

# THEORY OF CHANGE



A thinking and action approach to navigate in the complexity of social change processes

Iñigo Retolaza Eguren



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Together with many partner organisations in developing countries, the **Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Hivos)**, a Dutch NGO, strives for a free, fair and sustainable world in which all citizens - both men and women - have equal access to resources and opportunities for development.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Any systematization process of an experience is the result of collective dynamics, which by their very nature transcend one's own individuality. This guide is not an exception. Therefore, even though I am finally responsible for everything written and proposed here, I have to acknowledge the essential contributions from many people from whom I have learnt and who helped to bring this guide to completion.

On the one hand, I would like to thank the whole Hivos team in Central and South America, and the Netherlands (particularly to Dineke van den Oudenalder, Corina Straatsma and Marjan van Es) for willing to share such a refreshing and innovative learning space over the years. Learning with colleagues from different parts of the world has been a truly enriching experience for me. Special thanks to Marjan van Es for her continuous support and meticulous edition of the final document.

I would also like to thank the Democratic Dialogue Regional Project (Sonia González, Anaí Linares, Scarleth Gomar, Samara Pellecer) from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their ongoing support, help and patience with the delivery of this guide.

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Finally, to everyone who believes that another world is necessary (not only possible!!) and insists on changing it wherever they are. We are in for the long haul.





# FOREWORD

This document aims to be a guide to help to direct the design of a Theory of Change applied to social change processes. However, it is an initial approach that must be furthered based on new experiences and practical applications.

*A handbook is a general text that combines theory and practical information.*

*Jennifer Moon, 2005*

The focus and the contents of the guide emerged from the synthesis of my learning as Theory of Change design process facilitator which has involved social change agents from different Latin American countries. My learning process has been consolidated from different sources and experiences over recent years. Special mention should be made to the learning space offered by Hivos, an international NGO based in the Netherlands. The opportunity that Hivos gave me to facilitate different Theory of Change workshops with some of its counterparts from Southern and Central America was a rich and intense source of learning and inspiration. In the same way, my professional relationship with the Democratic Dialogue Regional Project (DDRP) run by UNDP enabled me to consolidate another important learning space. This time from an action-research approach around dialogue processes applied to different areas: national dialogues focused on public policy formulation and monitoring as well as legislative proposals, facilitating national and regional dialogue spaces on different topics, strengthening capacities of political and social leaders from different countries of the region in dialogue issues, etc. These two areas of experience and knowledge, not being the only ones, are the main source underpinning the contents of the guide presented here.

The document is aimed at the wealth of agents linked to social change and development processes. That is, bilateral donors, grassroots male and female leaders, social and political leaders, NGO officials, community grassroots organizations, social movements, public decision-makers, and other agents involved in social change processes.

It should be pointed out that the Theory of Change focus applied to social change processes seeks to be a thinking-action alternative to other more rigid approaches and planning logics. This is the understanding that as we live in a complex and, at times, conflictive era, we need more flexible instruments that enable our actions to be planned and monitored in complex, emerging and uncertain contexts; always considering a flexible and not a rigid perspective.

In general terms, the guide summarizes the core of the contents and methodological steps that are implemented in a Theory of Change design workshop. As is already known, this thinking-action focus is also applied to institutional coaching processes and to designing social change and development programs.

The first part of the guide describes some theoretical elements to be considered when designing a Theory of Change applied to social change processes. It is obvious that there are many other aspects that have to be taken into account. Nevertheless, some of the ones that I consider to be fundamental based on my experience are summarized here. The second part of the document describes the basic methodological steps to be implemented throughout the process when designing a Theory of Change. In order to reinforce this practical part, a Theory of Change workshop route is attached hereto hoping it will help to illustrate the dynamics to be developed in a workshop of these characteristics.

I would like to stress that this guide has to be taken as a living document which is in constant evolution. I therefore invite the reader to go beyond what is proposed here both in methodological and theoretical terms.

Finally, I would like to express my desire that the guide be used to improve the performance of those organizations and individuals involved in social change processes aimed at helping to establish a fairer and more just world.

***Iñigo Retolaza Eguren***  
*La Paz, Bolivia*  
*April 2011*



*The first dialogue has to do with one's inner Self*

*Javier Medina*

*The process of learning is not, therefore, about the accumulation of material of learning, but about the process of changing conceptions*

*Jennifer Moon*

*The future is a perpetual construction through human interaction and emergent construction derived from it*

*Ralph D. Stacey*

*We are what we think.  
All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world*

*Buddha*

# THEORY OF CHANGE



# THEORY OF CHANGE

## 1. WHY IS A THEORY OF CHANGE NECESSARY?

Nowadays, there is increasingly greater recognition when accepting that we live in a change of era and, therefore, not an era of changes (de Souza 1999). In this change of era, uncertainty, multi-diversity, the paradoxical and contradictory govern the dynamics of our (inter)actions and the emerging configuration of our societies, their States and governing institutions. This is reflected at a personal level, but also at organizational and society levels.

*We need good theories of social change for building the thinking of all involved in processes of development, as individuals, as communities, organizations, social movements and donors.*

*Doug Reeler, 2005*

As a consequence of our mindsets being (de)formed by a modernistic<sup>1</sup> educational and social system, we believe that order and control of the social processes in which we are involved can be achieved. The dogmatic use that many development agents make of the Logical Framework as a development project management tool is a clear example of this. Even today there is a trend to believe in the existence of absolute truths, static, total certainty. And if that were not enough, we continue to believe that the best manner to measure that truth is using quantitative approaches<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, we live in complex and dynamic times that feed off uncertainty and a multi-diversity of relations (identity, economic, social, geographical, political, cognitive, intercultural, institutional, historical, etc.). This fundamental fact has a direct impact on the social change and development processes involving those agents to whom this guide is addressed.

- 1 The modernistic approach is based on the fragmented interpretation and analysis of reality. It is linear (cause and effect have a direct and known relationship) and does not look at complex interdependencies between different factors.
- 2 These are approaches that utilize tools and methods based on supposedly objective ways of looking at reality.



As Edgar Morin would say (1990), “we need some archipelagos of certainty to navigate on this sea of uncertainty”. The thinking-action focus of a Theory of Change seeks to identify those archipelagos of certainty on which we can feed a thinking-action logic that enables us to navigate through the complex ocean of social change.

A Theory of Change allows us to organize our thoughts and configure abstractly, and based on our knowledge and experience, those conditions needed to achieve the desired change in a given context. This is partly done by making our assumptions explicit and by analyzing them critically; those very same assumptions that govern our way of thinking, learning and our knowledge generation. In short, we need to make critically explicit those assumptions that we use to understand reality and, therefore, to act in it. Seen from a Theory of Change perspective, this emphasis on making assumptions explicit is fundamental in any social change and learning process. Whether using a learning question (*How do we understand and learn about reality? How do the different agents involved in multi-agent processes learn?*) or a political question (*What are the real arguments used by the different agents when proposing a reality in comparison to another? What are the underlying interests different stakeholders have? How do they position themselves based on their identity and interests?*).

---

*There is a need to observe and understand the change processes that already exist in a living social system. If we can do this before we rush into doing our needs analyses and crafting projects to meet these needs, we may choose how to respond more respectfully to the realities of existing change processes rather than impose external or blind prescriptions based on assumed conditions for change.*

*Doug Reeler*

Basically, social change processes want to take us to a place where we have never been before. The agents involved imagine and visualize the future reality in a way that is not possible to fully understand at present. This is partly due to a fundamental fact: we project our possible futures based on the mindsets we have at present day, so there are many aspects of the future impossible to grasp or visualize with the learning tools we currently have. That is why we need to develop new capacities to learn from the future as it emerges (Scharmer 2007).

We could almost say that working for social change is an act of faith. We believe that we will reach a better place by following a certain logic and change action. And we believe that we will better reach that desired change situation by acting on a series of conditions existing in the environment. That conviction about the possibility of a future that we believe to be better is a great driving force to be celebrated. The problem emerges when our conviction becomes dogma and we start believing that our future paradigm is the only viable and desirable one.

