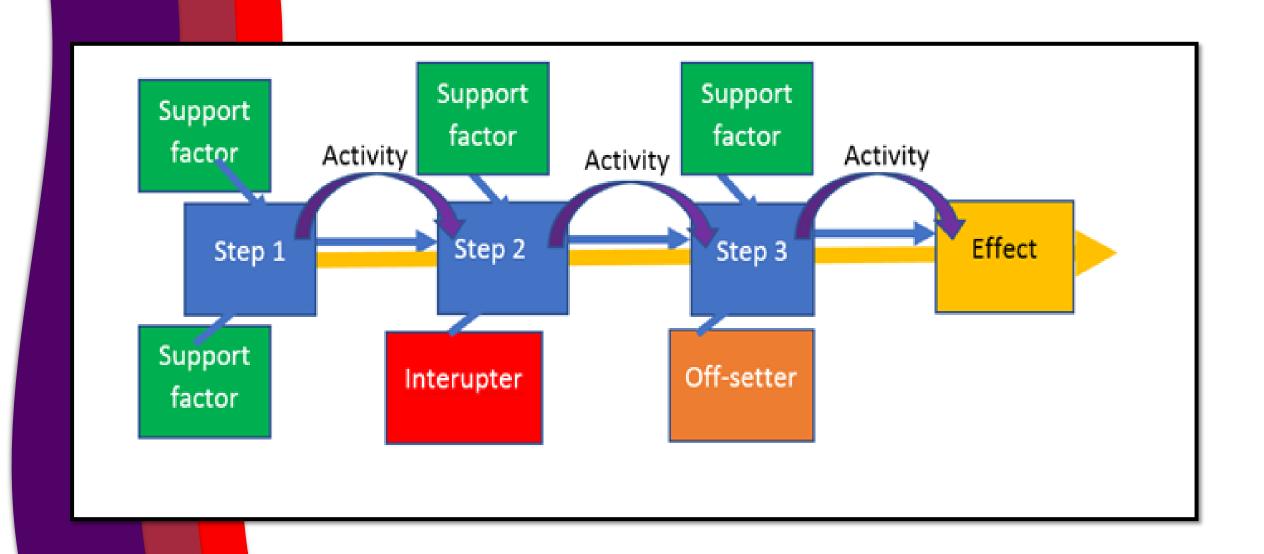
Common development markers

- Democracy?
- Good governance?
- Growth/ GDP?
- Women's participation?
- Foreign direct investment?

• • • •

So...

 Best way to get reliable prediction/ evaluation in a new setting is to build a thick local causal model



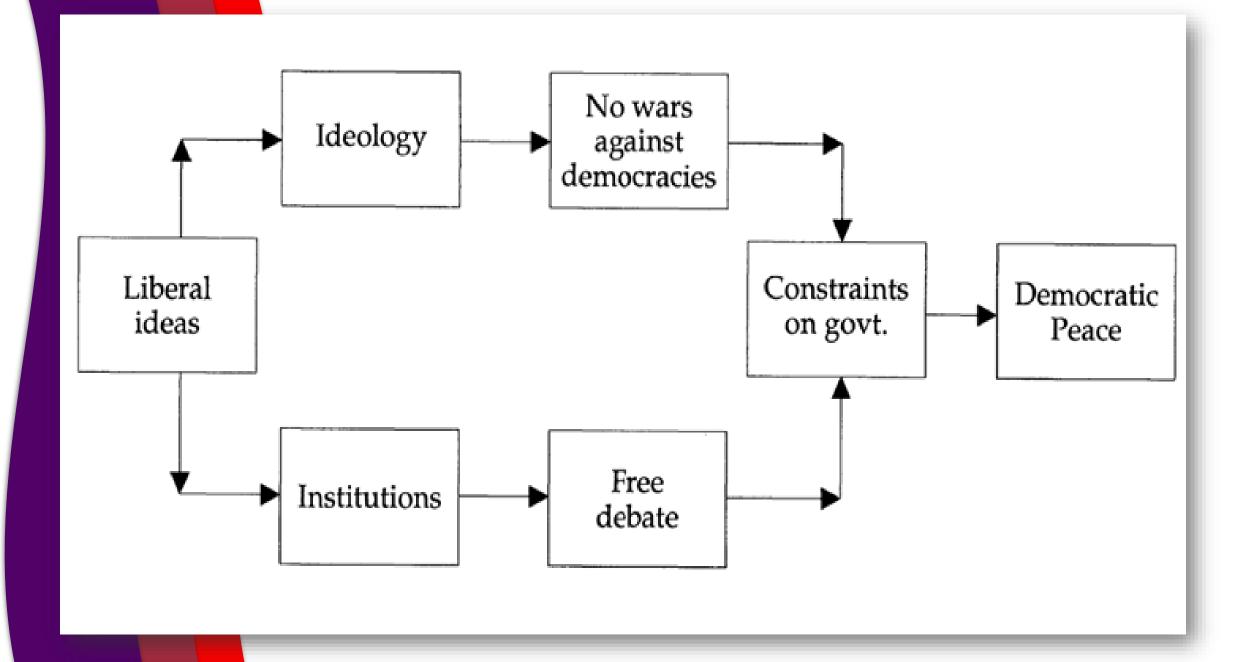
So...

