

# ICT4D - where next?

**Note that this version  
of the presentation  
is without most of the  
imagery used in its  
original form**

Tim Unwin

*UNESCO Chair in ICT4D*

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[www.ict4d.org.uk](http://www.ict4d.org.uk)

# ICT4D -where next?

- Difficulty in saying anything new to you ....
- Towards a critical ICT4D
- Keeping sane as a PhD student
  - ◆ Being a little bit mad helps prevent you from going totally mad

# Outline

- Thoughts on a framework for reflecting on ICT4D
- Towards a critical ICT4D
  - ◆ Key research agendas
- Reflections on PhD practices

# A framework for ICT4D

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- Development
- Empowerment
- The role of ICTs

# Critical importance of how we consider 'development'

- 'Development' is often unproblematised
- Hegemonic dominance of development as
  - ◆ Economic growth
  - ◆ 'poverty' elimination
- But
  - ◆ Absolute/relative poverty contrasts
  - ◆ Social, cultural, political dimensions of 'development'
- How we define 'development' determines how we see ICT4D

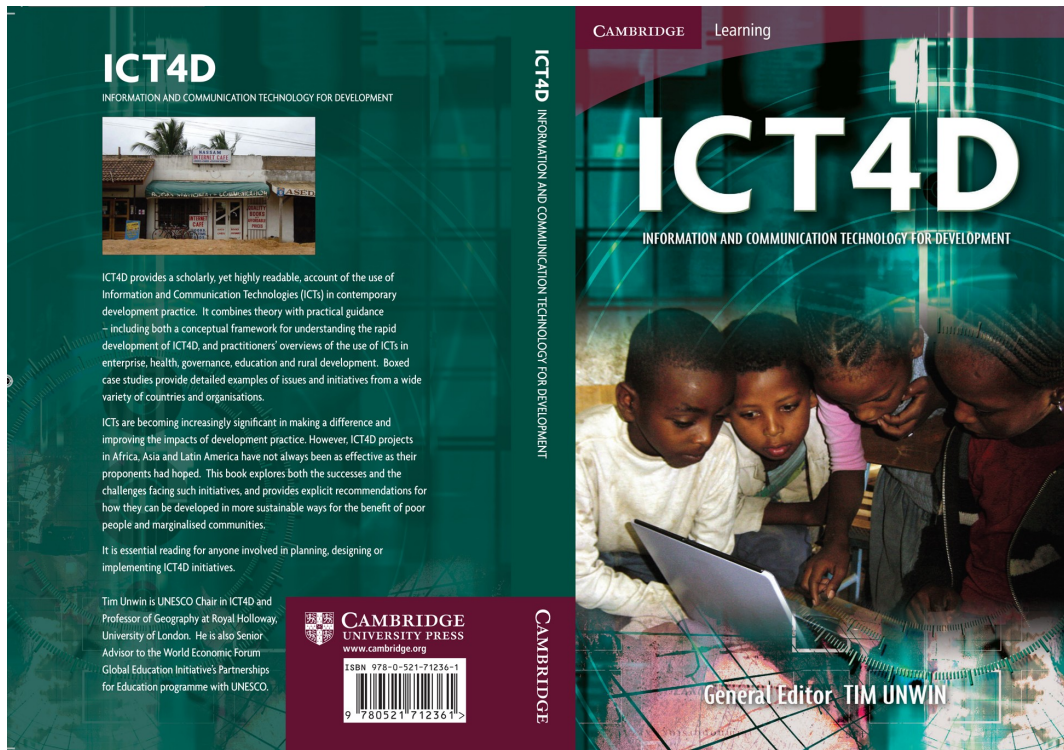
# Meanings of 'empowerment'

- Complexities of 'empowerment'
- Academic arrogance
  - ◆ Who are we to think we can empower others?
- Power relationships
  - ◆ Between researchers and researched
- How do we really know how best to 'help'?
  - ◆ Often do more damage than good
- Who determines our research agendas?

