**Intervention logic/theory of change: The origins**

*(Extracted from Origins of the theory of change, Center of Theory of Change, New York)*

*http://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/toc-background/toc-origins/*

Methods such as logframes were a significant advance, providing a framework through which the relationships between a program’s components could be drawn out and articulated. However, US writers such as Weiss, Chen and Patton increasingly highlighted the challenges in evaluating complex social or community change programs when it was not clear precisely what the programs had set out to do or how and therefore difficult to evaluate whether or how they had achieved it (James, 2011).

One organisation which began to focus on these issues was the US based Aspen Institute and its Roundtable on Community Change. The work of the Roundtable led to the publication in 1995 of *New Approaches to Evaluating Comprehensive Community Initiatives*. In that book, Carol Weiss, a member of the Roundtable’s Steering Committee on Evaluation, hypothesized that a key reason complex programs are so difficult to evaluate is that the assumptions that inspire them are poorly articulated. She argued that stakeholders of complex community initiatives typically are unclear about how the change process will unfold and therefore give little attention to the early and mid-term changes that need to happen in order for a longer term goal to be reached. The lack of clarity about the “mini-steps” that must be taken to reach a long term outcome not only makes the task of evaluating a complex initiative challenging, but reduces the likelihood that all of the important factors related to the long term goal will be addressed (Weiss, 1995).

Weiss popularized the term “Theory of Change” as a way to describe the set of assumptions that explain both the mini-steps that lead to the long-term goal and the connections between program activities and outcomes that occur at each step of the way. She challenged designers of complex community-based initiatives to be specific about the theories of change guiding their work and suggested that doing so would improve their overall evaluation plans and would strengthen their ability to claim credit for outcomes that were predicted in their theory. She called for the use of an approach that at first blush seems like common sense: lay out the sequence of outcomes that are expected to occur as the result of an intervention, and plan an evaluation strategy around tracking whether these expected outcomes are actually produced.

Since the publication of Weiss’s book, the use of planning and evaluation using theories of change has increased exponentially among philanthropies, government agencies, international NGOs, the UN and many other major organizations in both developed and developing countries. This has led to new areas of work, such as linking the theory of change approach to systems thinking and complexity. Change processes are no longer seen as linear, but as having many feedback loops that need to be understood. Theories of change are strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning. They are also helping to understand and assess impact in hard to measure areas, such as governance, capacity strengthening and institutional development. Innovations continue to emerge.