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OXFORD POVERTY & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

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UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

# Communicating Multidimensional Poverty

Sabina Alkire, 2 Sept 2012

Tabita, Kenya



Rabiya, India



Stephanie, Madagascar



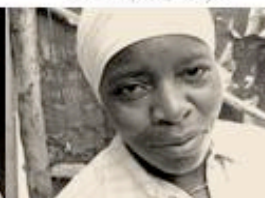
Agathe, Madagascar



Dalima, Kenya



Ann-Sophie, Kenya



Valérie, Madagascar





# COMMUNICATION

It's best to pretend people are actually listening to you.

**Q: How did Free Market Economics go from marginalization to being the dominant school?**

**A: 1. The Best Ideas always win**

**2. Relentless organisation and strategy**

**3. The single example of Chile proved it**

**4. It was chosen by Reagan & Thatcher**

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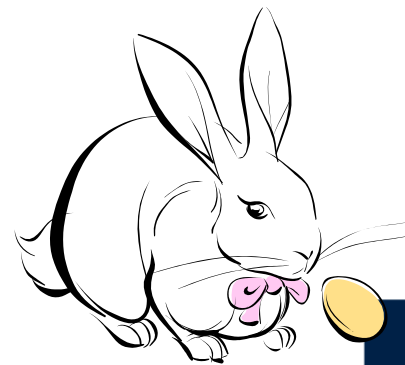
**2. Relentless organisation and strategy**

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**4. It was chosen by Reagan & Thatcher**

# TACTICS OF FREE MARKET ECONOMISTS

1. HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE UTOPIAN
2. TARGET THE 'SECOND-HAND TRADERS'
3. COORDINATE - RESEARCH & POLICY BOTH
4. FOSTER TALENT – INVEST IN PEOPLE
5. LOITER WITH INTENT



# TACTICS

## 1. HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE UTOPIAN

Free market economists describe their path  
as deliberate, strategic, co-ordinated ~  
and built on values:

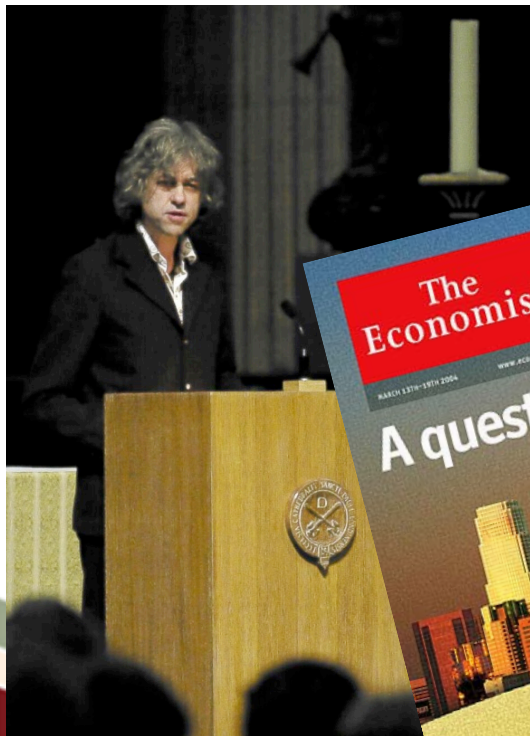


*The main lesson which the true liberal must  
learn from the success of the socialists is  
that it was their courage to be Utopian  
which gained them the support of the intellectuals and therefore an  
influence on public opinion.*

(Hayek, *The Intellectuals and Socialism* 1949)

# TACTICS

## 2. TARGET THE 'SECOND-HAND TRADERS'



# TACTICS

## 2. TARGET THE ‘SECOND-HAND TRADERS’

*We believe that ideas have consequences, but that those ideas must be promoted aggressively.*

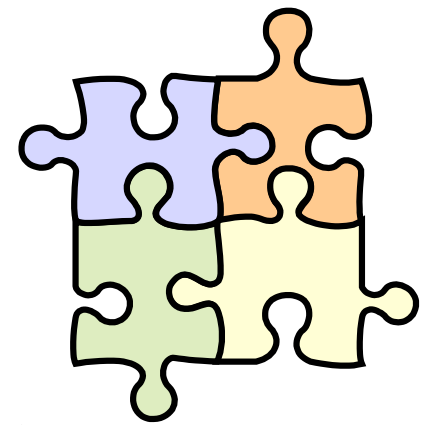
(Hayek, Opening statement to the Mont Pelerin society at its founding).