# Meanings of 'empowerment'

- Habermas's critical theory as a guide
  - ◆ Theory of knowledge constitutive interests
- In self-reflection, knowledge and the interests of knowledge are one
- One possible role for academics
  - ◆ The psychoanalysts of society
  - ◆ Encouraging development of self reflection amongst *all those* involved in ICT4D

# The role of ICTS - drawing on the new book...

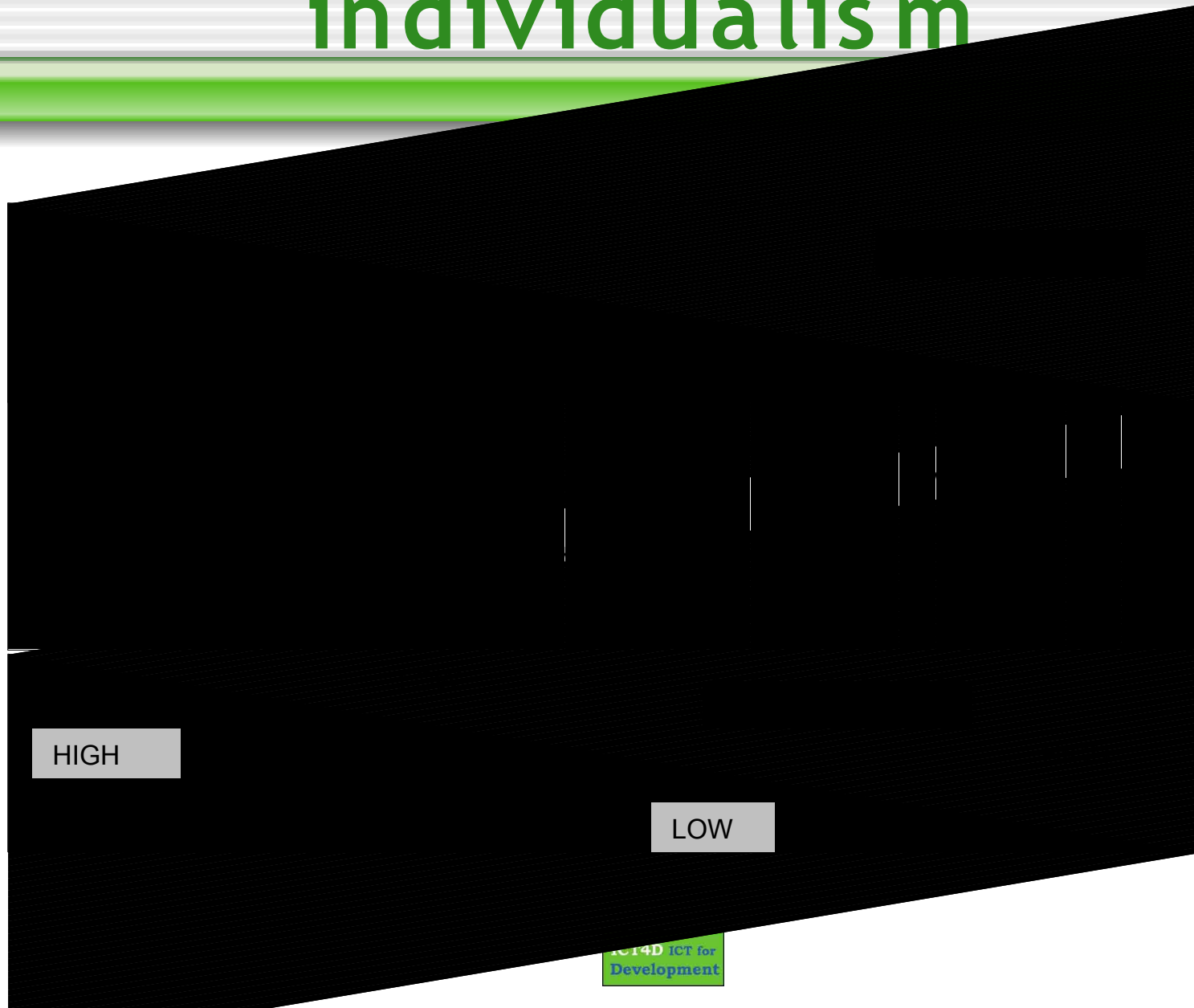


- A conceptual framework
- Practical explorations
  - ◆ Enterprise
  - ◆ Health
  - ◆ Education
  - ◆ Governance/ment
  - ◆ Rural development

