

Behaviour change as a conditional 'neuroliberal' form of citizenship

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Image: © Marian Bantjes

Neuroliberalism at work in welfare-to-work programmes

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Jobseekers' psychometric test 'is a failure'

US institute that devised questionnaire tells 'nudge' unit to stop using it as it failed to be scientifically validated

Shiv Malik

The Guardian, Monday 6 May 2013 12.39 BST

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The 'nudge' unit piloted the psychometric test in Essex despite being refused permission to do so. It has now been rolled out to other areas. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

An American psychology organisation has told a UK government agency to stop using a personality test on jobseekers because it is a failure.

The Behavioural Insight team, or "nudge" unit, which was created by David Cameron in 2010 to help people "make better choices", has been

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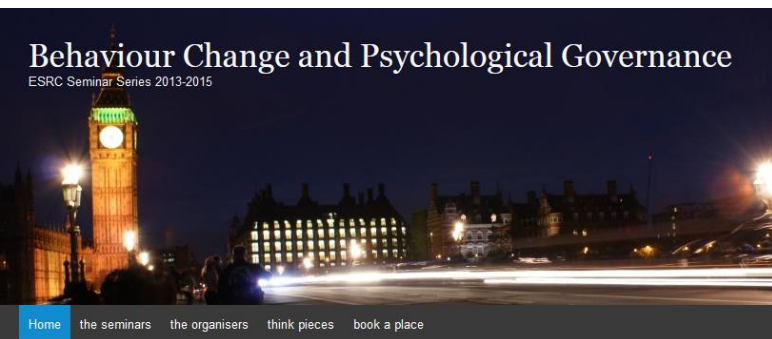
Researching the impacts of the “new” behavioural sciences on public policy

Soft Paternalism blog

A research project blog about the time-spaces of libertarian paternalism



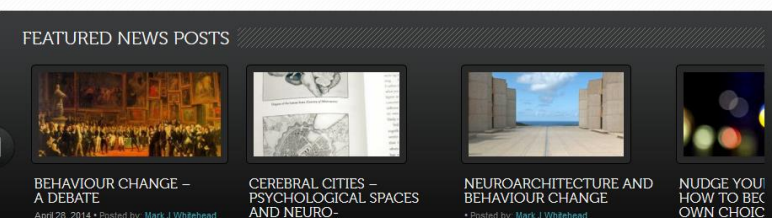
Leverhulme Trust (2008-2011): UK study “The Time-Spaces of Soft Paternalism”



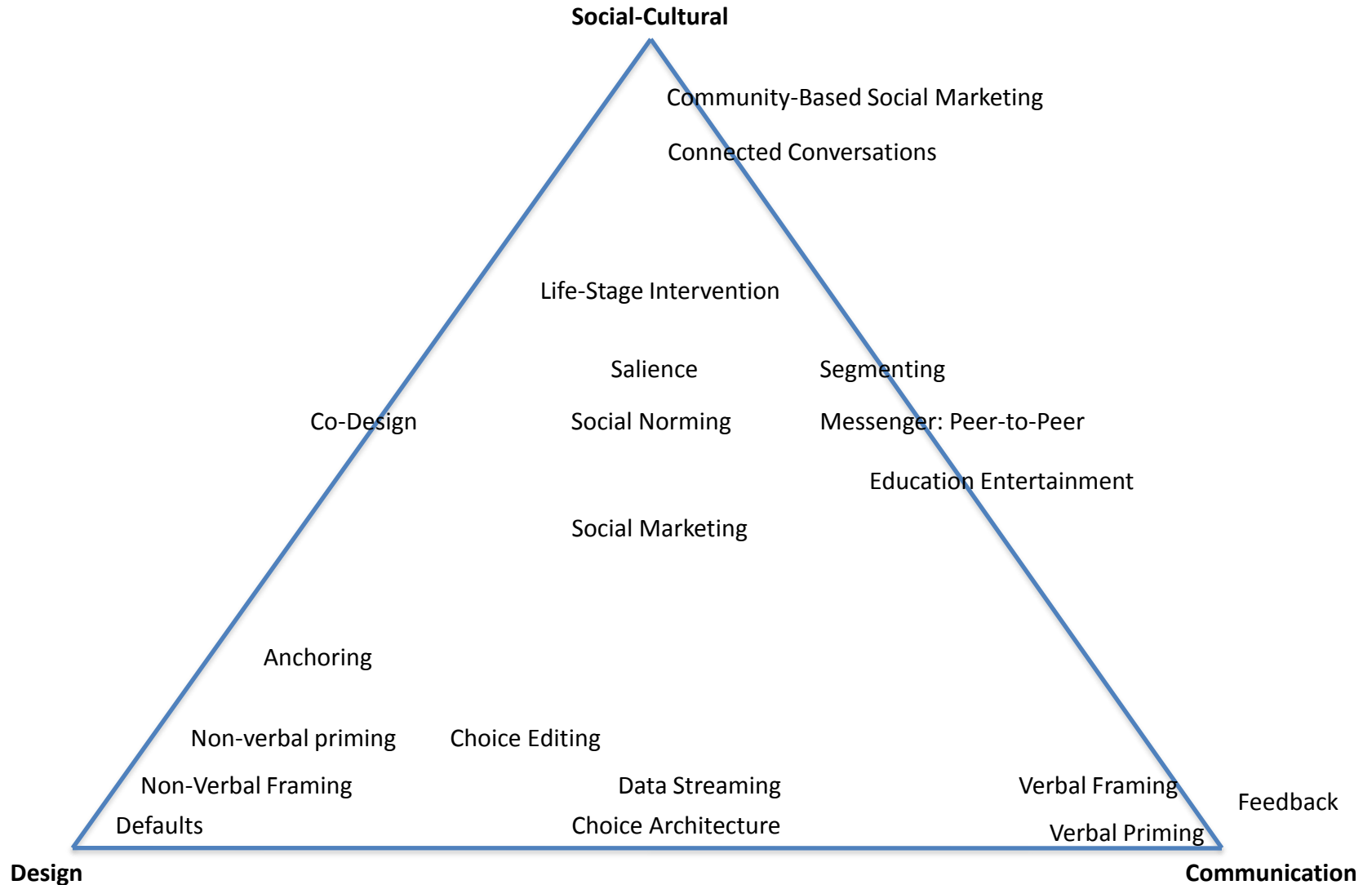
ESRC (2013-2015): Seminar Series “Behaviour Change and Psychological Governance”