# TACTICS

## 2. TARGET THE ‘SECOND-HAND TRADERS’:

- journalists, artists, entrepreneurs, clergy, filmmakers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc.
- **Society’s course will be changed only by a change in ideas. First you must reach the intellectuals, the teachers and writers, with reasoned argument. It will be their influence on society which will prevail, and the politicians will follow.** *Hayek 1949, p 84.*

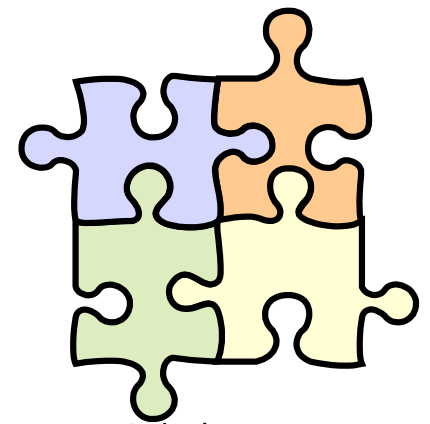
# TACTICS



## 3. COORDINATE - RESEARCH & POLICY



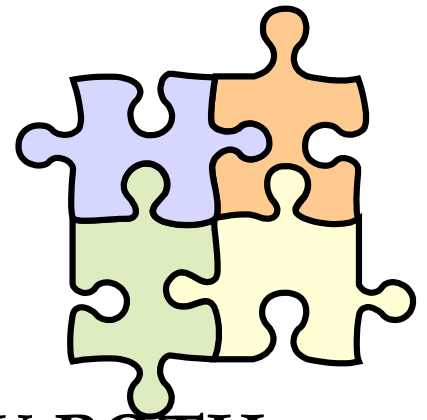
# TACTICS



## 3. COORDINATE - RESEARCH & POLICY BOTH

- *Mont Pélérin* After World War II, in 1947, when many of the values of Western civilization were imperiled, 36 scholars, mostly economists, with some historians and philosophers, were invited by Professor Friedrich von Hayek ... to discuss the state and the possible fate of liberalism (in its classical sense) in thinking and practice...

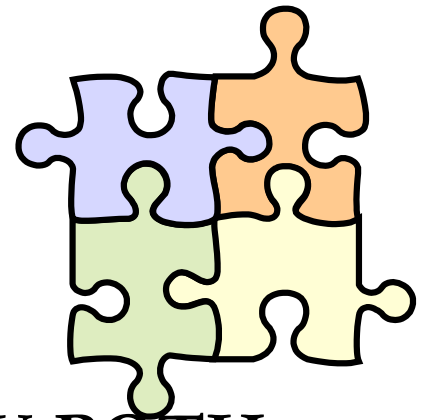
# TACTICS



## 3. COORDINATE - RESEARCH & POLICY BOTH

- The group ...emphasised that it did not intend to create an orthodoxy, to form or align itself with any political party or parties, or to conduct propaganda. Its sole objective was to facilitate an exchange of ideas between like-minded scholars in the hope of strengthening the principles and practice of a free society and to study the workings, virtues, and defects of market-oriented economic systems.

# TACTICS



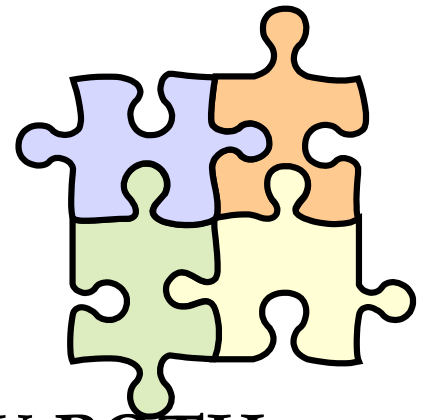
## 3. COORDINATE - RESEARCH & POLICY BOTH

*University of Chicago:* 5 characteristics:

1. a fanatical work attitude
2. firm belief that economics is of the highest relevance
3. emphasis on scholastic and academic achievements,
4. the preparedness to question everything
5. the apparently inspiring isolation of Chicago.

*Overtveldt, 2007: 20*

# TACTICS



## 3. COORDINATE - RESEARCH & POLICY BOTH

*Institute of Economic Affairs:* relationships, skills...

‘Hayek advises Fisher;

Fisher recruits Harris;

Harris meets Seldon.

In nine words, that is the start of the IEA.’

*Blundell: Waging the War of Ideas*

# TACTICS

## 4. FOSTER TALENT – INVEST IN PEOPLE



# TACTICS

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*American Institute for Humane Studies:*

focused on identifying, developing and supporting the very best and brightest young people it can find who are (a) market-oriented and (b) intent on a leveraged scholarly, or intellectual, career path.