# Individual and communal adventures

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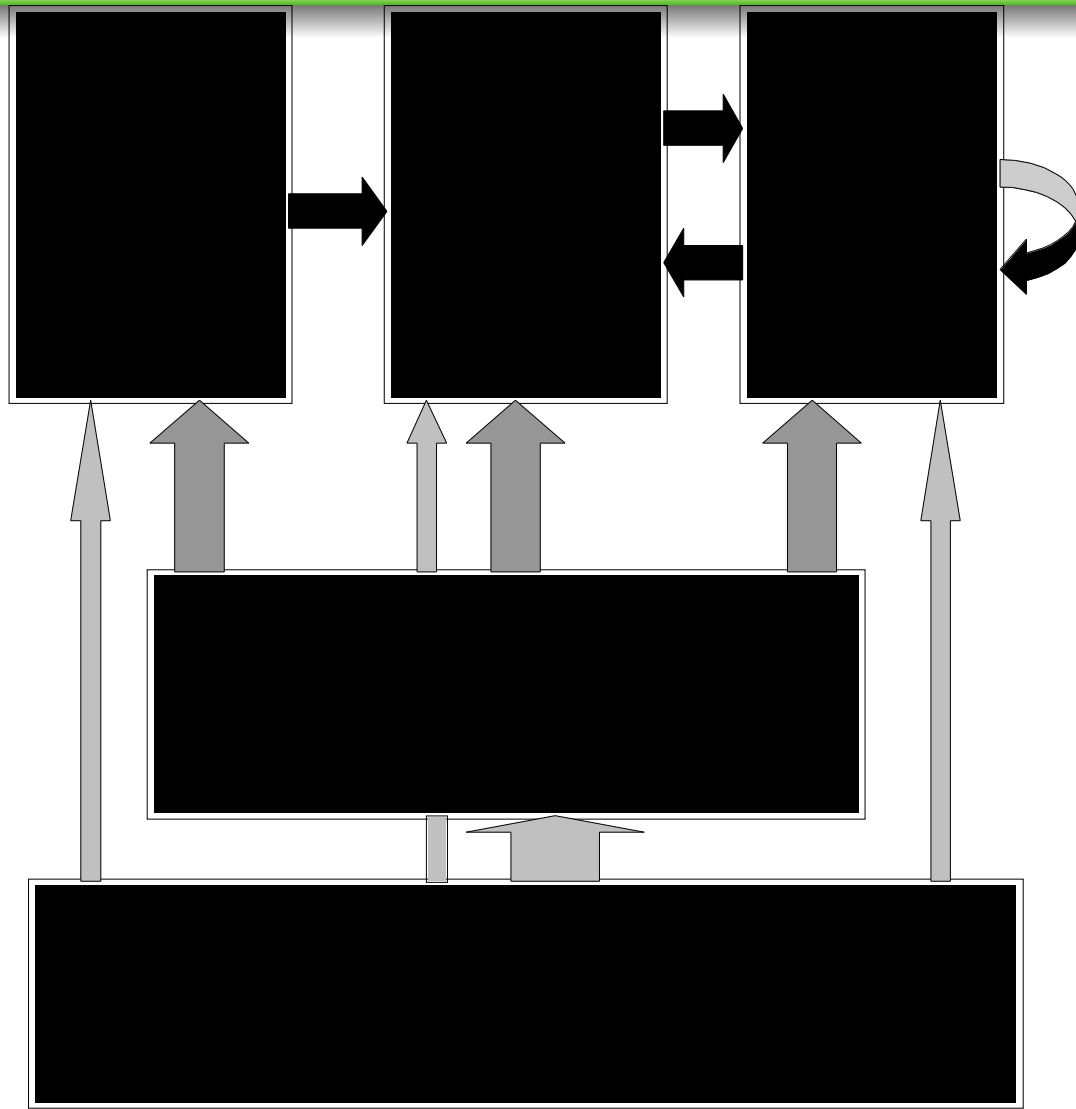
# Costs, ease of access and individualism



# The technologies... .

- ... Identifying the most appropriate in a particular context
- ... should not drive our agendas

# A framework for thinking about the technologies



**Fundamental importance of  
an integrated approach that  
uses ICT to serve the needs  
of poor people and  
marginalised communities**

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# Conclusion

access appropriate become being benefit **communication** create  
deliver **development** different economic **effective**  
ensure **evaluation** example external global growth http **ict4d**  
**icts** important indeed **information** **initiatives**  
innovation interests **involved** knowledge marginalised **monitoring** needs opportunities  
organisations partnerships **people** poor potential practices process **programmes**  
provide sector sharing sustainable **technologies** therefore used work www

# Towards a critical ICT4D

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Key research agendas

# Critical research agendas

- A focus on needs
- Building on indigenous practices
- Addressing 'sustainability'
- Accessibility
  - ◆ Technical and social

Mobile computing!