On the other hand, developing a Theory of Change (ToC) provides us with a tool for monitoring our actions and hence opens the space for accountability to ourselves and to those stakeholders involved in the process. The systematic use of a ToC as a process monitoring tool helps us to i) (un)learn and be constantly aware of the need to review and update the assumptions we use to initially configure our ToC; ii) re-read and simplify the complex nature of the context we live in and weigh up whether the initially established change conditions are maintained or on the contrary we need to set new conditions and define new assumptions; iii) (re)define new strategies that help us to face effectively and in the best way possible what is mentioned in the above points.

*A good Theory of Change helps us to handle complexity adequately without falling into over-simplification.*

*Doug Reeler, 2005*

When this prospective exercise is also carried out with the participation of other stakeholders involved in the process, the quality of the exercise is enriched as we are able to incorporate a multi-diversity of approaches, opinions, assumptions, interests and knowledge that helps us to construct a (more) shared view of reality and, therefore, of the change process that we are undertaking and which affects one and another of us in the same and different way. On the other hand, the very act of including stakeholders from different political and identity-based positions ensures that the exercise helps in the political process of achieving coordinated action agreements based on shaping (and negotiating) shared meanings.

Necessarily, it has to be stressed that this change logic must be shared with the different actors, or at least it should honestly and intelligently consider what the other actors think or require. The reality is holographic<sup>3</sup>, multi-stakeholder. It is holographic since we start from the premise that we are social beings and, therefore, our identity and view of reality comprises and is made up by other visions, by a greater Whole to which our own fragmented view belongs. Multi-stakeholder, because we want to live in a participatory and inclusive world where the different interests and needs are included and recognized. Therefore, and by democratic imperative, reality forces us to relate with each other in an inclusive and dialogic manner.

That is, a holographic and democratic view of relations not only invites us to relate with others in a more harmonious way, but it also has implications regarding how we relate with our own inner Self: the Whole lives in our (fragmented) self and vice versa.

Therefore, we are compelled to consider this social, historical, political and economic inter-dependency between different factors and actors. When failing to do so, we cannot achieve profound transformational changes but sterile and hypocritical ones. Even today we are reluctant to practice what we preach. That is the fundamental challenge when facilitating and participating in social change processes embedded in conflictive and complex contexts.

3 A holographic approach considers that the Whole is present in every part of that Whole; and on the other hand, it claims that every part comprises the Whole. For example, holographically speaking, in every father there is a son, a daughter, a grandson and everybody else belonging to that family. On the other hand, there is no way we can understand from an individual perspective what comprises a family without considering the complex and interactive dynamics integrating that (whole) family.



## 2. WHAT IS A THEORY OF CHANGE?

In short, a Theory of Change is:

- A **conscious and creative visualization exercise** that enables us to focus our energy on specific future realities which are not only desirable, but also possible and probable
- A **set of assumptions and abstract projections** regarding how we believe reality could unfold in the immediate future, based on i) a realistic analysis of the current context, ii) a self-assessment about our capabilities of process facilitation, and iii) a critical and explicit review of our assumptions.
- A **thinking-action approach** that helps us to identify milestones and conditions that have to occur on the path towards the change that we want to contribute to happen.
- A **multi-stakeholder and collaborative experiential learning exercise that encourages the development of the flexible logic needed** to analyze complex social change processes.
- A **semi-structured change map** that links our strategic actions to certain process results that we want to contribute to happen in our immediate environment.
- A **process tool** that helps us to monitor consciously and critically our individual and also collective way of thinking and acting.



## 3. WHAT IS NOT A THEORY OF CHANGE?

It is as important to differentiate ToC from other approaches as to define what it is not. Therefore, a ToC is not:

- An **absolute truth** of how change has to happen, of how it is going to occur or even of how we want it to occur.
- A **definitive recipe** that helps to eliminate the uncertainty existing in complex and emerging social processes.
- A **substitute of the Logical Framework** as a rigid planning tool.

## 4. GUIDELINES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF SOCIAL CHANGE PROCESSES

Some conceptual tips that help to consolidate the substantive analysis of our Theory of Change are set out below.

### 4.1. TYPES OF CHANGE

We start from an initial premise regarding the different types of change<sup>4</sup> that occur in our environment.

#### *The paradigm paradox*

*We need our paradigms to make sense of the world, yet because of these we become trapped or constrained.*

*Dana Zohar, 1997*

- *Emerging changes.* They occur as our life unfolds every day. They are adaptive and irregular processes based on experiential learning, and occur as the result of the unexpected and/or non-planned changes that emerge from the dynamics called Life.
- *Transformative changes.* Crisis and stagnation prepare the ground for change. This type of change is based on un-learning and liberating oneself from those mindsets, relations, identities, formal and non-formal institutions, etc. which hinder and delay the probability of enacting new realities that are more just and fair in economic, social and political terms.
- *Projectable changes.* Changes based on complicated or simple problems that can be resolved by means of specific projects and actions planned from a linear logic.

In general terms, a Theory of Change focuses on analyzing and proposing relevant actions to *transformative changes*, which are more complex in nature and which require flexible thinking-action logic from our side. *Projectable changes* are those that can be managed using a project logic: the Logical Framework or the Balanced Scorecard as a planning and analysis tool. It is important to explain this initial starting premise, as actions for transformative change are often put forward from a project change logic. We have to avoid falling into that logic trap. Fluid and flexible thought logic (Riso 2007) prevails in the second case (transformative changes). A rigid logic dominates in the third case (projectable changes).

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4 Adapted from Reeler D, 2005



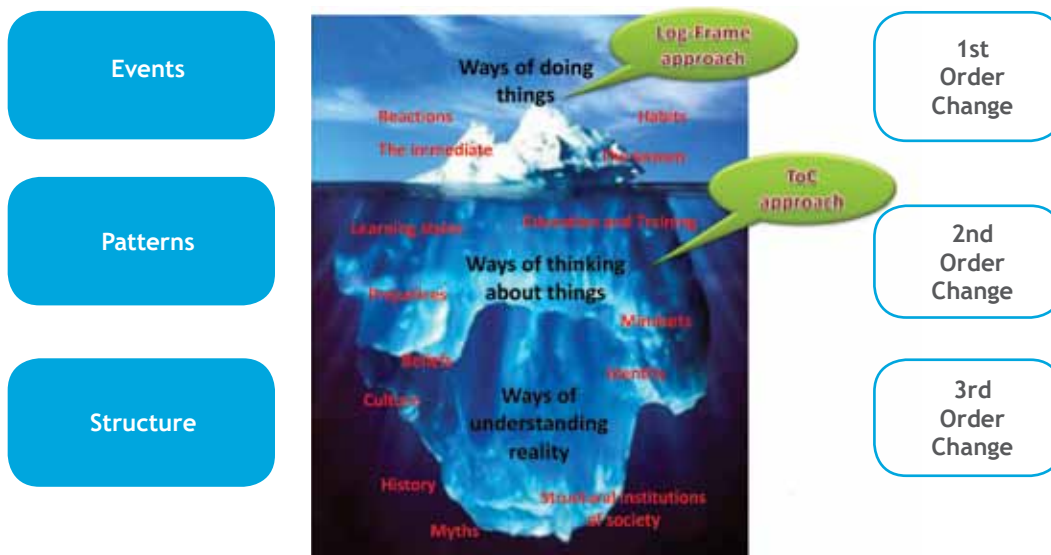
## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

- What type of change are we visualizing?
- How can we develop a more flexible thought logic?
- What are the implications of using rigid logic to facilitate complex social change processes?

### 4.2. LEVELS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

In order to analyze and develop the design of our Theory of Change it is necessary to clearly identify the level of change that we want to attain. At the same time, we must be aware of the system/level from which we depart and at which level we propose the changes to happen.