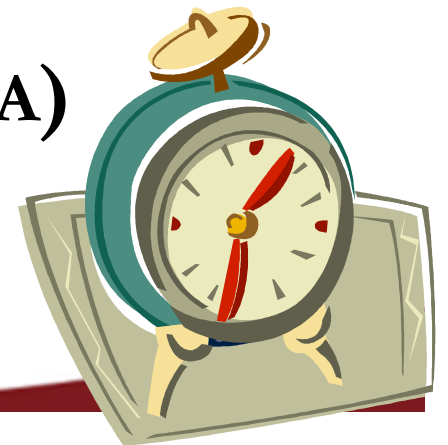
# TACTICS

## 5. LOITER WITH INTENT



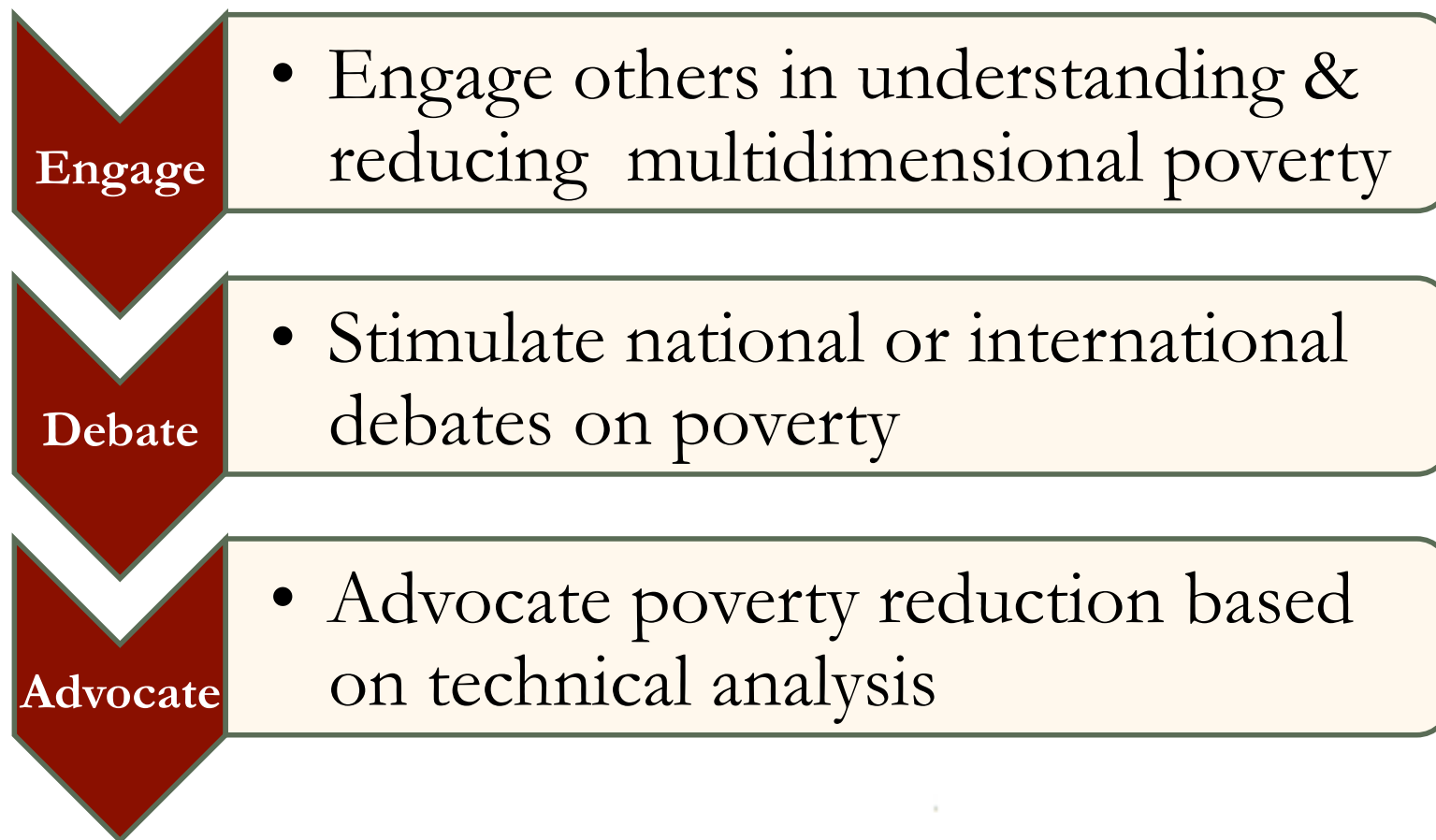
THEN POUNCE.

**(FOOTNOTE: TORTOISES CAN'T POUNCE  
BUT YOU GET THE IDEA)**

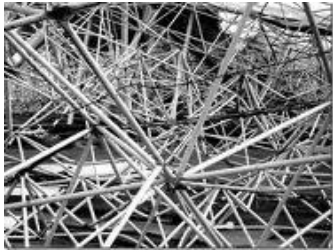


**And now for something  
completely different...:**

# Why communicate your measure at all?



# Challenges and principles



Avoid **complexity**

Avoid **jargon**

alkire-foster cut-offs data datasets  
mpi multidimensional surveys

When you can't, explain, explain, explain

**Humanity** – care about poor people



**Find** the 'memorable' **factoid**  
("you won't believe this but.....")



Design memorable **metaphors**

Make it **exciting & action-oriented**

# Starting points

Building  
blocks



Media

Audience



Curiosity



Outputs &  
channels



# Building blocks: Clarify your aim

- ✓ **Goals:** What do we want to achieve?
  - ✓ Internally?
  - ✓ Locally, Regionally, or Nationally?
  - ✓ Internationally?
- ✓ **Audience:** Who do we need to reach ?
- ✓ **Channels:** How can we reach them?
- ✓ **Messages:** What are our messages?
- ✓ **Products:** What do we need to do to reach them?
- ✓ **Humility:** What is realistic, given our limitations?