- Best way to get reliable prediction/ evaluation in a new setting is to build a thick local causal model
- 3 kinds of middle-level theory can, deployed together, help you do so
- But you need those tools to do so
- This is NOT a good starting point

Figure 3: A systemic logical model for M4P enables better capture of M4P impact Systemic **Poverty** M4P Market reduction intervention change Sustainable Large scale (a) (b) (c)

So...

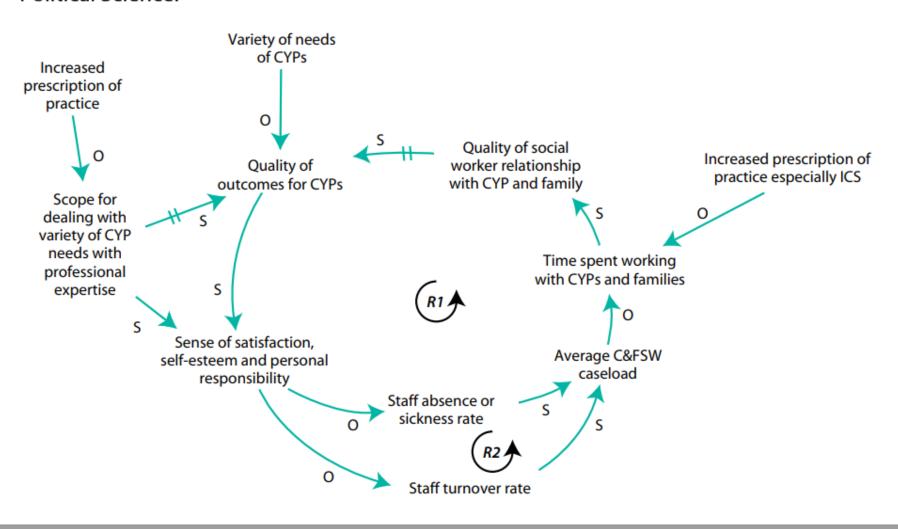
- Best way to get reliable prediction/ evaluation in a new setting is to build a thick local causal model
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- But you need those tools to do so
- This is NOT a good starting point
- Nor this



Better....

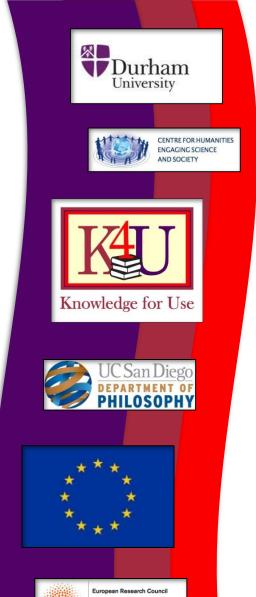
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Responsible programme development: provide a ToC w these ingredients

- 1. The series of steps by which the intervention is to produce the outcome
- 2. The principles by which the effect is produced at each step
- 3. An account of, or a marker for, the kind of underlying structures that afford this sequence of changes



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from anywhere in the world

Thank you

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Outcomes, not indicators

- "Indicators are different from ... outcomes... indicators are specific, measurable targets related to the outcomes..."
- NC: Because presence/absence of intermediate outcomes is stronger evidence of success than indicators of those