The logic of the Theory of Change develops from an understanding of the premises that we use to understand and act on reality. In general terms, this means that we start from level 2 in order to effect change at level 1 and level 3. We do so by articulating thought with action. The process of designing a Theory of Change emphasizes changing the paradigm from which we define reality. Consequently, action taken to transform reality will derive from looking at reality in a new way. In other words, when approaching from a different perspective our thinking and action regarding the resolution or management of complex problems, we assume to be able to achieve different (and better) results than we could have accomplished without this paradigm shift.



Operational question: How can we do better what we are already doing?

Epistemological question: How do we know what we are doing is correct?

Ontological question: How do we determine what is correct?



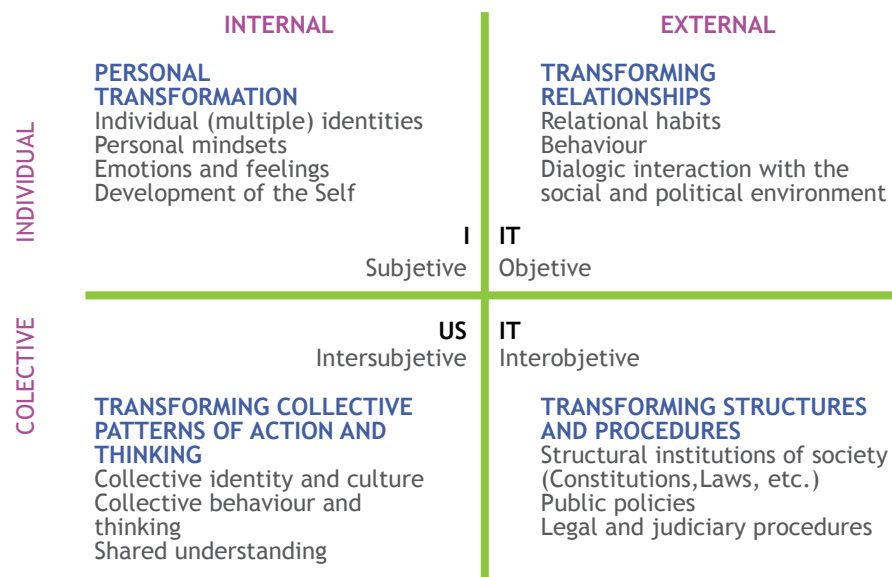
## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

- On which levels do we want to generate change?
- How influential is our way of thinking when it comes to facilitating processes of social change?
- What relationship patterns do we need to develop in order to make our Theory of Change useful to our purposes?
- What social and cultural factors do we need to consider when it comes to designing our Theory of Change?

### 4.3. DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Any change process requires a comprehensive thinking and action approach that makes it possible to attain conditions that are sustainable and at the same time maintain and nurture the change process.

The diagram below makes it possible to generate an analysis that is more comprehensive and related to the strategic approach needed to achieve success as a result of implementing the initiatives proposed by our Theory of Change. In other words, we suggest integrating different types of initiatives to help frame our action in a more integrated and articulated way. This allows us, on the one hand, to propose a more integrated institutional action; and, at the same time, to develop a more collaborative and articulate relationship with other initiatives led by other actors which are already underway.



Adapted from Wilber 1996, 2007; Thomas 2006; Retolaza 2008b



Here are some examples of different initiatives that relate to the four dimensions:

- i. *Transforming the Self*: individual training and self-reflection according to context and experience, activities to encourage the practice of reflection in a professional setting (reflexive practice), recognition and management of multiple identities, identification and modification of one's mindsets, introspection and personal development (psychotherapy, meditation, yoga, bio-dancing, shamanic practices, spiritual and residential retreats, self-knowledge techniques, self-learning journeys, etc.)
- ii. *Transforming our relationships*: Creation and facilitation of spaces for multi-stakeholder encounters, spaces for dialogue, initiatives to coordinate agendas among multiple actors, spaces for deliberation and public conversation, resolution and/or management of relational conflicts, exchange of experiences based on situational contexts, participatory action-learning processes, learning peers, etc.
- iii. *Transforming cultural patterns*. Campaigns to raise awareness and mass communication, advocacy towards opinion forming media, changes in the collective perception of others (i.e. racism, discrimination based on identity, social acceptance of homosexuality), actions aimed at specific segments of the population depending on the situation (e.g. intra-family violence and its effect on husbands, wives, sons and daughters), activities designed to modify cultural and social patterns of exclusion or dysfunctional collective habits, etc.
- iv. *Transforming structural institutions*. Support for constitutional change processes, lobby on key legislative reforms, promotion of social control processes related to public policy, support for decentralization processes aimed at social development and the eradication of poverty, educational and health reforms, change of economic models, change and/or creation of formal and non-formal institutions, etc.



#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

- What dimension of change predominates in the action of our organization?
- What are the implications of concentrating on one sole dimension of change?
- How do we integrate the different dimensions in our Theory of Change?
- What type of activities or initiatives can we develop for each dimension of change?
- What alliances do we need to put in place so to approach our processes in a more comprehensive way?

#### 4.4. INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Briefly and for our purposes, we consider institutions to be the rules of the game that determine the government of a society or a specific social group (e.g. ethnic groups, clans, social associations, etc.), including a specific organization.

Normally, these institutions rely on mechanisms that fulfill and require realization of a series of norms put in place to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the common good. In themselves, these norms are quite rigid and difficult to change over time.

*Institutions are structures and mechanisms of social order and cooperation governing the behavior of a set of individuals within a given human collectivity. Institutions are identified with a social purpose and permanence, transcending individual human lives and intentions, and with the making and enforcing of rules governing cooperative human behavior.*

*Wikipedia (accessed 12 July 2010)*

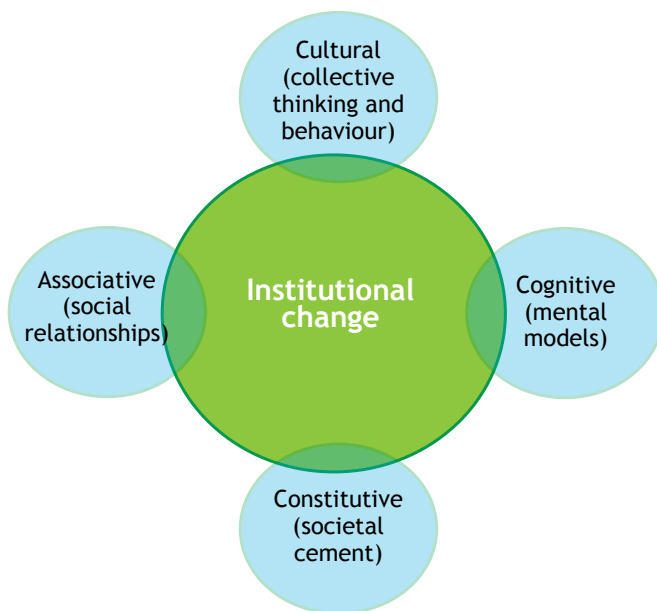
Basically, there are two types of institutions: formal and non formal.

- i. Formal institutions.* Those that are based on written norms and that rule relations and formal procedures that govern a society as a whole (i.e. political constitution of the State, laws, statutory regulations, ministerial decrees, etc.) or a specific social or corporative group (i.e. administrative-bureaucratic procedures of a company or producers association, established by statute or internal regulations)
- ii. Non formal institutions.* Those persons, mechanisms, intangible and unwritten dynamics that govern a society or social group (i.e. public sector corruption, consensual legal systems based on customary law, relations based on kinship or patronage, homophobia and misogyny, community based reciprocity, discrimination and racism, Gandhi in India, motherhood and the family, etc.)