# Potential MPI audience

Inside trackers

General Public

2<sup>nd</sup> hand traders in ideas

- Academics
- Development policymakers
- Development practitioners
- Wider public
- Media

# Possible outputs & channels

- ✓ **Reports** (academic & policy-focused)
- ✓ **Events** (yours and using the **platforms** of others)
- ✓ **E-newsletter or email list**
- ✓ **Website and social media outlets**
- ✓ **Media**

# Messages ~What won't work

‘Research university sets up research programme’

‘New institute holds launch event’

Academic gives lecture



# Media diversity ~ focusing in

## Kinds of media

- Print vs. broadcast
- ‘Old media’ vs. New (=digital e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter)
- Blogosphere
- Local/national/regional/transnational
- News vs. entertainment
- Mainstream vs. niche



# Media tactics

Press  
release

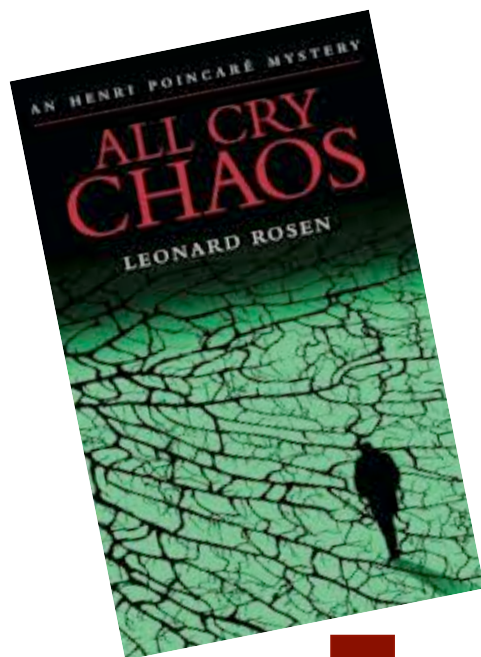
Events

Interview  
ops

Expert  
comment

Letters to  
editor

# Use the simplest word available



TOM GLASS  
—  
SIMPLE STORIES  
FOR COMPLICATED  
PEOPLE

NO	YES
permit	let
purchase	buy
persons	people
exit	way out
demonstrate	show
violate	break
approximately	about
following	after
sufficient	enough
manufacture	make
establish	set up
expenditure	spending
participate	take part
utilise	use

## WHY ENGLISH IS HARD TO LEARN

We'll begin with *box*; the plural is *boxes*,  
But the plural of *ox* is *oxen*, not *oxes*.  
One fowl is a *goose*, and two are called *geese*,  
Yet the plural of *moose* is never called *meese*.

You may find a lone *mouse* or a house full of *mice*,  
But the plural of *house* is *houses*, not *hice*.  
The plural of *man* is always *men*,  
But the plural of *pan* is never *pen*.

If I speak of a *foot*, and you show me two *feet*,  
And I give you a *book*, would a pair be a *beek*?  
If one is a *tooth* and a whole set are *teeth*,  
Why shouldn't two *booths* be called *beeth*?

If the singular's *this* and the plural is *these*,  
Should the plural of *kiss* be ever called *keese*?

We speak of a *brother* and also of *brethren*,  
But though we say *mother*, we never say *methren*.  
Then the masculine pronouns are *he*, *his*, and *him*;  
But imagine the feminine . . . *she*, *shis*, and *shim*!

- ANONYMOUS



# Comms tips

(OPHI's former Research Comms Officer)

- ✓ Make a **Communications plan** (seriously)
- ✓ Ensure plan has the genuine **support** of your Boss
- ✓ Seek **professional comms training**/bring in professional comms expertise
- ✓ Get to know **journalists** and **media-savvy colleagues**
- ✓ **KISS!** [Keep It Simple, Stupid]

# The input of researchers

Figure out what issues are *timely* and *relevant*.

Read the newspapers

Follow policy dialogues & get to know people

Keep asking ‘why my measurement matters’  
to a poor person.

See your work from a ‘users’ perspective

Craft factoids

Design metaphors

Experiment: not everything works.

# Finding ‘factoids’

E.g. – The Poorest of the Poor

E.g. – India vs Africa

E.g. – MPI in Middle Income Countries

E.g. – GDP per capita vs MPI

“How do I wake them up?”



