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Capacity development in a complex, uncertain, dynamic and ambiguous world

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Background – Capacity development

Since the 1950s

Failed to bring significant and sustainable change

Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goal 17

2003 capacity building in Afghanistan for United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

Last 15 years - Capacity development research from different perspectives to make society more resilient and sustainable

Experts, program managers, high-level decision-makers, internal partners and donors

Principles and practice & why not successful

Results - applicable both in Sweden and internationally



Capacity development concept

A process to develop capacity to achieve a goal or desired state

Capacity or ability to do something and get things done

Through a partnership between an internal and external partner





Troubling partnerships

Image Credit: Magnus Hagelsteen, Haiti, 2010

Purpose

Explore the perspectives of internal partners involved in capacity development

Understand their perspectives on challenges and possible solutions

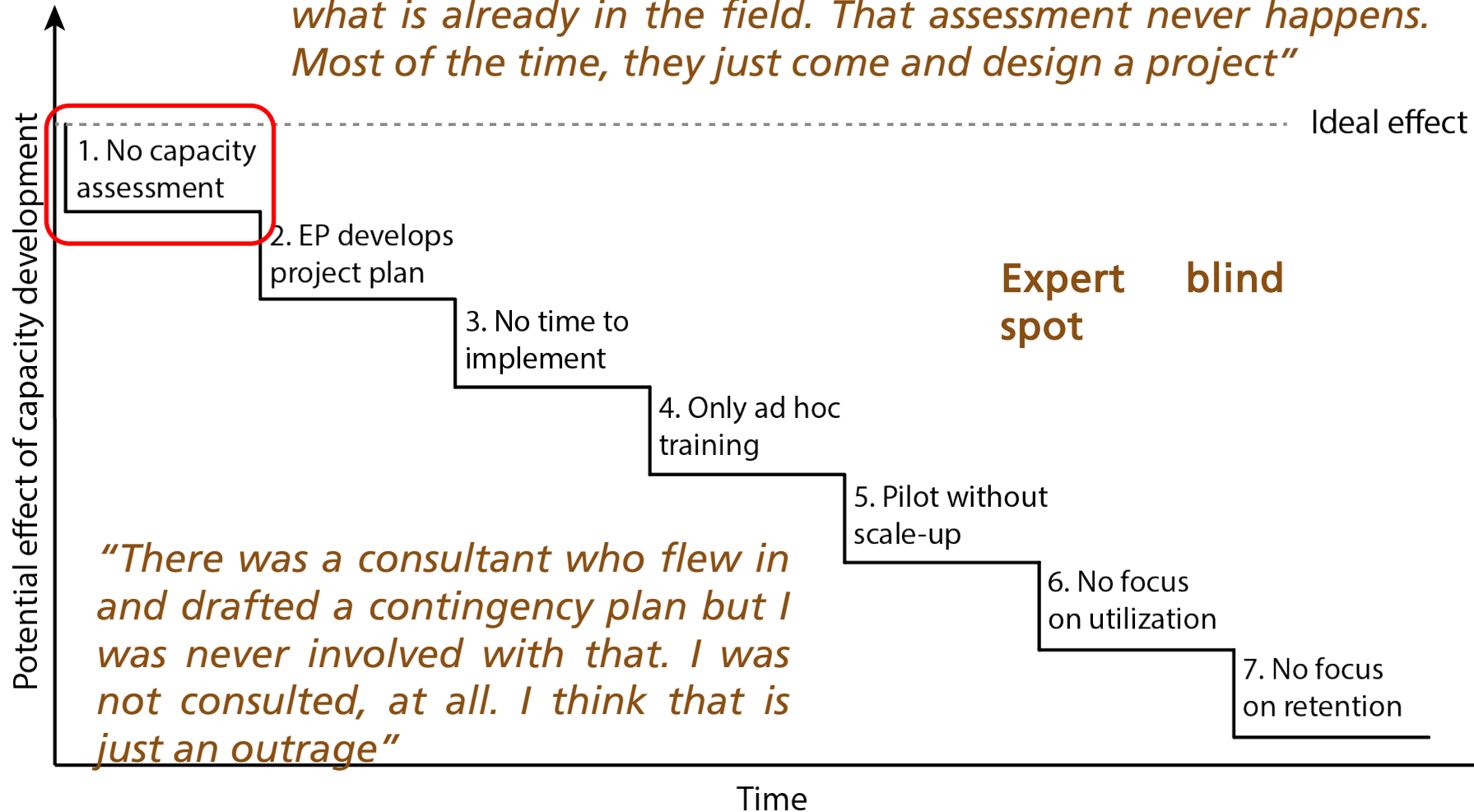
27 interviews in 5 countries

- Botswana, Mozambique, Seychelles, Tanzania and Zambia
- Directors, deputy directors, head of departments, divisions or units, program officers, national coordinators, focal points, advisors or experts in DRR and CCA at various governmental organizations and committees