ESRC (2013-2015): International study “Transforming Behaviours”



Techniques of behavioural change



Charting the emergence of behaviour change in the UK

- An **anthropological** approach (qualitative interviews with policy strategists)
- A **genealogical** approach (discourse analysis of policy texts)
- A **geographical** approach (how is time-space reconfigured; where do policies emerge; how are they mobile?)

“I asked Danny Kahneman [a Nobel Laureate and a key figure in the field of behavioural economics] if he would drop by ... about 2001–2002 So Danny came in, and we’d invited some people, just for a chat around the table, to talk about these things, because you know I think we should be really interested in this sort of new literature, and he comes in and he says ... I’ve just been sent a draft of this paper, called libertarian paternalism ... and he says it’s really interesting, I think it’s going to be a very important paper, and so that was the first time I came across it.”

Policy strategist,
Cabinet Office,
interviewed Oct 2009

	Academic and popular publications	Policy publications	NGO/Think Tank publications	People and Events
2000-2003	“Libertarian Paternalism is not an oxymoron” (Thaler and Sunstein)			Richard Thaler, David Laibson, Sheena Iyengar and Shlomo Benartzi give talks to the DWP Daniel Kahneman visits the Cabinet Office (2001-2)
2004	The Paradox of Choice (Schwartz); Fooled by Randomness (Taleb)	Personal Responsibility and Behaviour Change (CO) Choosing Health (DH)		Tabloids hail ‘fat tax’ at publication of Personal Responsibility and Behaviour Change. Tony Blair assuages nanny state fears in conference speech Jill Rutter picks up same report at DEFRA and sets up Whitehall group for Behaviour Change
...				NHS Choices established
2012		Applying behavioural insights to reduce fraud, error and debt (BIT) Test, Learn, Adapt: Developing Policy with Randomised Controlled Trials (BIT)	Acceptable Behaviour? Public Opinion on Behaviour Change Policy (Ipsos Mori) Nudging citizens towards localism? (John and Richardson, British Academy) Tax and benefit policy: insights from behavioural economics (IFS)	Sunset Clause to wind up Behavioural Insights Team reviewed by the BIT Steering Board in Summer 2012

From: Jones, R., Pykett, J. and Whitehead, M. (2013) “Psychological governance and behaviour change”. *Policy and Politics* 41: 2, 159-182.