Economics focus

# A wealth of data

A useful new way to capture the many aspects of poverty

Jul 29th 2010 | from the print edition

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doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61125-7 [Cite or Link Using DOI](#)

## Poverty index: who is the poorest of them all?

[The Lancet](#)

In a working paper by the [Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative](#), Oxford, UK, this month, Sabine Akire and Maria

Emma Santos present a new poverty index (MPI). This index measures nutrition, education (years of schooling), education (years of schooling), flooring, cooking fuel, assets

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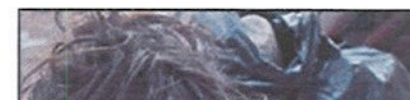
13 July 2010 Last updated at 06:18

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## 'More poor' in India than Africa

Eight Indian states account for more poor people than in the 26 poorest African countries combined, a new measure of global poverty has found.



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Prison 'not linked' to cri



# Finding 'factoids'



## Start from an idea or a controversy:

- MDGs wrongly count countries not people.
- Growth => higher GDP per capita but may not decrease multidimensional poverty.

## Or a question:

- There are more \$1.25/day poor in MICS. Is it true for MPI poverty?

In 2001, 5.7 billion gallons of fuel were wasted – enough to fill 570,000 gasoline tank trucks. If placed end-to-end, the trucks would stretch from New York to Las Vegas and back!

Source:  
2004 Urban Mobility Study



# Finding 'factoids'

Become very Curious  
about your results



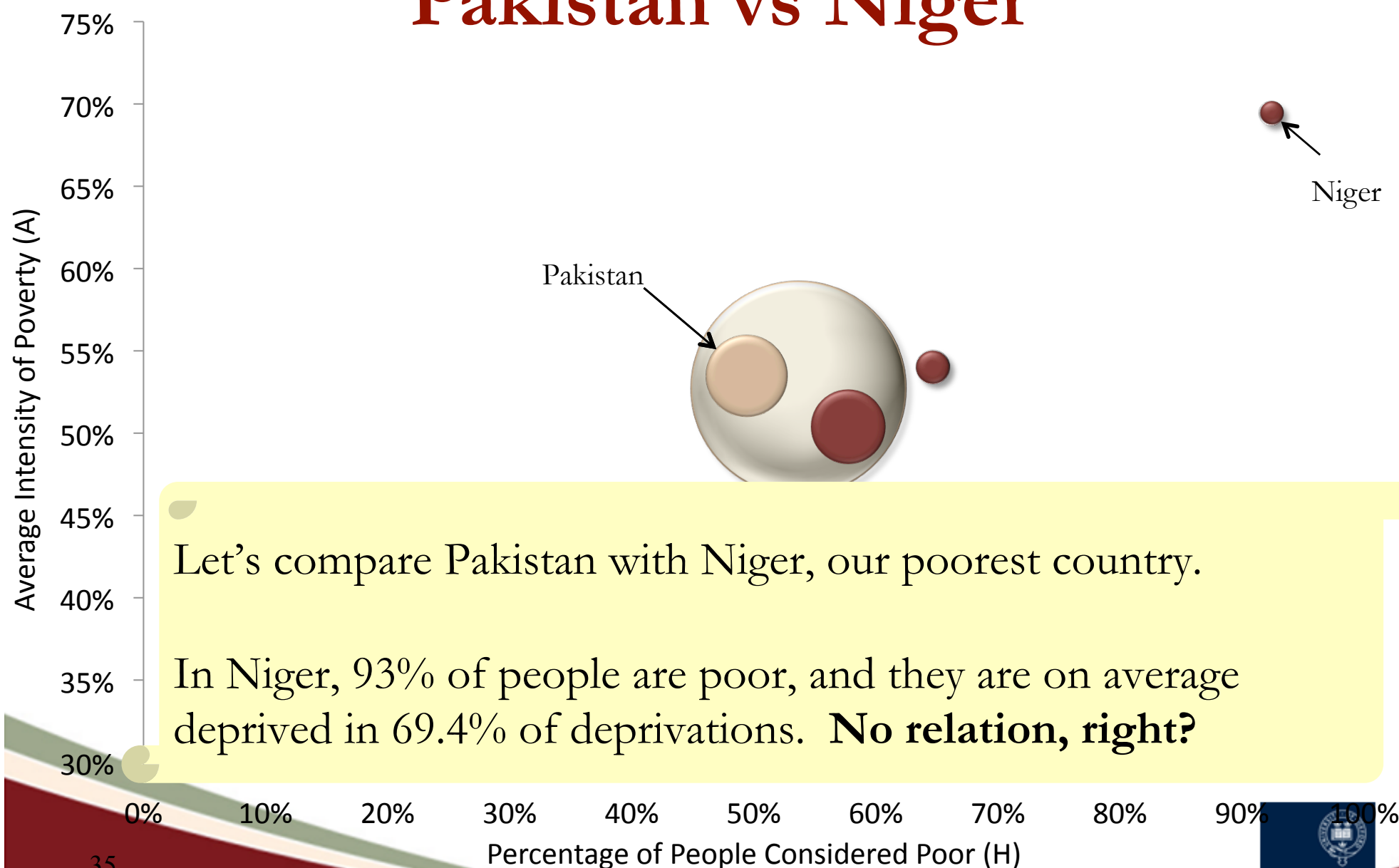
Play with your data.