At the same time, it is important to highlight four groups of institutions that determine the intensity and sustainability of the processes of social change (adapted from Voeten and Parto, 2005):

- i. Cultural institutions:* those that determine collective thinking and behavior (carnivals, national celebrations, dance, music, folklore, traditions, etc.)
- ii. Associative institutions:* those that govern social relations and collective action (fraternities, family clans, social movements, social networks, sports clubs, etc.)





Adapted from Voeten and Parto 2005

*iii. Constitutional institutions:* those that set the standards for the norms that cement societies (Constitution of the State, public policies, laws, religion, family, etc.)

*iv. Cognitive institutions:* those that determine the configuration of collective and individual ways of thinking (ethno-cultural collective beliefs, social prejudices, educational systems, mass media, etc.)

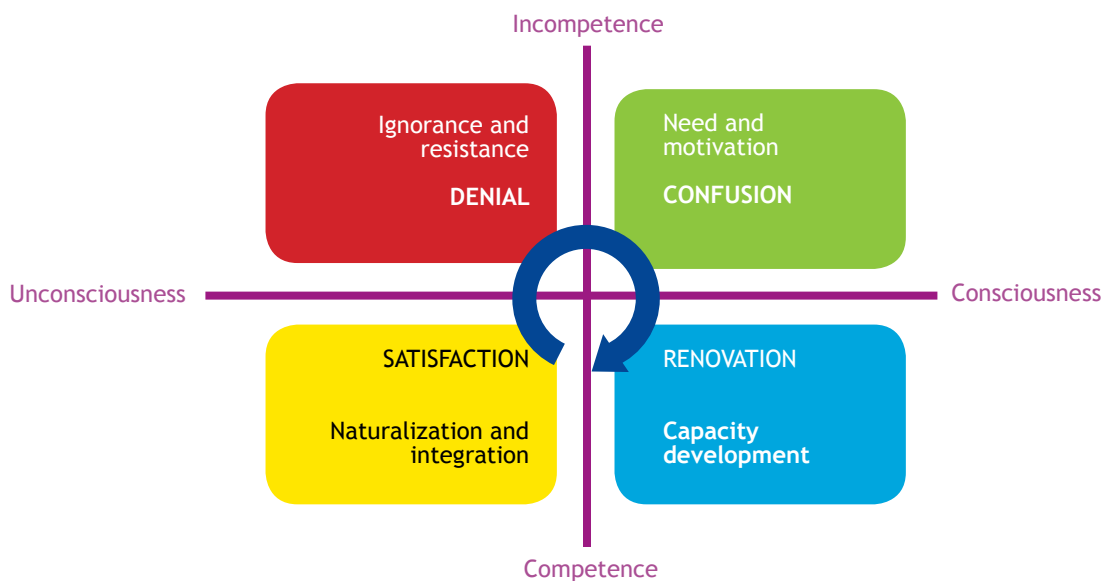
#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

- In our context, which institutions need to be transformed?
- Which formal and/or non formal institutions can help us to speed up our change process?
- What could be the points of departure for institutional change in our Theory of Change?
- How do the formal and non formal institutions interact and shape our organization/society?

#### 4.5. PHASES OF A CHANGE PROCESS

Change processes are dynamic, impermanent. That is, they evolve as a result of dynamic and emergent interactions that continuously go through different stages. Although we may plan to promote actively certain interactions and change processes, the result emerging from them is quite uncertain and cannot be fully controlled. To simplify and didactically illustrate this dynamic sequence, it can be said that, in one way or another, every process of change passes through four main phases:

- i. *Satisfaction phase (unconscious competence)*: where no change dynamics are created since, and yet, there is no consciousness of the need for change. People have acquired and integrated a series of mental models, behaviors, institutional practices, cultural habits, relational dynamics, etc. and do not feel that it is pertinent or necessary to be changed. The system<sup>5</sup> is balanced well enough to make for a certain stability and consistency. In social and political terms, there may be differences between actors in the satisfaction phase: some actors may be satisfied, while others are not. In this case, the system will stay in the satisfaction phase until an unsatisfied critical mass pushes toward change.
- ii. *Denial phase (unconscious incompetence)*: there is a perception that something is not working well and there already is a disjunction between what is and what ought to be. Yet, there is resistance to changing the *status quo* for fear of the unknown, behavioral and intellectual inertia, or for what is anticipated to be an unwanted reconfiguration of the power structure. A breach in the balance of the system is visible but there is great tension and resistance that impede progress toward a realignment of the elements of the system; and, in the end, of their relationship to each other.



Source: author's own elaboration after Lucas 2001, Weisbord & Janoff 2007

5 System (from Latin *systema*, in turn from Greek *σύστημα*): "whole compounded of several parts or members, system", literary "composition"[1]) is a set of interacting or interdependent entities forming an integrated whole. The concept of an 'integrated whole' can also be stated in terms of a system embodying a set of relationships which are differentiated from relationships of the set to other elements, and from relationships between an element of the set and elements not a part of the relational regime. (Wikipedia, accessed 12 July 2010)



iii. *Confusion phase (conscious incompetence)*: the actors are motivated to undertake change once initial resistance is overcome. This may happen because those actors who were satisfied can no longer stay in that phase due to the pressure of an unsatisfied critical mass demanding change (extrinsic motivation). Or else, a set of individuals feels the need for change due to their personal situation (poverty, exclusion, etc.) and come together claiming for change (intrinsic motivation). Nevertheless, it is not too clear how to progress or what direction to take because the process of change is so new, unknown, and uncertain. Different actors are not able to agree on what the path for change is. Or else they may find themselves lacking the competence to undertake the desired change and need to develop new capacities for change. This is a moment of major vulnerability for the actors, given the consequences of finding themselves out of their individual political, cognitive-emotional and relational comfort zones. This is the moment of major cognitive dissonance between what is known and what is perceived to be the need to be learned/known. The conscious recognition of the lack of knowledge of what should be known creates anxiety. The same is true when recognizing the need to change a specific political position: there is knowledge of the need to move toward another position but it is still not sufficiently clear what this new position might be. The system is very dispersed which makes for chaotic conditions. Here there is a need to help actors find a way forward by developing future scenarios, opening cooperative learning spaces, facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue spaces, etc. At this stage, social change process facilitators have a key role in managing anxiety and allowing new and collaborative dynamics between different actors; so to build up trusting relationships and a shared meaning of what has to be known and done.

iv. *Renovation phase (conscious competence)*: starting from the explicit and conscious need to develop new alternatives, there is movement toward a virtuous dynamic supported by a critical mass. The need for change is individually and socially accepted; and this new context helps the development of those conditions needed for the desired change to happen. There is the start of a change process, transformation and renewal that achieves to consolidate the foundations for change. The system is able to reconfigure the dynamic of equilibrium and, gradually, there is progress toward a new order. This order is based on an active equilibrium which means that no system stays static but has a tendency to move in different directions, away from a static equilibrium. There is chaos and order (the so called chaordic stage) and actors need to manage this dynamic equilibrium by coming together and agreeing on how the system moves.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

- How can we communicate the need for change to those around us?
- What are the points of resistance that we find in ourselves and others?
- What are the causes of resistance to change?
- What strategies are we going to implement in order to move from a state of confusion to one of renovation?
- How can we facilitate the creation of conditions to sustain the new changes?