# A focus on 'needs'

- Most ICT4D projects have been supply led and top down
  - ◆ They 'should' work, but fail to do so
  - ◆ because they only rarely serve the needs of user groups
- Difficulties of bringing supply and demand together
- But we need to begin with the needs of the poor and marginalised
  - ◆ The market will provide for the rich and powerful

# How do we identify needs?

- Very little quality research on needs
- How can people think about what they don't know?
  - ◆ Exploratory workshops
- Cultural issues limiting reflective consciousness
- Research practices
  - ◆ Qualitative methods
  - ◆ Participatory activities

# Indigenous practices

- Most ICTs developed in major capitalist economies
  - ◆ To serve the interests of global capital
- How can we learn from indigenous information and communication practices?
  - ◆ Indeed, how much do we really know about these?

# Building on indigenous institutions

- Ingando and Gacaca in Rwanda
  - ◆ Ingando
    - Reflecting on, and finding solutions to, crises
  - ◆ Gacaca
    - Justice on the grass
- Harambe
  - ◆ Kenyan communal self-help
- Indaba
  - ◆ Gatherings of principal men among Zulu and Xhosa
- How can we best build on institutions such as these?



# ... but some caution is required



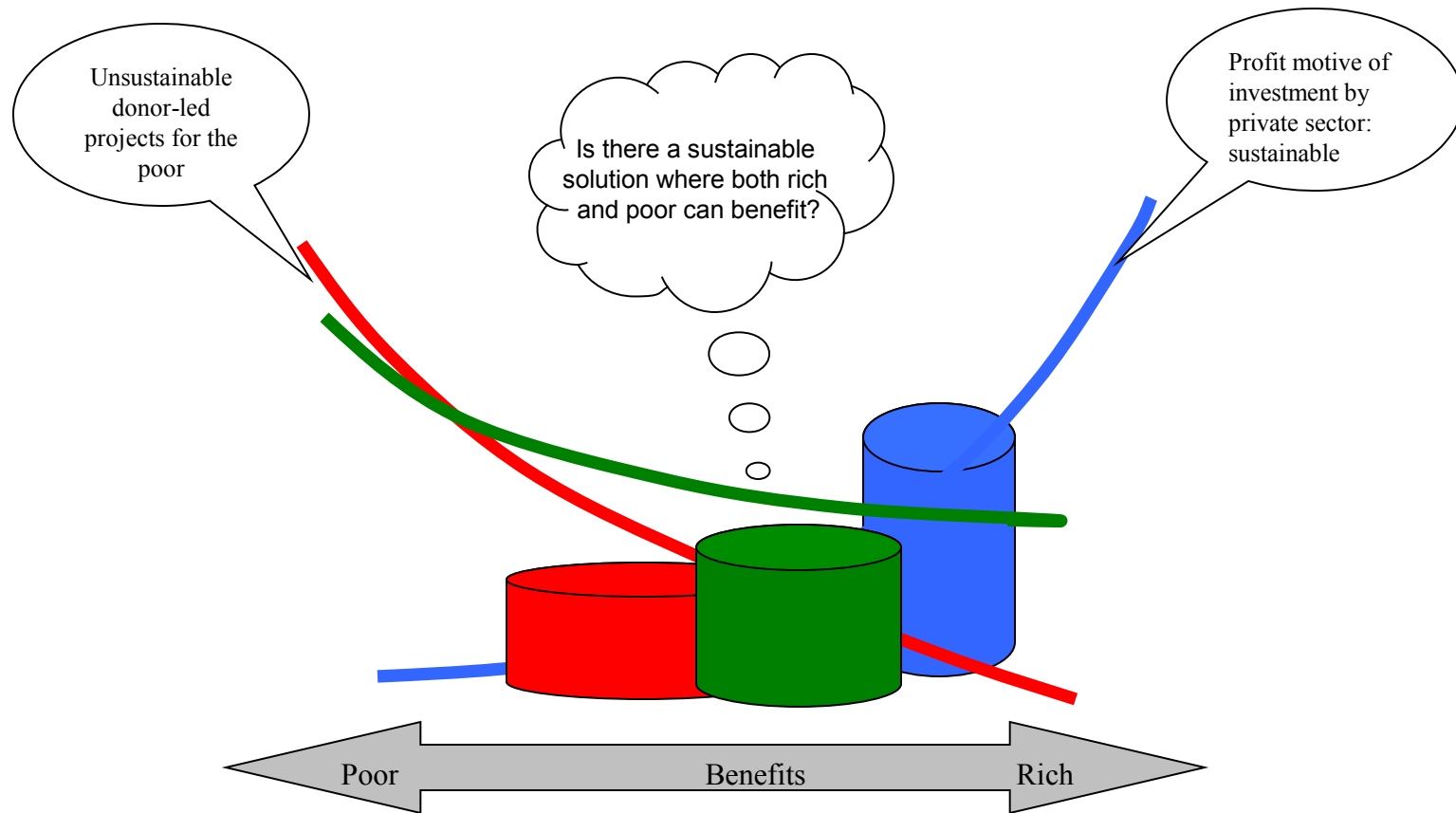
- Unexpected and unintended consequences
- Importance of initiatives being locally led
  - ◆ But local interests may be problematic
- Our academic interests may be very different...
- Benefits of being an outsider
  - ◆ But only the chameleons