Find comparisons that are striking or  
unexpected

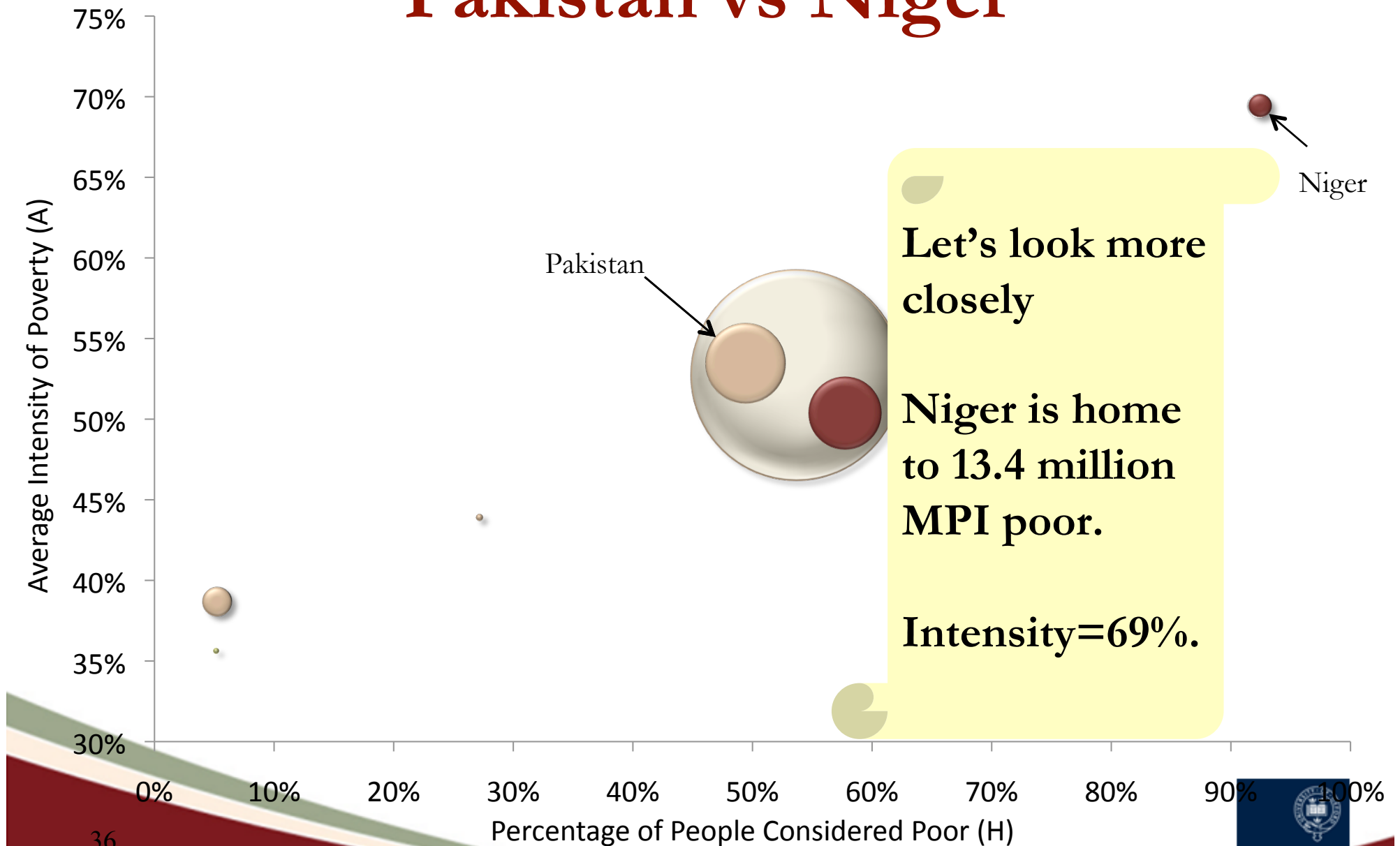
Make sure factoids are 100% accurate and  
academically defensible.