### 4.6. PARTICIPATION AND POWER IN THE CHANGE PROCESS

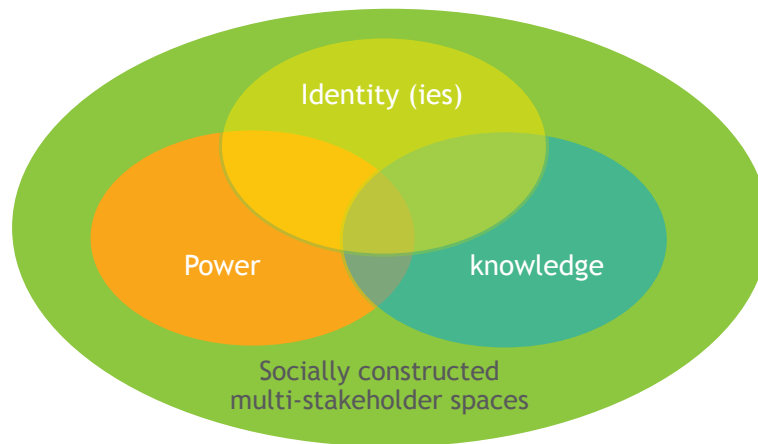
In every participatory process there is a direct relation between the exercise of power, the knowledge base and the identity(ies) that condition the positioning and interests of the actors involved. As we shall see, different actors can exercise power in many different ways. Some dynamics of power can help to integrate in a (more) horizontal and inclusive manner the different types of knowledge that exist among the actors who participate in the process. In contrast, an oppressive use of power by the powerful can restrict the possibility of recognizing and acknowledging as valid and relevant certain identities and types of knowledge. For example i) the non recognition and inclusion of indigenous knowledge in decision-making processes dominated by Western-minded government bodies or those with discriminatory proclivities, ii) not placing value on and not incorporating women's knowledge when it comes to policy making directed to these social groups, and iii) the refusal by municipal authorities and technicians to consider citizen initiatives as alternatives to official proposals concerning the disposition of public roads, social policies, or the construction of neighborhood parks (urban planning), etc.

The level of democracy (thus, the level of inclusiveness of ongoing power dynamics and structures) in the social space in which the processes of social change take place condition and even determine the quality of interactions between different bodies of knowledge and identities. Therefore, a more democratic institutional setting will allow for a more horizontal relationship between actors who hold different positions, identities and knowledge base. This is true for many countries where non-indigenous identities govern the society, impeding the recognition and inclusion of indigenous identities and their knowledge base. This could be the same case for societies where GLBT<sup>6</sup> population is rejected by a heterosexual majority in power, which hinders a more open and inclusive legislation, for instance.

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6 GLBT: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transexual





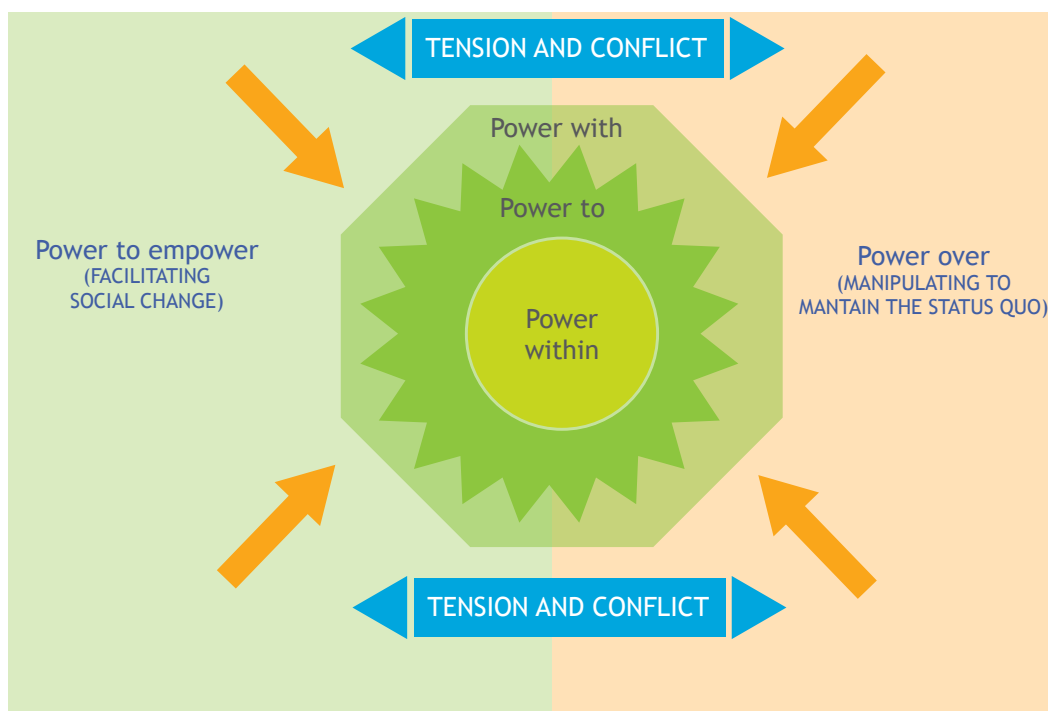
Source: author's own elaboration

In the diagram above we find overlapping spaces where interactions are more fluid and the boundaries are blurred. These are the spaces where facilitators of social change processes move. These are spaces that open the possibility for new realities to emerge since actors interact in ways that do not necessarily reproduce dysfunctional power dynamics or oppressive institutions. These are dialogic and creative spaces where actors are free and able to think in different and new ways.

Now, let us look more closely at the *power* variable. Hayward (cited in Hughes et al. 2003:7) defines power as “the capacity to participate effectively in shaping the limits of the possible”. This definition summarizes quite well the meaning of power in relation to the processes of social change. The exercise of power is also related to control of resources by different segments of society. Hence, “the control of these resources becomes a source of individual and social power” (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002). In any case, this societal aspect of power reveals its relational nature, in as much as “power is dynamic and relational, rather than absolute” (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002).

According to VeneKlasen and Miller (ibid) and Eyben (2004), the traditional significance of power has to do with *power over*. But as the same authors point out, power has several dimensions (*power within*, *power to* and *power with*) which are not necessarily negative. Chambers (2004) adds the dimension *power to empower*: the possibility and capacity to use our own dimensions of power to help empower others.





Source: author's own elaboration after VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002

As VeneKlasen and Miller (ibid) explain, “power over involves taking it from someone else, and then using it to dominate and prevent others from gaining it.” The most collaborative forms of power are power with, which looks for “finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength”. “Power within has to do with a person’s sense of self-worth and self-knowledge”. The ability of a person to function in a societal context may be understood as power to: “the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world.”

Hence, power has many faces, different dimensions, and it is exercised in many ways. It is not static and it is now “owned” by a sole actor; hence, its exercise by different individuals may vary depending on the context and their social and political capabilities. At some point I may exercise power over my son by forcing him to spend the weekend doing his homework, but at the same time I may be affected by the way my father exercises power over me. And on the other hand, I may come together with other neighbors and exercise power with them in order to ask the municipality to build a new health center in my community. So, we have to understand which of the dynamics of power we want to promote/use in order to conceive, advance, and consolidate the change process to which we want to contribute through the activities supported by our Theory of Change.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

- What are the dynamics of power that prevail in our context (society, organization, family)?
- How can we help to create/promote more empowering and horizontal power dynamics?
- How can we ensure that decision-making spaces recognize and integrate the diversity of identities and accumulated knowledge that exists among the different actors involved?
- How to prevent and/or manage conflicts deriving from processes of exclusion?

## 5. METHODOLOGICAL STEPS TO DEVELOP A THEORY OF CHANGE

In this section we will tackle the key methodological aspects needed to develop a Theory of Change: the desired change, the actors involved, the underlying assumptions, the pathway to change, the change indicators, and the learning, monitoring and accountability mechanism. It is assumed that the theoretical elements described in the previous section should help us to better configure our Theory of Change.

### 5.1. THE DESIRED CHANGE

The elaboration of a Theory of Change begins not with the identification of a problem to be resolved, but rather with the creative, appreciative, and positive visualization of a situation that we wish to attain at a later time. We use this creative visualization of the future as a horizon and motivation for our current action. That is, the desired change represents a confluence of conditions, relationships, and results that we wish to help occur in the years to come as a result of our action in the context of the present and the future. Temporal, relational, structural, geographic, social, cultural, economic, political, institutional dimensions are taken into consideration. The emphasis on one dimension or another will depend on the kind of change that is desired or needed. This is also conditioned by the identity, positioning, mindsets, and interests of those that formulate such Theory of Change.