# ‘Sustainability’

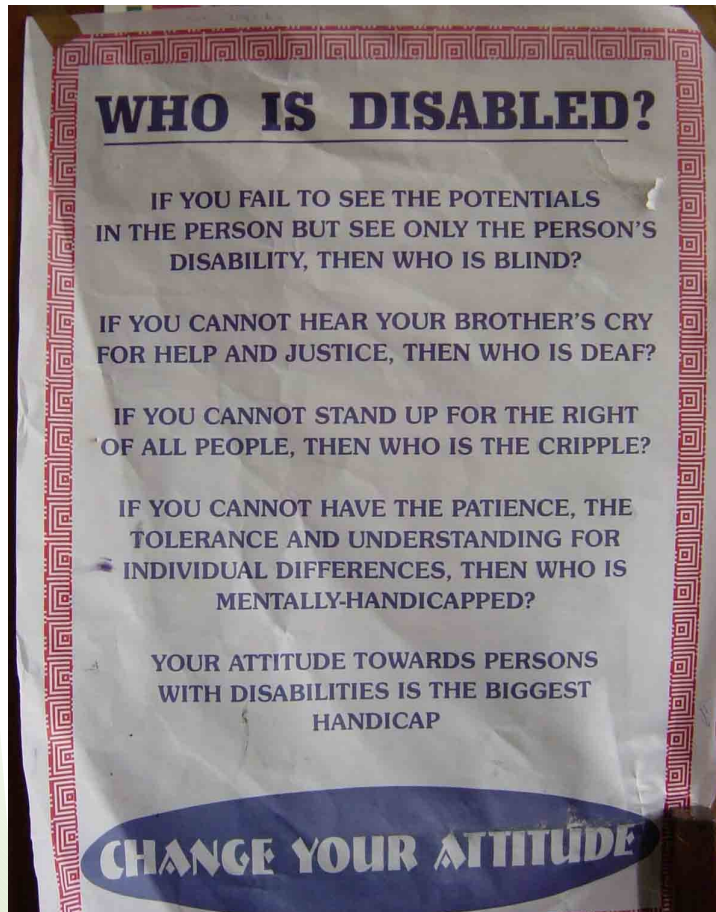
- ‘Sustainability’ is usually only an issue when ‘failure’ occurs
- Need for new business models to enable market solutions
  - ◆ People are indeed willing to pay for services they want!
- Support for governments, donors and civil society
  - ◆ Regulatory environments ensuring equality of access
  - ◆ Focus on delivering solutions for the poorest and most marginalised



# Types of ICT4D intervention



# Accessibility



- ICTS and all of the senses
- Low demand generally means high costs
- Enormous potential for high quality research
  - ◆ Both hardware and software
- Frequently ignored across much of world
  - ◆ Especially Africa

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# Challenges of being a critical ICT4D postgraduate