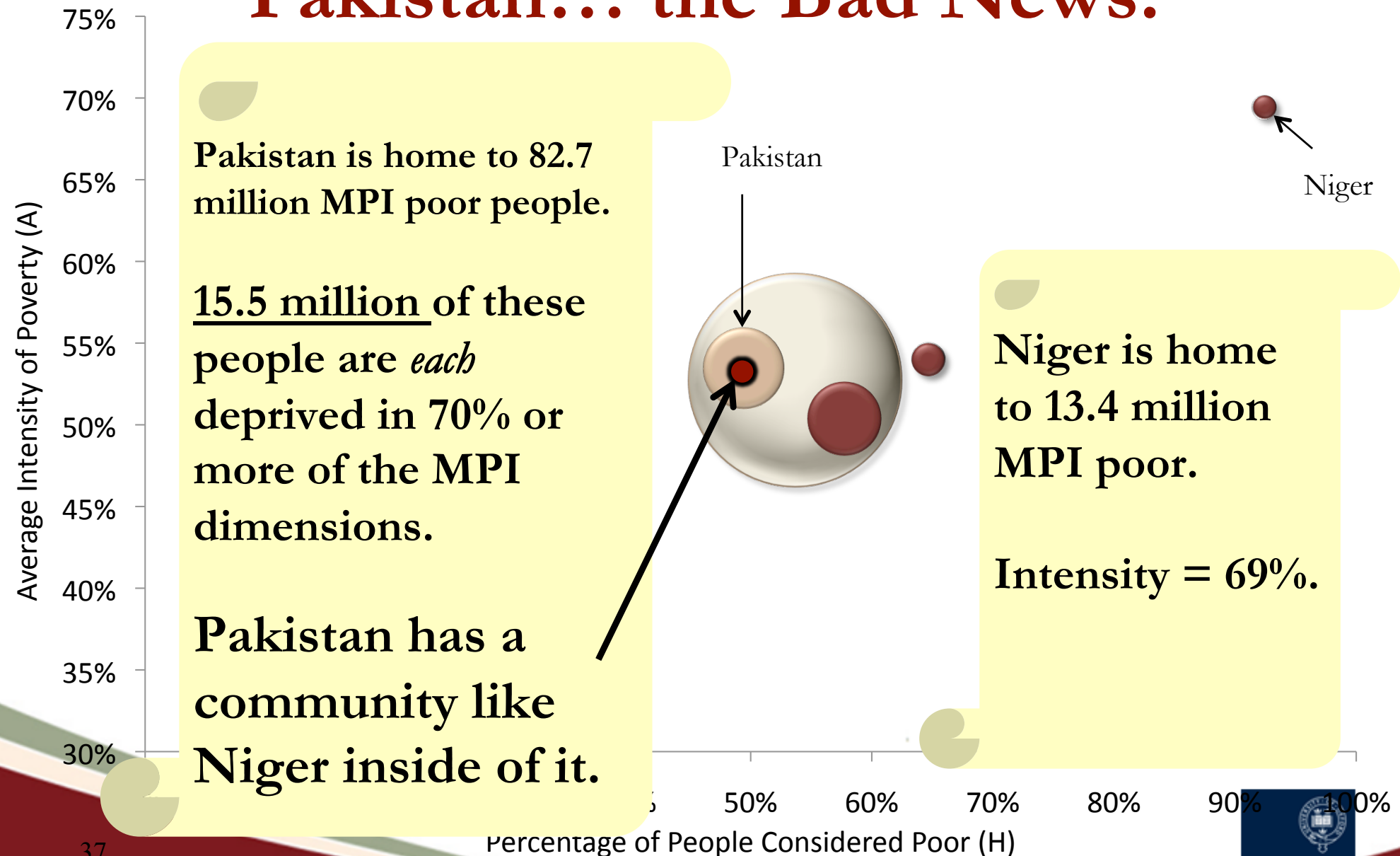
# Pakistan vs Niger



# Pakistan vs Niger



# Pakistan... the Bad News.



# Design Metaphors

**Fact:** They are less passionate about measurement.

**Fact:** They are less worried by details

**Fact:** A catching image is remembered & repeated.

The MPI is like a High Resolution Lens...



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You can zoom in



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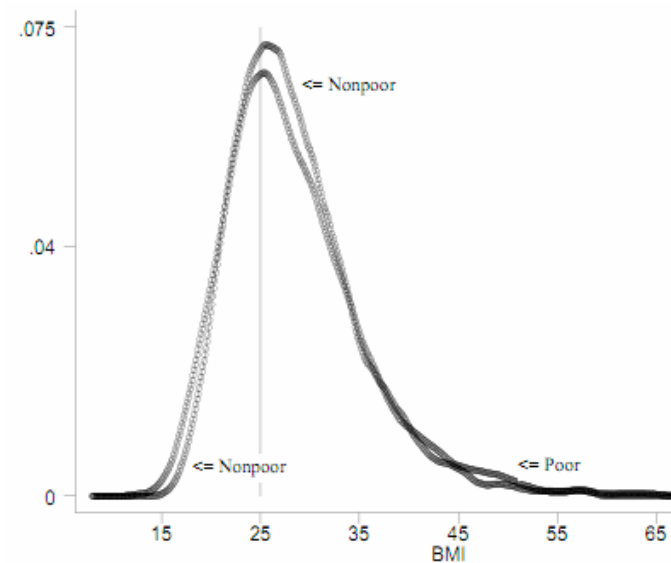