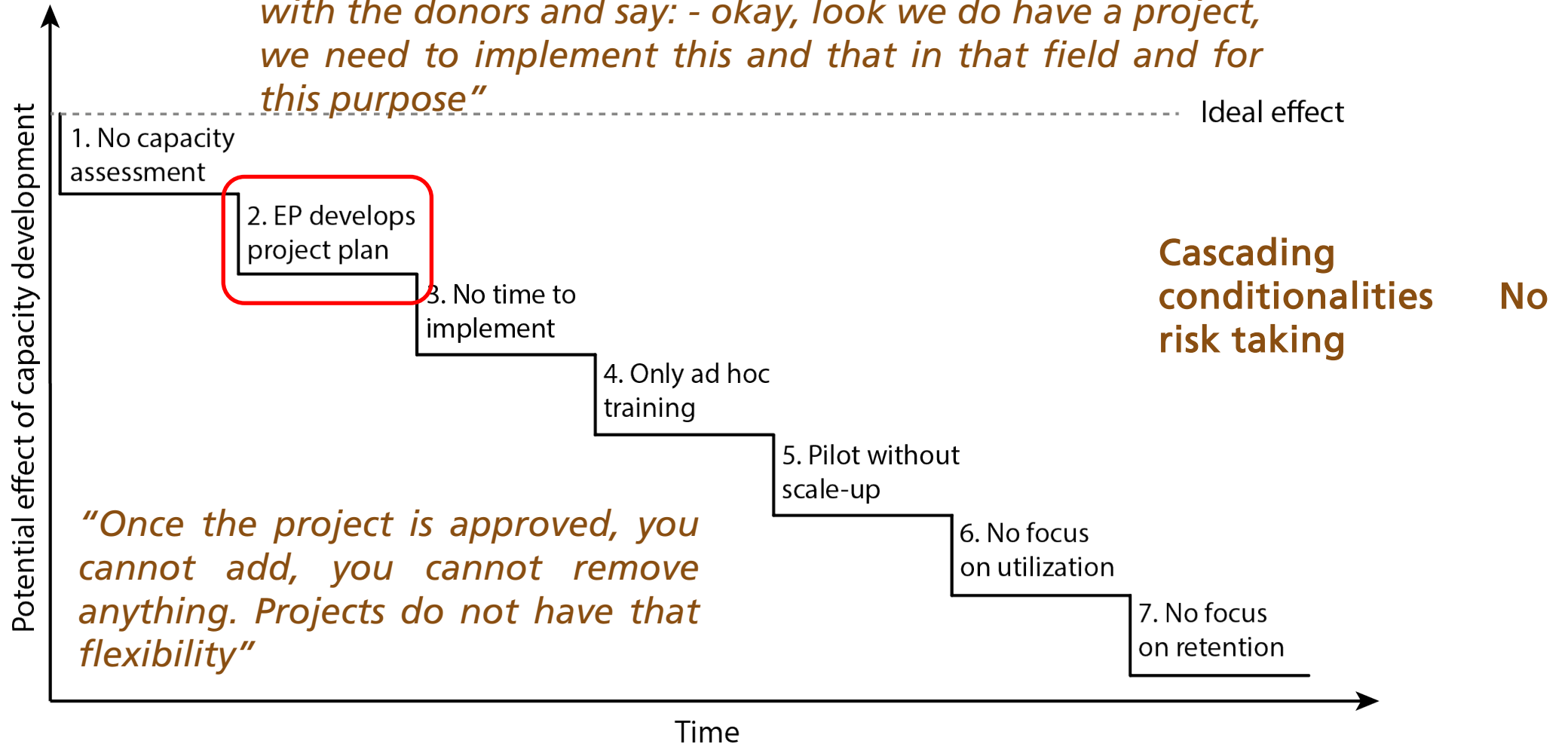
Seven types of project failures

"They should do what I call an initial assessment to find out what is already in the field. That assessment never happens. Most of the time, they just come and design a project"