Government departments and policy think tanks promoting Behaviour Change

BIT: Behavioural Insights Team (in Cabinet Office)

HMT: Her Majesty's Treasury

CFEB: Consumer Financial Education Body

CO: Cabinet Office

COI: Central Office of Information

DECC: Department of Energy and Climate Change

DEFRA: Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

DCLG: Department for Communities and Local Government

DfT: Department for Transport

DH: Department of Health

DWP: Department of Work and Pensions

FSA: Financial Services Authority

GSR: Government Social Research

HSJ: Health Service Journal

IfG: Institute for Government

IFS: Institute for Fiscal Studies

IPPR: Institute for Public Policy Research

LGC: Local Government Chronicle

LGID: Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly The IDeA)

LSX: London Sustainability Exchange

NEF: New Economics Foundation

NICE: National Institute of Clinical Excellence

NSMC: National Social Marketing Centre (DH and Consumer Focus)

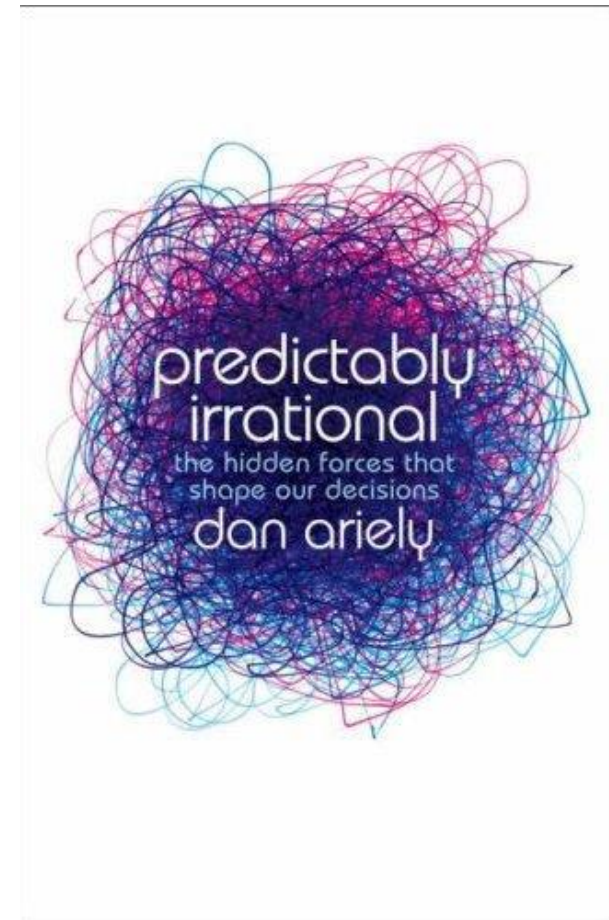
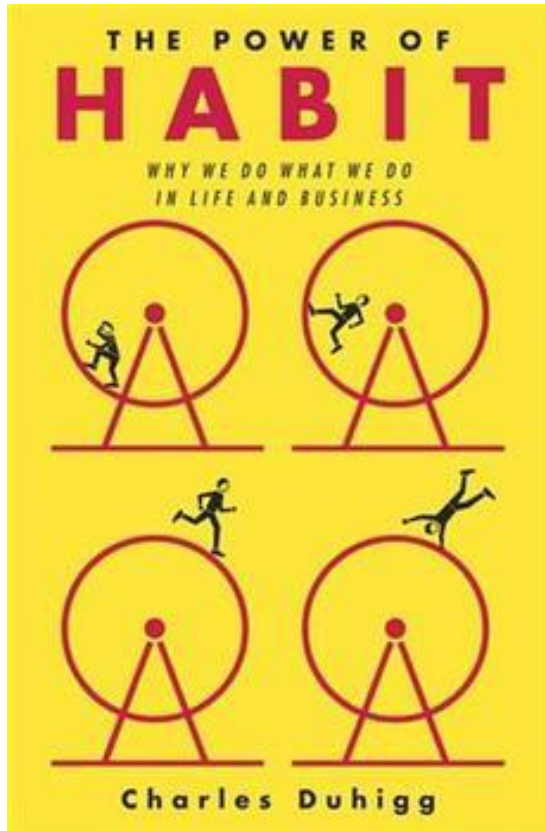
PSI: Policy Studies Institute

SDC: Sustainable Development Commission

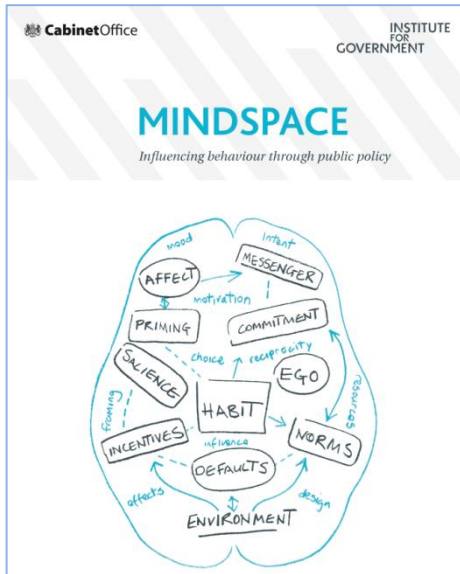
SFT: School Food Trust

SMF: Social Market Foundation

Policies negotiating the (un)conscious



Behaviour changing in the mind



“The Behavioural Insights Team, commonly known as the '**Nudge Unit**', was set up in July 2010 with a remit to find innovative ways of encouraging, enabling and supporting people to **make better choices for themselves**”