## THE QUICHÉ CONNECTION: EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH ICTS



"This Guatemalan organization works on the issue of new technologies through various components that include developing software for the Mayan population, training, sale of the equipment, and promotion of the technology as an empowering tool for social change. Our organization uses the possibilities offered by internet to empower many women grassroots organizations. These women manage social networks and reflective processes through the use of internet. Along with this, the organization develops virtual courses for learning Quiché (a Mayan dialect). These alphabetization programs help to update and consolidate cultural, spiritual, and social values of the Mayan culture. Part of our work is about training women groups in the use of these tools so they can scale up in the labor market in the midst of a society with strong racist and sexist tendencies. All this effort is making possible for many Mayan women to enter working spaces which were historically vetoed to them; both at working but also at political and social level.

Icons are used to represent the following categories: Communication (cell phones) - Material (pyramid) - Productivity (Guipil, a typical, embroidered over blouse) - Social Justice (scale). The icons correspond to the results with particular focus: on the one hand, we represent reality as we live it today and then as we would like to see it unfolding. For the Mayan people, it is a comparison between how they live and how they would like to live. In its depiction, two moments are proposed:

on the left of the image, the present moment is represented, and, on the right, the near future that they want to attain over ten years:

The cell phone and the parabolic antenna represent our vision of technology that ranges from cell phones to all the other technological devices that continue to appear.

By using pyramids on both sides, we are trying to show how currently men are above women (on the left side), and, then in the right side, how we want to see women and men in the future on the same level in terms of access and opportunities.

The Guipil is the Mayan garment par excellence and represents productivity. We do not want to create needs; we want to meet them. We want technology to be like the Mayan garment which is part of the culture but which is integrated in a fair production line, with a focus on material and lineage, with a focus on gender and generation.

The scale: represents social injustice, the current government tends not to recognize the rights of (the country's) indigenous people; in the future, we want the scales to be rebalanced in a fair way. To achieve this, we see that technology is not an end in itself. It is a means to achieve the world that we want, that we visualize. We try to help our members to make this change. This is the over-riding vision of the project and that which is closely aligned with the vision of our organization."

The vision must be *plausible*. It is necessary to concentrate on changes in and among individuals, organizations, social structures, cultural patterns, and institutions on which our organization can *really* influence (not idealized conditions that are impossible to attain). That is, it must not only be possible to affect future reality; there must also be a sufficient degree of **probability that change can happen**, in order to justify the investment of resources and energy necessary on our part, to make it happen.

It must be **dynamic**. It should be like a still in a film of a complex and dynamic system in which people and their institutions are working effectively together and in interaction with outside agents in order to resolve problems and improve the well-being of the citizens and the environment in which they live together.



## GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RICH PICTURE

1. Show the **context** in which we are evolving (temporal, geographic, social, cultural, economic, political, etc.).
2. Identify the **issues** that we face.
3. Represent the **actors involved** (public, private, civil society), **their relationships, values, attitudes, abilities and behavior** as they would exist in the new, visualized framework.
4. Incorporate **formal and non formal institutions** (public policies, legal framework, standards, customs, cultural patterns, values, beliefs, consensual norms, etc.) that support the desired change.
5. A variable of the Rich Picture emerges as a result of **visualizing the present and, after analyzing current reality, projecting an image of the future** so that the Rich Picture embodies as much a vision of the present as of the future.
6. The **desired change** can be projected 5-10 years into the future, depending on the decision taken by those who are designing the Theory of Change.



Desired Change, Rich Picture FAMIVIDA, ToC workshop, Quito (Ecuador), 2007  
Source: Theory of Change Workshop, Quito (Ecuador), 2007



Source: Theory of Change workshop, La Paz, Bolivia, 2010. Nurturing multi-stakeholder creative processes as a way to enrich shared visions of the future.

Once the desired change is identified, it is necessary to move on to the definition of which **Strategic Areas** are going to be prioritized to sustain this change; and, in the end, which should be the focus of our action. We will try to synthesize 3-4 strategic areas in order to avoid excessive dispersion and in order to focus our exercise on strategic and fundamental elements rather than on those that are peripheral, secondary, and superficial.

### GUIDELINES FOR THE DEFINITION OF THE STRATEGIC AREAS

- Which are the main factors emerging from our conversation when defining the desired change?
- Are there some emerging categories that we can identify? Can we find among all these factors some sort of convergence? Can we sort them out and define some categories?
- Among all these categories, which are those that can make the system move towards our desired change more than other categories?
- Based on our organizational expertise, role, and capacity to which areas can we contribute better?
- Identify these key categories (3-4) and rephrase them in such a way that their strategic value is clear.
- Develop a strategic objective for each of those categories selected.

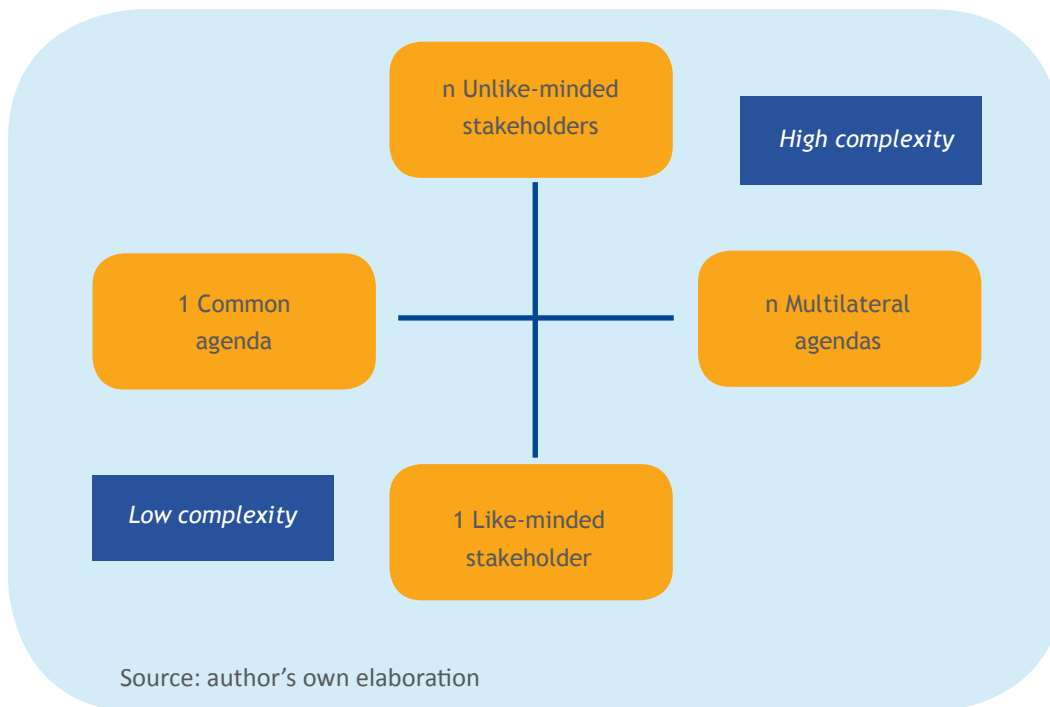


## 5.2. WHO ARE THE AGENTS OF CHANGE?

Once the field of action has been framed, the next step is to identify those actors who are involved in the process that we actively wish to influence. These are people who in one way or another will be affected by change or who already are part of the reality that we wish to influence. The degree of social complexity, with respect to the quality and effectiveness of the interaction that exists between these people and their agendas, will determine, in one way or another, how collaborative, inclusive and effective the process of change will be in relation to the achievement of the desired change. At the same time, it will help to understand the degree and quality of interaction between the different stakeholder networks in which we must operate.