You can zoom in and see more



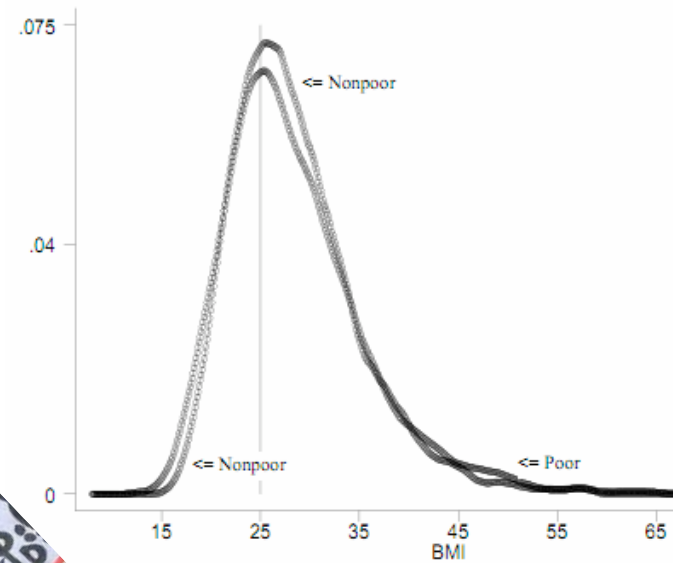
# Design Metaphors

**Headcount tells us  
which people  
are poor.**



# Design Metaphors

Headcount tells us  
which people  
are poor.



MPI also shows  
*how* people are poor.



# Design Metaphors

**The MPI...**



# Design Metaphors

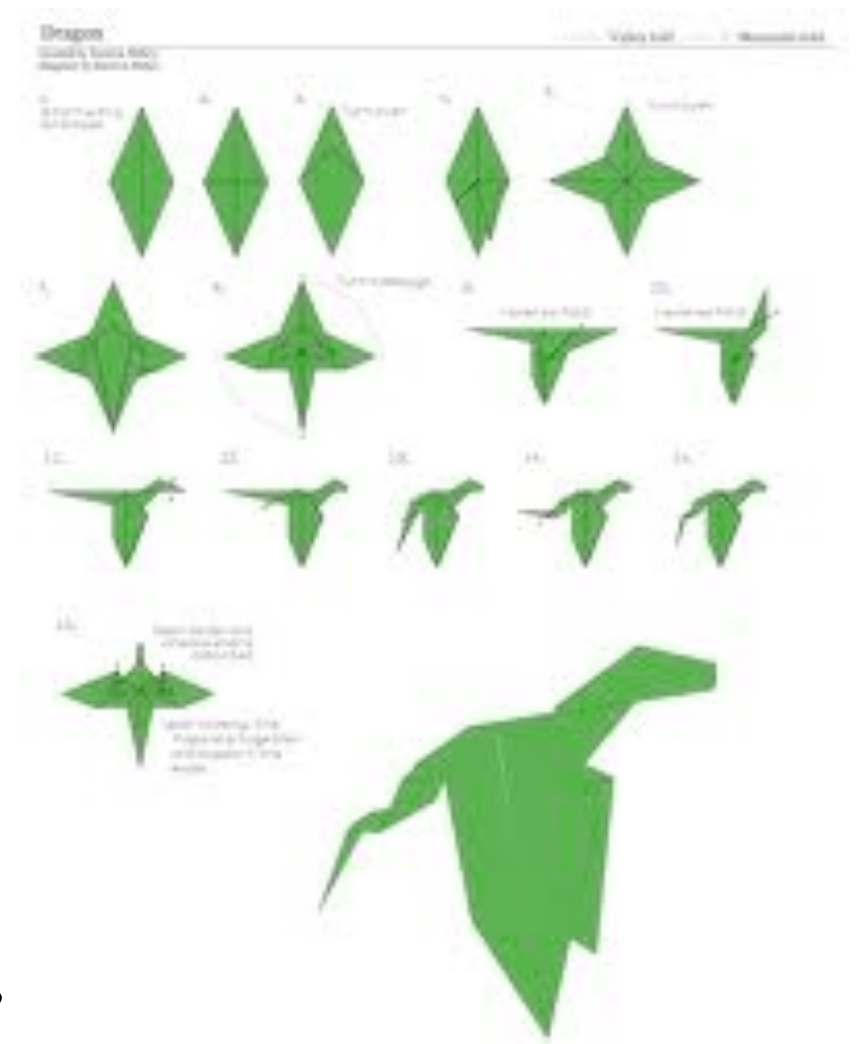
**The MPI...**



**can be unfolded and folded  
in different ways....**

**so you see how it's made...**

**and how it can be  
changed.**



# And what about Normative issues?

What were the most common questions for MPI?

1. Why these dimensions
2. Why these indicators
3. Why *not* these (better) indicators
4. Why these weights
5. Why these cutoffs

# Anticipate and prepare for questions

(memorize or make on a sheet)

Explanation of key ideas

Joint Distribution

Intensity

Normative justifications

Statistical Justifications

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