Messenger	we are heavily influenced by who communicates information
Incentives	our responses to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts such as strongly avoiding losses
Norms	we are strongly influenced by what others do
Defaults	we 'go with the flow' of pre-set options
Saliency	our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us
Priming	our acts are often influenced by sub-conscious cues
Affect	our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions
Commitments	we seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocate acts
Ego	we act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

Mindspace, Cabinet Office, 2010

The emotionally literate state

“I mean I think that (perhaps it’s just me), but I think that from a behavioural perspective people are intrinsically selfish, which is quite Nudge? I think that economics and the recent experience of economics has also demonstrated that **people are essentially emotionally-driven, irrational...**”

(Department of Health Social Marketing Advisor, interviewed September 2009)

In some ways the most challenging and fascinating stuff in this whole territory [of behaviour change] is once you start asking how do you influence essentially the policy not only of a rational government, but also **unconscious processing systems**

(former Cabinet Office policy strategist (2), interviewed October 2009)

if you do train people, prepare them with **learned optimism skills, resilience skills, cognitive skills** on how to cope with life, they’re much better placed then to make choices which are actually in their interest, and you...may need less law and forcing and libertarian paternalism as well. So I think that one of the other missing chunks in the kind of standard behavioural economics things is that it just ignores that other strand of **[positive] psychology** and there’s now a fairly strong evidence base behind it

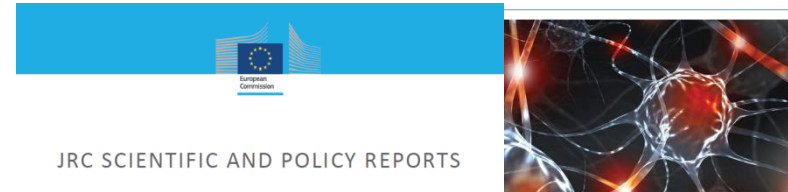
(former Cabinet Office policy strategist (2), interviewed October 2009)

“when I was in government after 97, it’s probably about 2 or 3 years later **I tried finding out who were the experts of psychology and behaviour change in every department** and we did the first exercise (probably in about 2000) of trying to find what..., as I say we were holding meetings across Whitehall with the experts and trying to analyse what was the shared knowledge base in different fields about what did and didn’t work. So in particular we were gathering together the **Central Office of Information who led on their advertising campaign** to drink driving, people from **the educational world** who were trying to persuade 17 year olds to learn more, and DSS (or whatever it was then) on **Welfare to Work**, **DEFRA** on recycling and energy change and so on. It proved pretty hard finding who knew about this and there was **not a shared knowledge base** at all – there was not a shared framework of theory. **There’s a strong set of disciplines in British government, the economists, the social researchers, but not really a psychology or social psychology organised profession**”

former Cabinet Office policy strategist (2),
interviewed October, 2009

Going global...

1. Nudge is more global than you might think.
2. Nudge-type initiatives are prevalent in Less Economically Developed Countries
3. The global spread of the new behavioural sciences is being facilitated by non-governmental international organizations and multinational corporations
4. The insights of the new behavioural sciences are being applied to public policy in very different ways in different places throughout the world.



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MB Comment: Activate your BS detectors: The Gates Foundation's latest project is behavior modification: Vaccination behavior. Apparently, Melinda Gates isn't satisfied with public compliance with Gates' vaccination programs. A puff piece interview in today's Financial Times reveals that the Gatesoids recently held a conference with the
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NGOs and International Bodies promoting Behaviour Change

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Behaviour Works (Australia)

Behavioural Architects

C-Change

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Change Labs

Common Cause

Communication Initiative Network

Corporate Culture

Danish Nudging Network (I Nudge You)

Deutsche Bank

Euro Health Group

European Commission

Global Fund

Greenudge (Norway)

Hiam Health

Hygiene Central

Innovations Lab (Kosovo)

International Labour Office

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Japanese Social Development Fund

John Lewis

Manoff Group

Mindlab

National Social Marketing Centre (UK)

OECD

PATH Foundation

Population Services International (PSI)