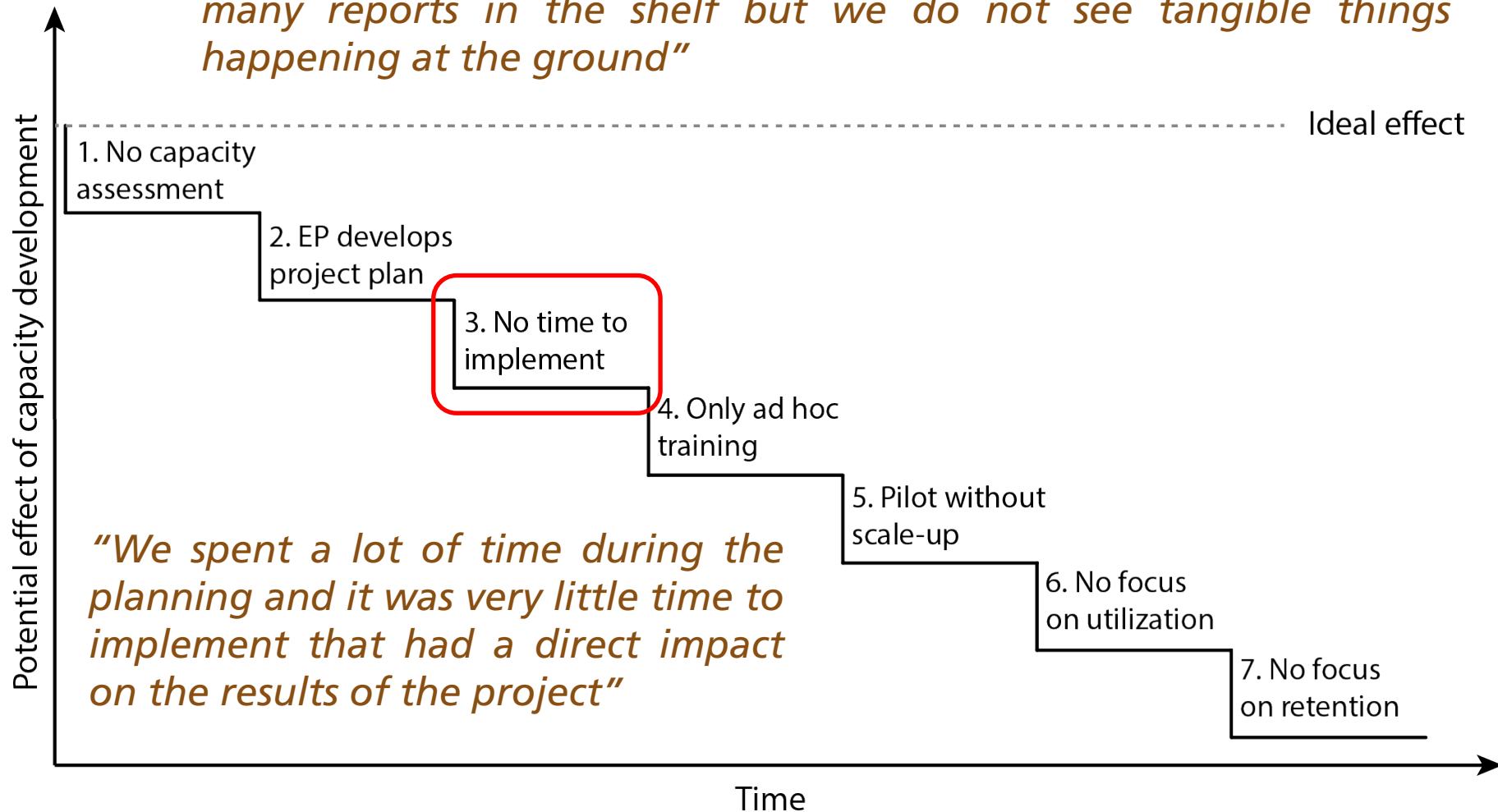
Seven types of project failures

"When they come, they have already negotiated the funds with the donors and say: - okay, look we do have a project, we need to implement this and that in that field and for this purpose"