*Although humans have deeply understood what is in seas and rivers as water, just what kind of thing dragons, fish, and other beings understand and use as water we do not yet know. Do not foolishly assume that all kinds of beings must use as water what we understand as water.*

*Dogen, Zen Patriarch (1200-1253)*



The diagram above shows the levels of complexity we may find in any social change process. Those processes involving few like-minded stakeholders (same interests, similar identities) are considered of low social complexity. On the other hand, the existence of many not like-minded stakeholders (diverse and many times confronted interests, positioning and identities) increases the level of social complexity of our process. This is the situation in which we find ourselves in most of the cases.



There are various lenses that we can use to identify and analyze the actors. To do so, we will use different mapping techniques, depending on the purpose and nature of the analysis:

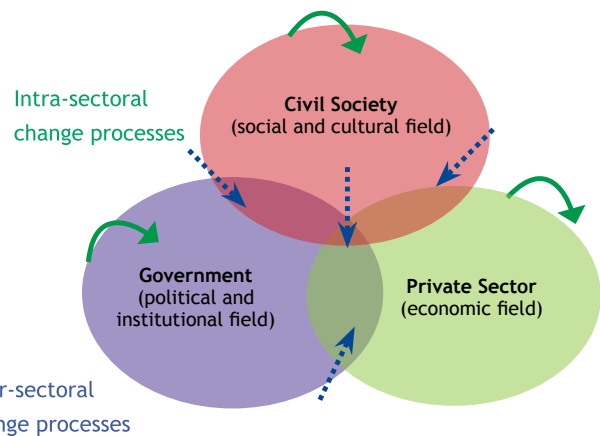
**Sectoral analysis**<sup>7</sup>. This analysis is useful in those cases that require a focus on constellations of stakeholders who represent, at scale, the whole of all the social actors affected by the change process.

To do so, we depart from our holographic premise, in which we assume that every individual contains in herself social representations and identities of the whole society, its diversity, and complexity. The second premise, the microcosmic one, tells us that by acting on a representative group of that particular society (or social network) affected by the change process, we will be able to better understand and act upon the whole of the social field we want to change. If we accept these two premises as valid, then we can work with a selected and representative group of stakeholders and be able to promote changes in their wider collectivity.

Normally, we begin with the identification and analysis of the actors in at least three sectors fundamental to every society: the public-government sector, private-economic sector, and civil society sector. These three sectors may be complemented by adding the political (party) sector or others (e.g. the international cooperation sector) on which special emphasis is required.

The sectors overlap each other; these overlap zones being occupied by those “bridge” actors who are capable of creating spaces and dynamics of positive or negative interaction between one sector and another. The quality of interaction will vary, depending on the interest that these actors have in the desired change. If more in-depth analysis is needed, the “level” variable can be incorporated: macro (national, federal, etc.); meso (departmental, regional, state, etc.); micro (municipal, local, community, etc.)

### THE NEED FOR CROSS-SECTORAL DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS



Source: After Kahane 2006

SECTOR	MACRO LEVEL	MESO LEVEL	MICRO LEVEL
PUBLIC-GOVERNMENTAL			
PRIVATE-ECONOMIC			
CIVIL SOCIETY-SOCIAL MOVEMENTS			
POLITICAL COMMUNITY			
DONOR COMMUNITY			

Source: author’s own elaboration

7 I thank Adam Kahane for sharing his insights regarding cross-sectoral analysis and microcosmic logic.



***Influence analysis***<sup>8</sup>. This map focuses on the actors' capacity, - either today or in the future - to influence the process of change. This type of analysis can be combined with the first, by identifying the actors according to sector, and then positioning them in the quadrants of the influence map. These different sectors may be visualized very clearly by using different visual codes (codification icons, cards with different colors or shapes, etc.)



Source: Keystone 2008

***Analysis of the articulation capacity***<sup>9</sup>. In this case, the emphasis is on the ability of the actors to articulate, network, mediate, collaborate and communicate with other actors. Specifically, the analysis concerns two forms of articulation: vertical and horizontal. The ability to articulate *vertically* refers to the degree of the actors' ability and legitimacy to create bridges of understanding, establish trust-based relationships, transmit messages between two parties, propose multi-actor negotiation agendas, stimulate relational processes, etc. This is done between two sets of actors. On the one hand, actors who hold a greater role in high-level decision-making (elites, national authorities, international organizations, etc.), and on the other hand those who find themselves at the bottom of the power pyramid (grassroots organizations, local leaders, neighbor associations, local NGOs, excluded indigenous populations, GLBT population, etc.) and are affected by such decisions. They are able to influence the process through collective action (social mobilization, national campaigns, international platforms, local blockades, sabotage campaigns, etc.). *Horizontal* communication focuses on the capacity of the actors to relate to other sectors and leaders of the same rank but who may be located in other social groups and sectors that are also involved in the process of change. These actors moving horizontally are able to "cross the line" (talk and deal with those with whom there is a conflict of interests) and come back without being denounced as collaborators or "traitors" by their constituencies. They have enough credibility and legitimacy both in their own organizations and among the actors on the other side. This fact allows them to move freely between parties building up trusting relationships and creating opportunities for cross-collaboration among not like-minded stakeholders.

This mapping exercise initially positions and analyzes actors according to their place on the pyramid: top (elites), middle (actors able to articulate top-bottom and cross-sectorial levels), bottom (local organizations and diverse local stakeholders). Then, a second phase analyzes relationships within and among the different levels. This mapping tool can also be used in any organization or social group in which we find different levels of power and decision-making.

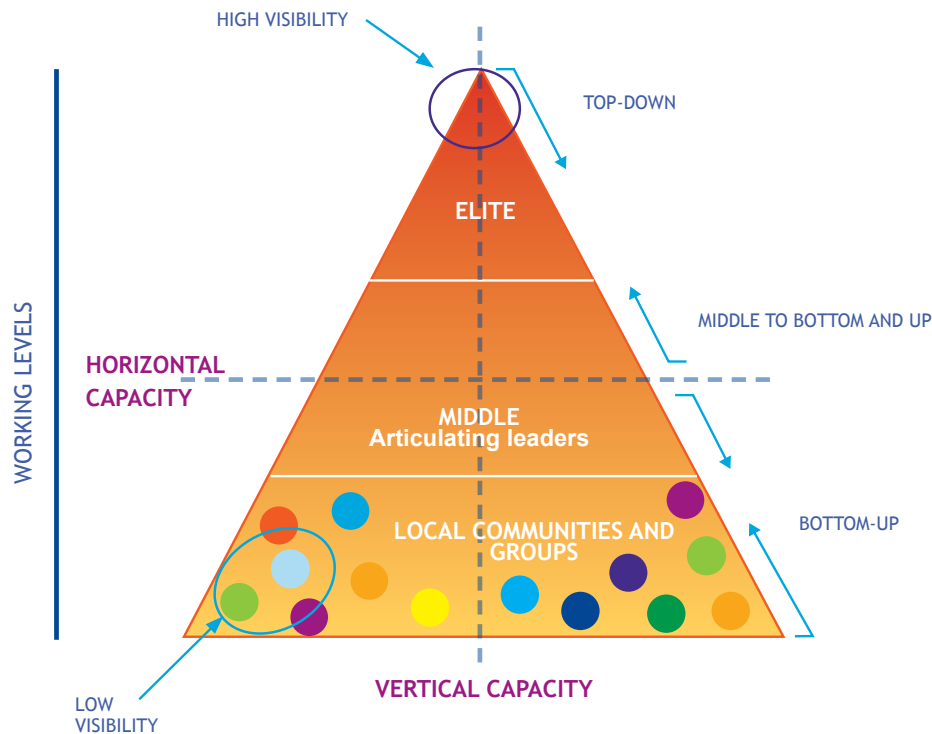
8 Keystone (2008)

9 Adapted from Lederach and from The Theory of Conflict Transformation.





Costa Rica workshop, June 2009. Presentation of the Desired Change and Map of Actors with emphasis on Articulating Capacity. Sustainable Agriculture group.