Red Cross

Samoa Air

Sanitation and Water For All Partnership

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

SNV

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UNICEF

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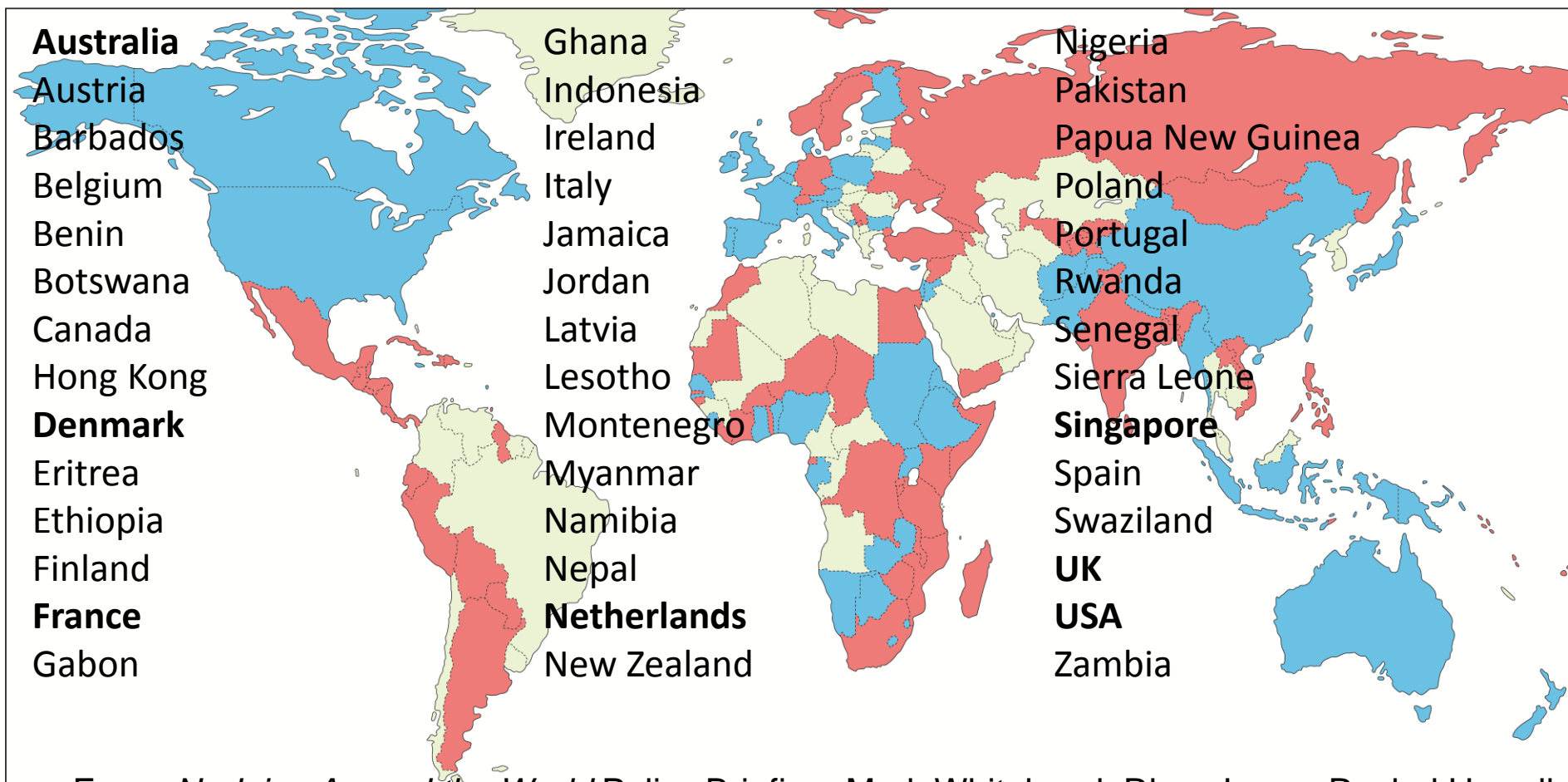
World Diabetes Foundation

World Economic Forum

Nudging around the world

States with centrally orchestrated behaviour change programmes

Ad hoc adoption of nudge-type policies



From: *Nudging Around the World* Policy Briefing, Mark Whitehead, Rhys Jones, Rachel Howell, Rachel Lilley, and Jessica Pykett (available soon from changingbehaviours.wordpress.com/)

Negotiating 'neuroliberalism'

- Governing at the interface of conscious and unconscious thought and action that connects emotional response and rational deliberation
- From neoliberalism to neuroliberalism at the Chicago School (irrationality as a rationale for government)
- Neuroliberal policies are promoted as interventions that simply *work* experimentally