# Mechanistic issues

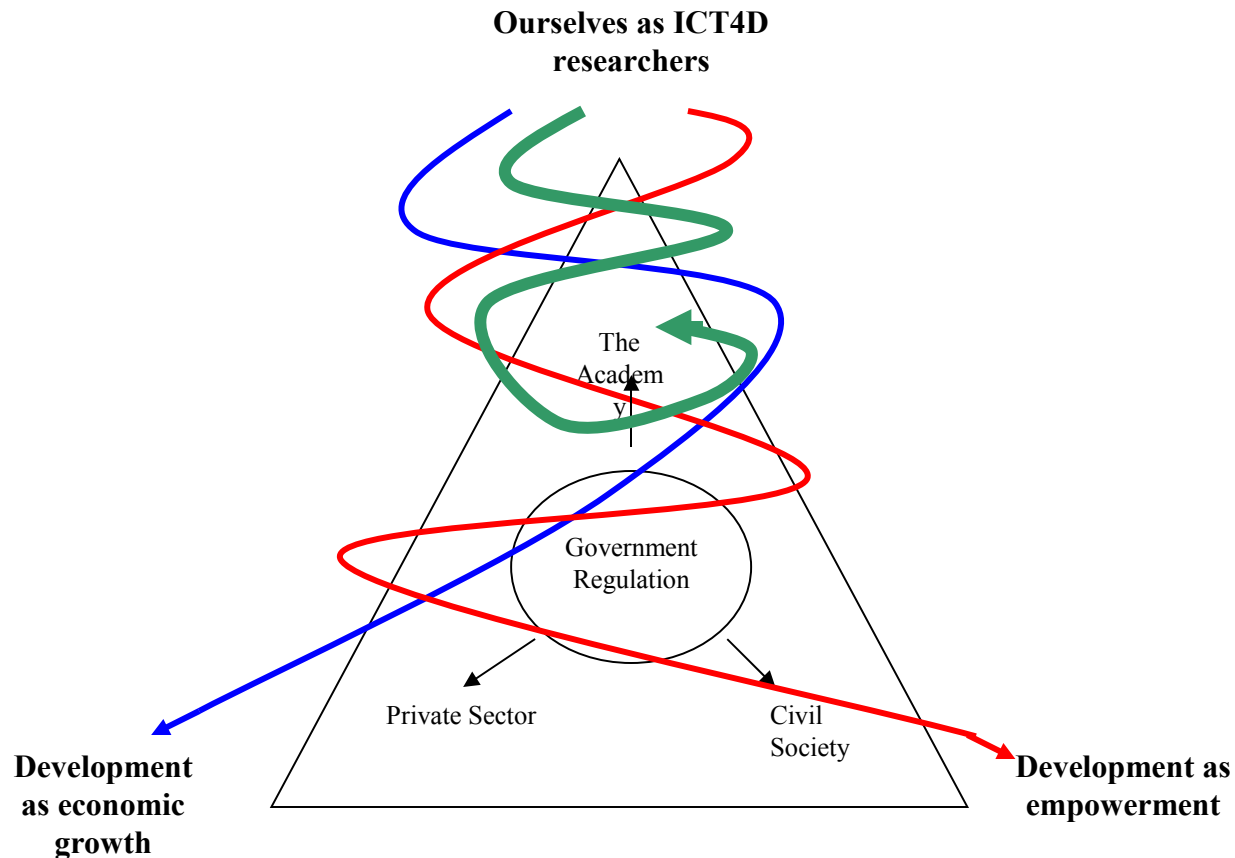
- The constraints of a 3 year PhD
  - ◆ Time pressures made worse by training?
  - ◆ Potential benefits of longer part-time research
- Different agendas working in partnership
  - ◆ Real benefits for critical research
  - ◆ But need for clear agreements
- Understanding what a PhD is
  - ◆ And how it varies in different places
  - ◆ Above all quality intellectual rigour
- Logistics of working with the very poorest
- Differences between research and consultancy

# Intellectual challenges

- Shaping a new discipline
  - ◆ Combining ‘technical’ and ‘socio-cultural’
  - ◆ What should it look like?
    - Hopefully many different faces...
- Is an empowering agenda compatible with writing a PhD?
  - ◆ Most academics concerned primarily with ‘academic’ rules
    - Critique for the sake of critique
      - Who reads academic papers?
    - Antagonism to development practices
  - ◆ The dominant economic growth agendas
    - Challenges in advocating alternatives



# The roles of ICT4D researchers



# Crafting ICT4D postgraduate practices

- Diversity of practices
  - ◆ From capitalists to revolutionaries?
- Communal shared learning experiences....
- Shaping our own definitions
- Driven by highest quality of research rigour
- Real 'work' starts after the PhD
  - ◆ The PhD as a wonderful period of freedom!

# Discussion...

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