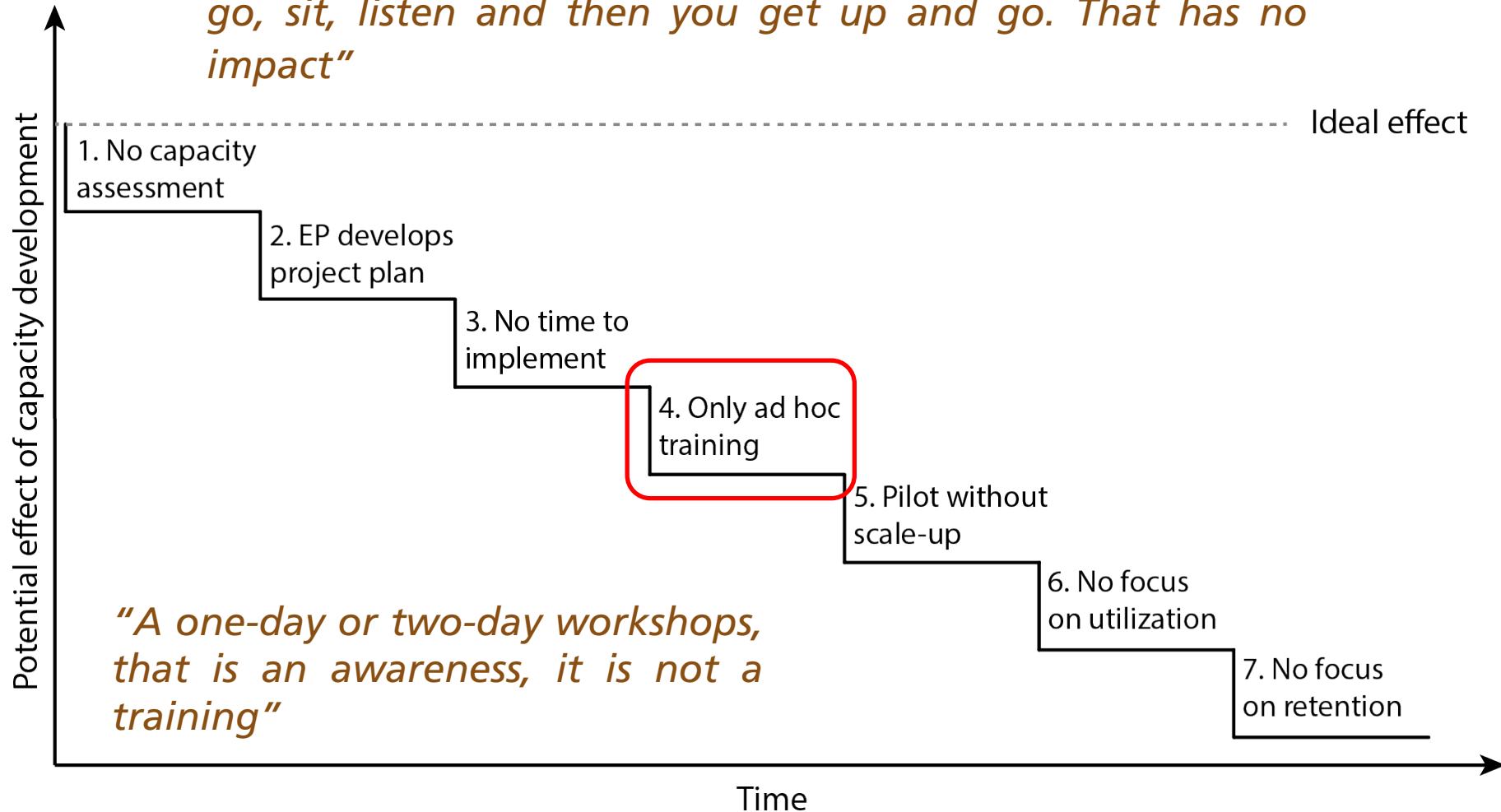
Seven types of project failures

"We have been doing assessment for quite a while. We have so many reports in the shelf but we do not see tangible things happening at the ground"



