

Environmental *Change* Institute



Incremental vs transformative adaptation for coping with climate extremes

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Incremental vs.
transformative adaptation

Focus on vulnerability
reduction

Rethink adaptation

Different framings of adaptation

- As an activity that is added on to existing development and planning approaches → INCREMENTAL
- And the framing where adaptation is a long term process of change → TRANSFORMATIONAL

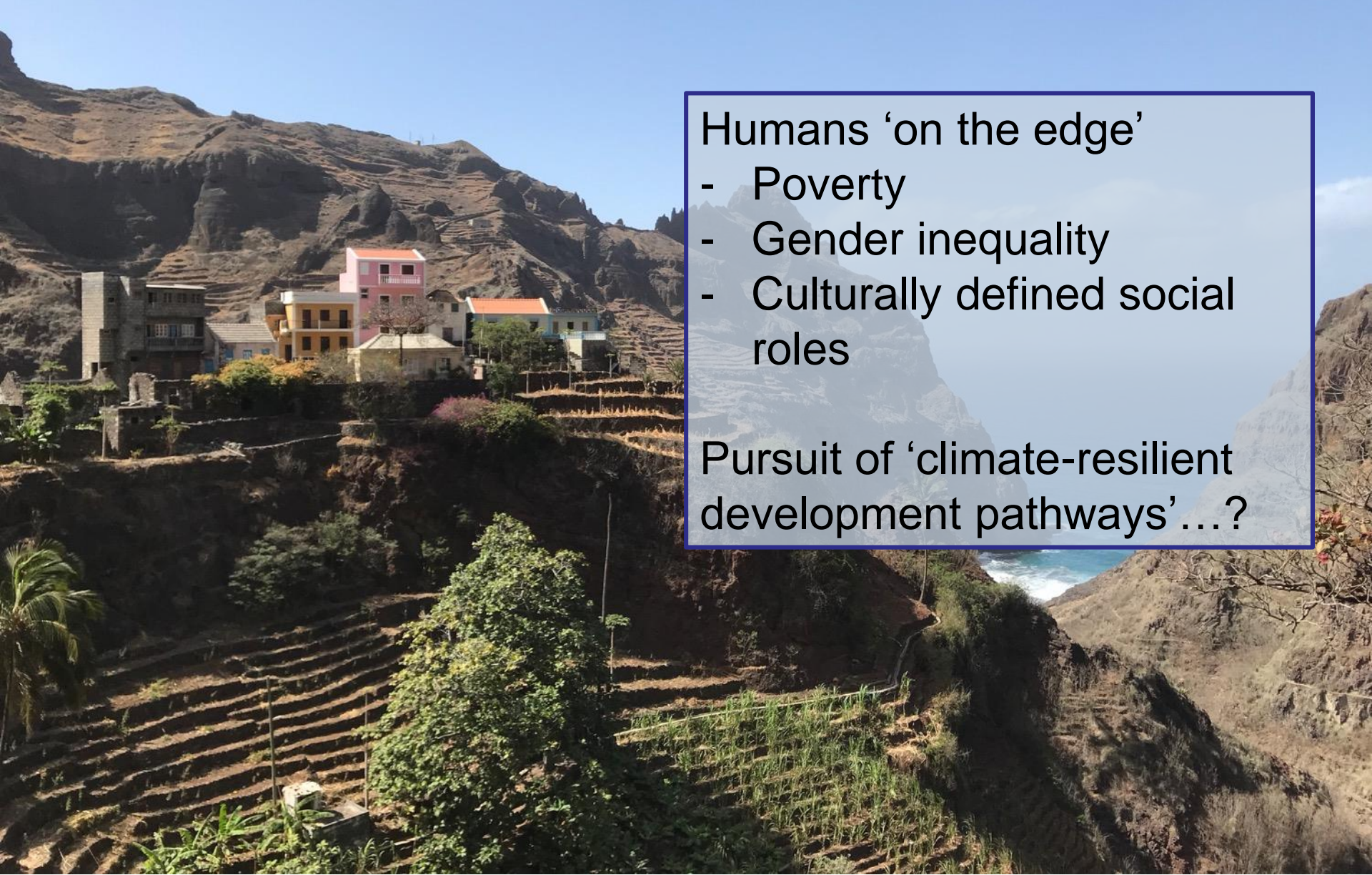


One every second



One Every Second

Source: <https://youtu.be/SFizi7UTIPo>

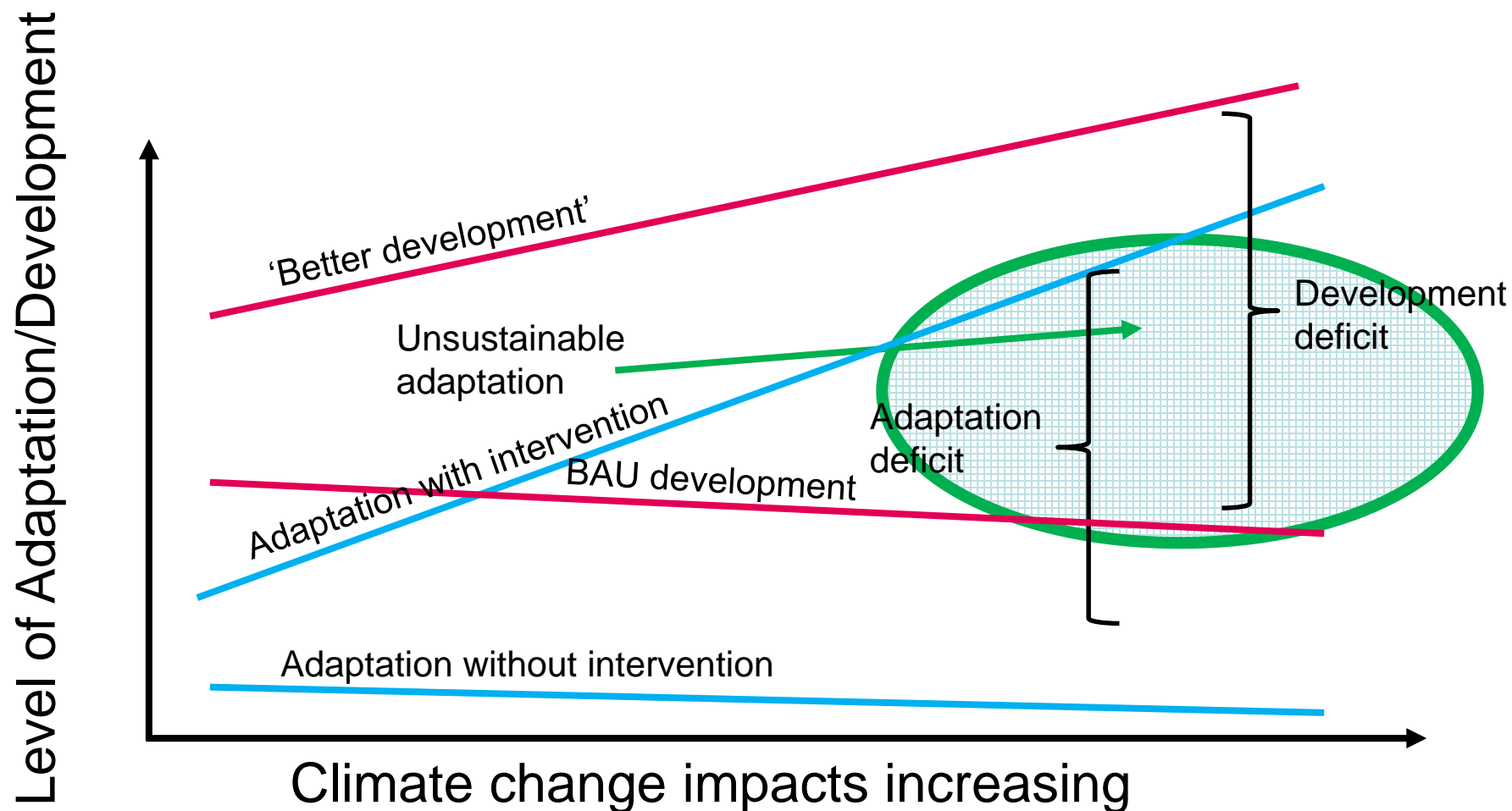


Humans 'on the edge'

- Poverty
- Gender inequality
- Culturally defined social roles

Pursuit of 'climate-resilient development pathways'...?

Development Deficit vs Adaptation Deficit



Why are we not addressing vulnerability?

- Vulnerability
 - Not addressing the underlying drivers
 - discrimination, equity issues that relate to gender, age, political affiliation, ethnic group...
- Too sensitive, too controversial, too much work!

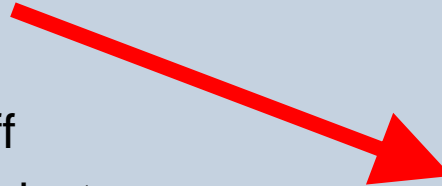
Vulnerability and equity

Poorly designed climate measures may affect some poor and disadvantaged people adversely, exacerbating inequity and vulnerability.

- Reinforcement of existing inequity and vulnerability
- Introduction of new risks and sources of vulnerability
- Redistribution of vulnerability

Maladaptation: What we don't want!

- Adaptation = MALadaptation
 - We are getting it wrong
 - We are making people worse off
 - Equity is not an the centre of projects



Barriers to vulnerability reduction

- Insufficient capacity, knowledge and learning
- Insufficient participation in planning and management
- Funding and investment patterns

In conclusion...

- Adaptation is at a cross-roads: we need to bring it back to its **radical roots**
- Technocratic perspectives on adaptation obscure the **social dimensions of vulnerability**, suggesting that quick fixes are possible
- Incremental adaptation is generally insufficient to trigger the changes we need, **but most adaptation is incremental**
- By framing adaptation as something that can happen outside of other crucial development processes, **the space for unsustainable adaptation becomes larger**