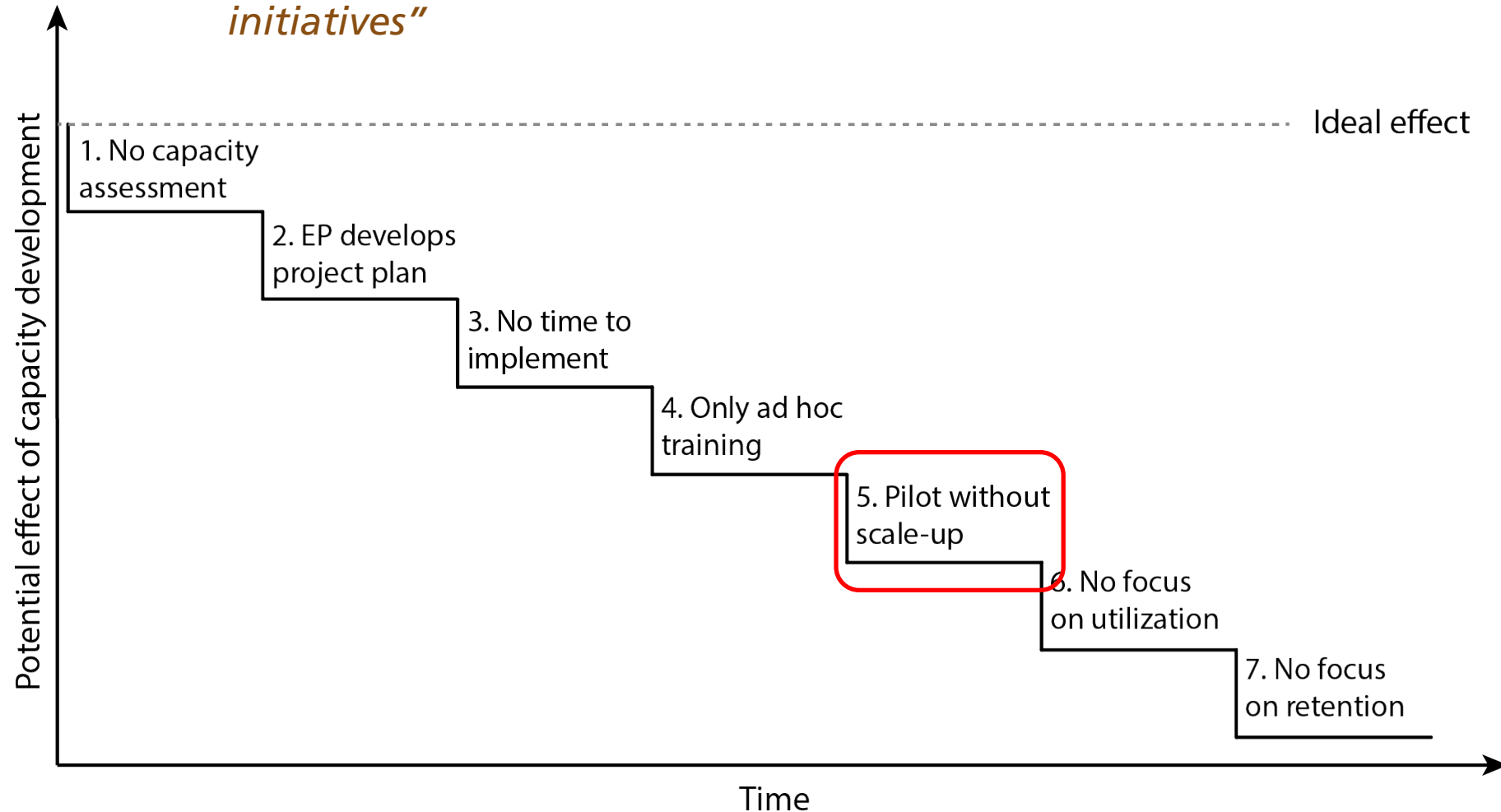
Seven types of project failures

"The fact, in most of the workshops you attend, you just go, sit, listen and then you get up and go. That has no impact"



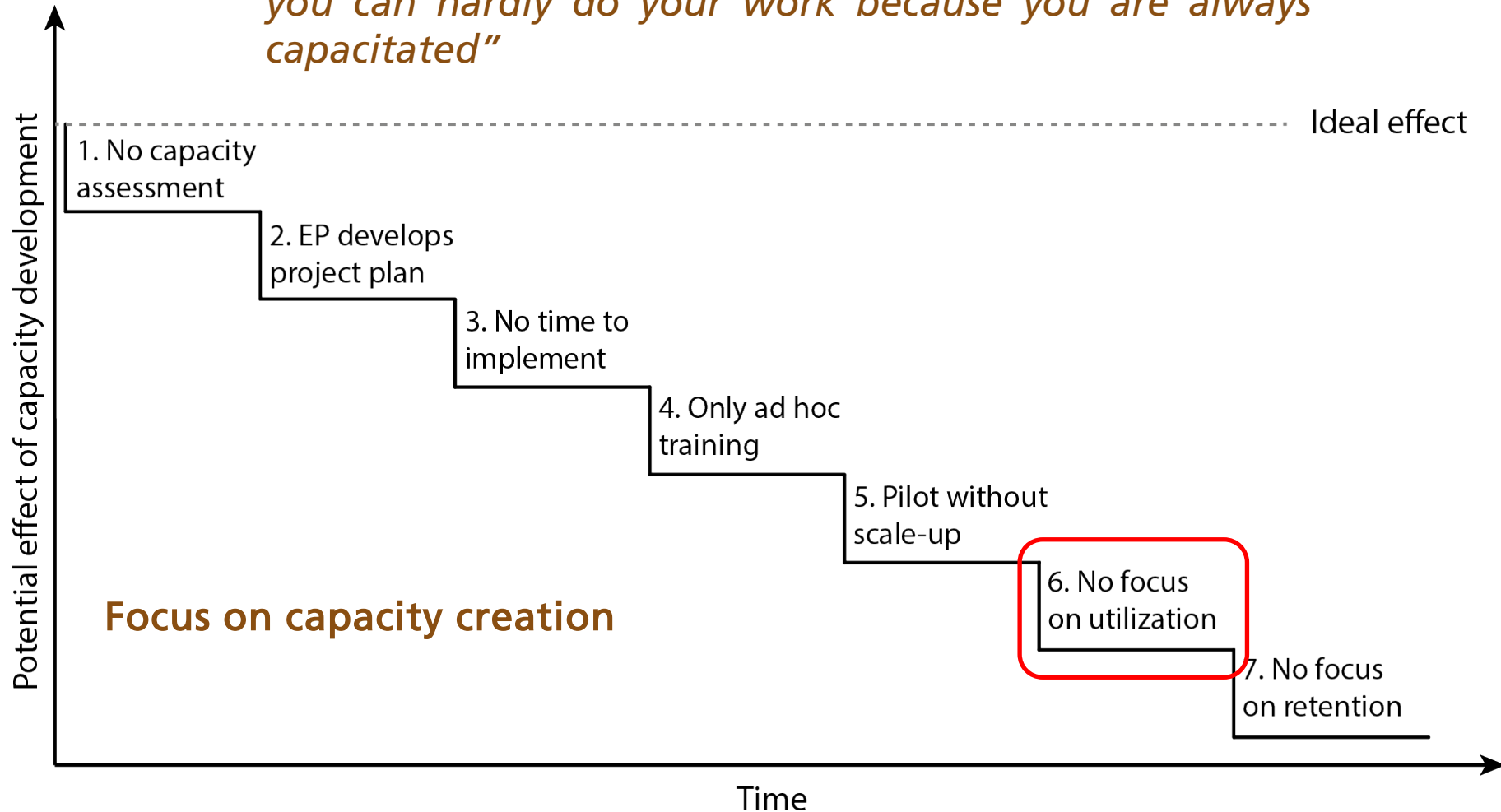
Seven types of project failures

"They go for a pilot project and never exercise how to scale up those initiatives"



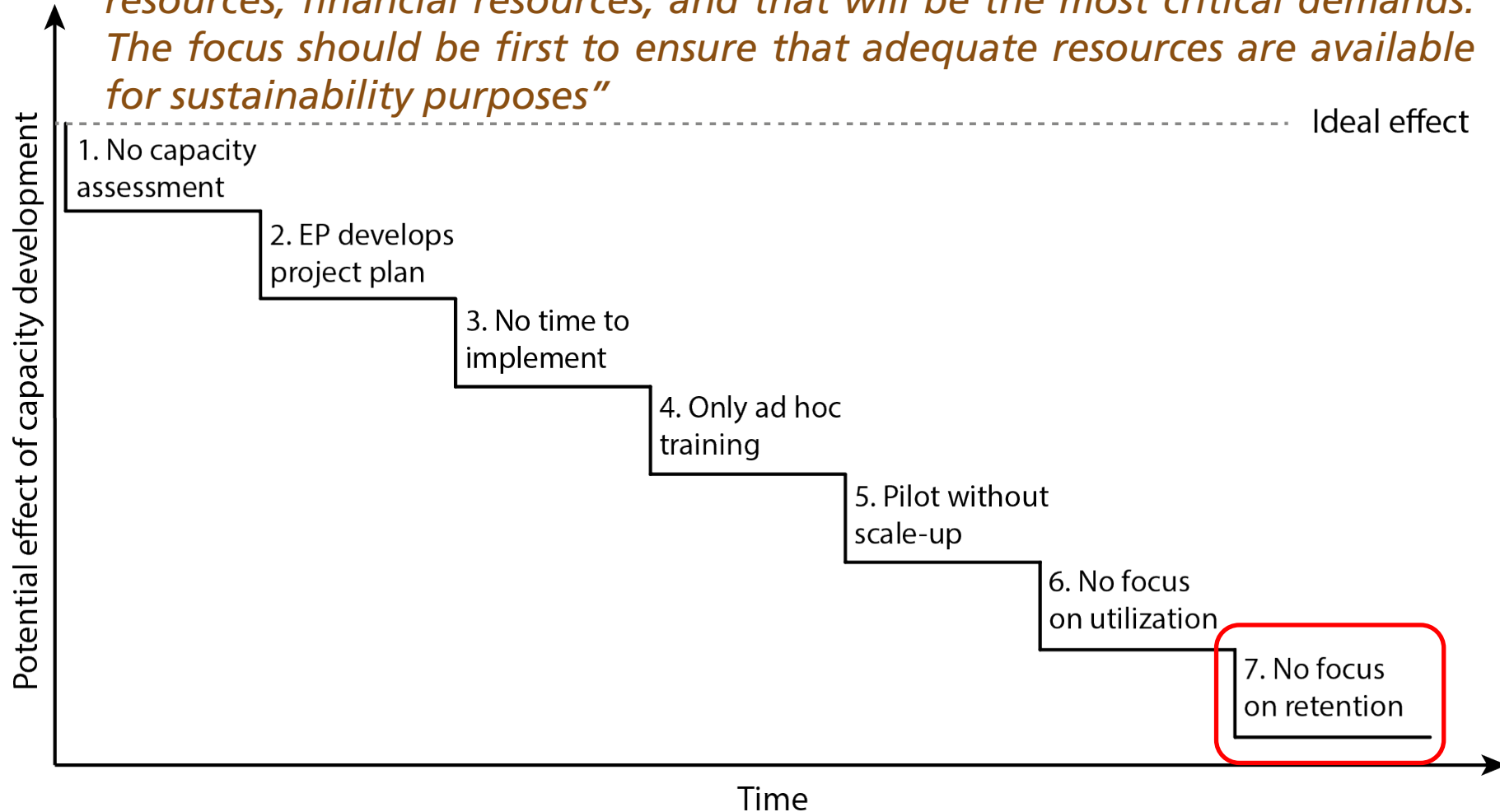
Seven types of project failures

"You spend a lot of time in workshops and seminars so you can hardly do your work because you are always capacitated"

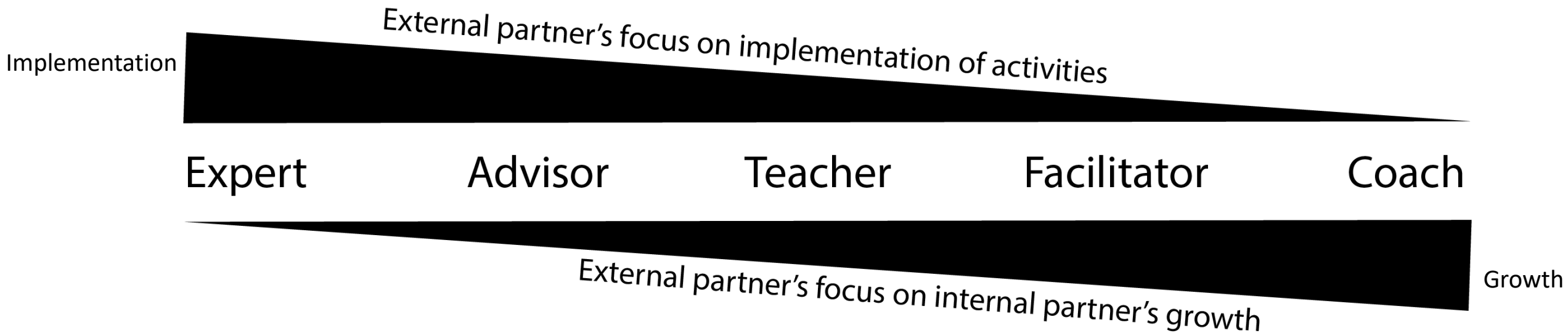


Seven types of project failures

“It all boils down to having the adequate resources in terms of human resources, financial resources, and that will be the most critical demands. The focus should be first to ensure that adequate resources are available for sustainability purposes”

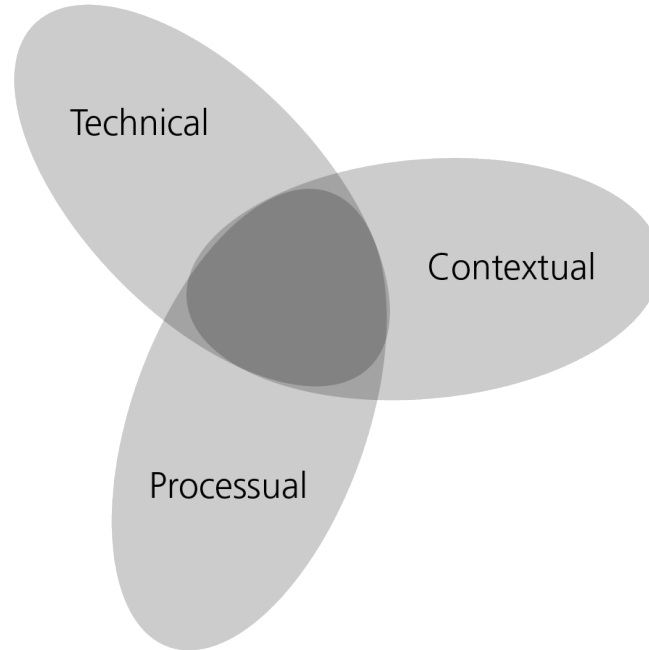


Flexible and adaptive roles



Three requisite types of capacities

Focus **technical** capacities



Contextual capacity:
to understand the local
context and the
existing capacities and
needs

Processual capacity:
to both drive the project and
organization as a whole, and
to facilitate capacity
development processes

*“What we are capable of doing and
what we are not capable of doing.
They need to learn from us so that
they can assist us”*

*“We already have existing structures on the
ground, we also have to capacitate the person who
is coming on how we are working at the
government and how they can fit in”*

Conclusion

1. A typology of seven project failures
2. More credit to internal partners
3. Explicit opportunities for equal partnership, mutual learning and adaptive roles of partners spanning from expert to coach need to be considered
4. Three requisite and interdependent types of capacities —technical, processual, and contextual



PhD Defence

Friday 1 March 2024 in V:A at 10.00

Hagelsteen, M., Becker P., & Abrahamsson M. (2021). 'Troubling partnerships: Perspectives from the receiving end of capacity development'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 59, 102231, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2021.102231>

Hagelsteen, M., & Becker, P. (2013). 'Challenging disparities in capacity development for disaster risk reduction'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 3(1), 4-13, doi: <http://lup.lub.lu.se/record/3216362>

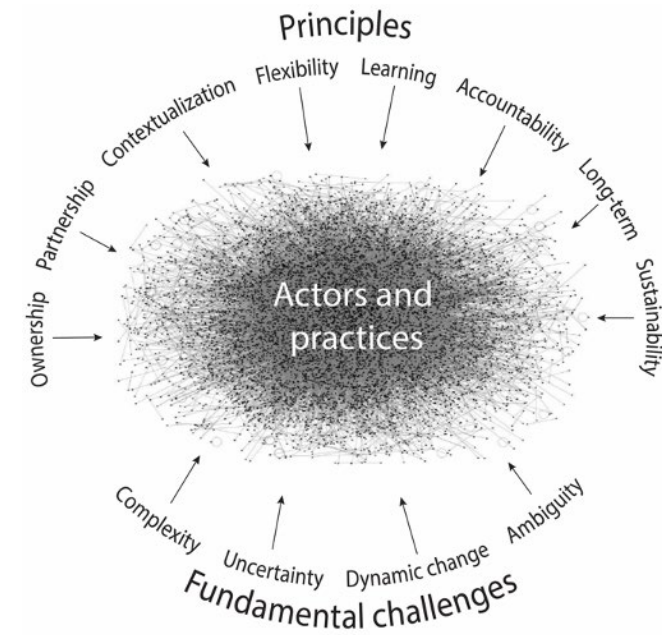
Hagelsteen, M., & Burke, J. (2016). 'Practical aspects of capacity development in the context of disaster risk reduction'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 16, 43-52, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2016.01.010>

Hagelsteen, M., & Becker, B. (2019). 'Systemic problems of capacity development for disaster risk reduction in a complex, uncertain, dynamic, and ambiguous world'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 36, 1-10, 101102, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2019.101102>

Hagelsteen, M., Gutheil, J., Morales Burkle, M.D.M., Becker, P. (2022). 'Caught between principles and politics: Challenges and opportunities for capacity development from governmental donors' perspectives'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 70, 102785, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2022.102785>

Appetizer

- Framework of eight principles and four fundamental challenges
- Gaps between theory and practice
- Terminological ambiguity
- Clashing principles and misguided accountability
- Intense need for control
- Outdated ideas of the world, lack of motivation for change
- Power relations and risk aversion
- Let go of control and allow flexibility
- Risk sharing agreements
- Flexible roles
- Manage capacities - Three requisite types of capacities,
- Manage relationships and time
- Manage risk and sustainable change



Thanks!

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Magnus Hagelsteen, Afghanistan, 2003



Magnus Hagelsteen, Bhutan, 2023