John Paul Lederach, Public Conference, La Paz, 2008

**Analysis of position based on interest.** In this case, the aim is to identify the position of the party in question, or ‘stakeholder’, on the basis of their interest with regards to the desired change. Actors are identified and analyzed on the basis of three categories: movers, floaters and blockers.

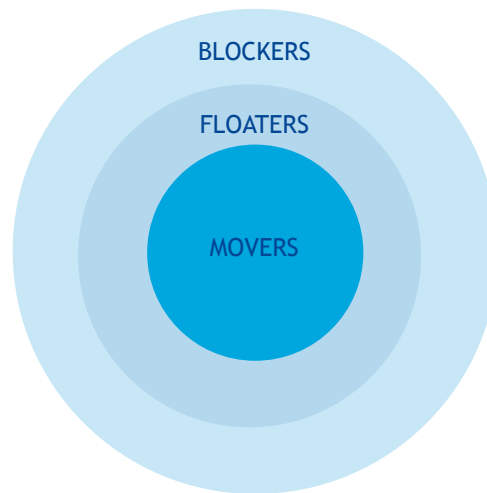
**Movers** are those social organizations, public entities, private corporations, key individuals, political parties, donor agencies, etc. committed to contributing to the desired change and they are to be found in the innermost circle. There is greater affinity in their interests and it is reasonably easy to establish constructive relationship areas and strategic alliances between them.

**Blockers** are those who are against the process, due to their own interests being negatively affected. They may also block the process because they do not have the necessary information to help them understand that it is possible to incorporate their interests through negotiation/mediation processes. Similarly, they may be blocking the process because of a question of inertia and historical lack of trust or rivalry with the movers or the subject of change (for example, big landowners blocking a redistributive agrarian reform process).



**Floaters** are those who occupy a position somewhere in between these two: they do not positively block the process, but neither do they actively support it. These actors may also change position (become a blocker or mover), depending on i) what is most beneficial to their own interests, ii) how movers or blockers influence and communicate with them.

Once all of the key actors have been identified and classified in terms of sector<sup>10</sup> and their positioning with regards to the desired change, the first step is to carry out an analysis of interests. Then identify groups/alliances that block or move the change process; and finally define possible strategies with regard to i) like-minded collective action (movers and some floaters), and ii) strategic lobby on not like-minded key actors (some floaters and blockers). The aim of this last process is to study which strategies would help to win over floaters, neutralize or divide blockers, and/or strengthen alliances between movers.



Source: author's own elaboration based on his interaction with the Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation (<http://www.cdi.wur.nl/UK/>)

### 5.3. THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT WE USE TO DEVELOP OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

One aspect that is a characteristic of the Theory of Change is the emphasis placed on intensifying and deepening the reflection process of the key actors, at least of those designing and supporting the desired change process. Not only is it a matter of analyzing and identifying the conditions necessary for defining the path to be pursued, but also of explaining how we arrive at those conclusions and the thought process by which we arrive at certain arguments and reasoning. The Theory of Change obliges us to constantly and repeatedly review the assumptions we use for interpreting reality so to better qualify our argumentation.

#### Assumption

*Something that you accept as true without question or proof.*

*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*

*The act of taking for granted;  
Something taken for granted or accepted as true without proof;  
A supposition.*

*Webster's New World College Dictionary*

Let's look at an example that usually creates great cognitive dissonance<sup>11</sup> in the participants of the Theory of Change workshops. Here is an assumption designed to provoke cognitive

<sup>10</sup> Here again we can use different icons, colors, shapes to categorize the stakeholders depending on the sector they belong to.

<sup>11</sup> **Cognitive dissonance** is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously. The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, or by justifying or rationalizing them. Dissonance occurs when a person perceives a logical inconsistency in their beliefs, when one idea implies the opposite of another. The dissonance might be experienced as guilt, anger, frustration, or even embarrassment. (Wikipedia, accessed 12 July 2010)

dissonance: *A stakeholder holding an explicit political positioning cannot facilitate a multi-stakeholder process in which he/she is one of the many stakeholders holding a specific interest.* In this case, some of the participants to the workshops do not agree with this assumption. They believe that even though being clearly positioned as regards the issue, these stakeholders enjoy enough credibility and legitimacy among all the other stakeholders (even the not like-minded) to allow them to facilitate such processes. On the other hand, other participants find it easy to facilitate processes within their own sector (like-minded, common interests, willingness to network with peers, similar identities and interests, etc.) but believe it is quite difficult and even dangerous to do so when the processes brings together different and not like-minded actors who politically take different sides and who will use this issue to bring down or abandon the process. Therefore, we should not take for granted (non reflexive assumption) that just because we are accepted as facilitators in certain settings and with certain actors, it will be the same in others. Our positioning and the perception other actors have about it need to be scrutinized periodically so to avoid non reflexive thinking. This cognitive exercise explains and reinforces our reflection process on two levels.

*External reflection (reflectivity).* The reflection process associated with the external world. It focuses on individual and/or group reflection on what is happening within our social, historical, political, and economic context. Most of the preceding sections deal with this type of reflection. We could say that this is the classical, traditional reflective process, which normally accounts for practically all analysis elaborated by organizations and groups involved in social change processes.

*Internal reflection (reflexivity).* The reflection process associated with the internal world. An internal, individual and personal view, which helps us to better understand how we think, why we think what we think, what effect our mental models have on how we view the world, and consequently how we relate to it, how we relate to our inner being, the construction and management of our identity(ies), the relationship that exists between our past and the configuration of our personality at the present time, the construction of our mental and emotional habits, etc. Traditionally, this type of reflection has been severely marginalized from this type of processes. It was believed that the personal dimension would not affect social change processes. And yet, this is precisely the most critical aspect in the whole change process. It is here that we see the greatest inconsistencies between what we propose and what we do. Consequently, we have to insist on the inclusion of this dimension in our reflection process, both at individual level and in the interaction with our action-learning peers (our action-learning “mirrors”).

We need to work continuously on these two dimensions when we attempt to make our way of thinking and acting more flexible; this is an essential requirement when it comes to facilitating or strategically contributing to social change processes. It is a matter of moving from a rigid thought logic to another that is more flexible and more adaptive to the complex times in which we live (Riso 2008).

Throughout our definition of the Pathway of Change (see section below), we shall be paying special attention to the assumptions we use to shape and hence support our



change logic. Certain check-points will be explicitly established for reviewing and identifying assumptions, so as to continue to adapt our change logic and the design of the pathway of change resulting from this logic.

#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

- What initial assumptions support our Desired Change?
- With whom have we shared and argued them?
- What are we not seeing that we need to see?
- What assumptions should we reconsider over time?
- How does our identity(ies) and past life experience affect the configuration of our assumptions?
- What mechanisms do we have for explaining and reviewing our assumptions?
- What methods (individual and peer-to-peer) are available to us for intensifying our internal reflection process?
- How do we react emotionally when someone questions our assumptions?

#### 5.4. PROJECTING FUTURE REALITIES. THE PATHWAY OF CHANGE

The Pathway of Change identifies the stages in the process and conditions that have to be met in order to be able to proceed with sufficient certainty in the midst of the complexity in which the whole social change process is embedded.

The achievement of results in each strategic area, and therefore the achievement of the Desired Change, is dependent on the occurrence of a range of **conditions**. Therefore, we start by identifying what conditions are ideally necessary for the change to happen. Since a Theory of Change approach deals with complexity (non linear thinking, uncertainty and social emergence) the achievement of these conditions may or may not i) occur in the near future, ii) help us in contributing to the desired change. We assume they do; and hence, we must check periodically whether these conditions i) are being met, and ii) contribute to the accomplishment of our desired change.

This is necessary because in complex processes other conditions may emerge as a result of our (inter)actions as well as the actions undertaken by others, independently from our own actions or desires. Therefore, we must avoid falling into a linear thinking process in which we assume reality will unfold as envisioned by us and only by us. This is why it is so important to i) cross-check our assumptions with not like-minded stakeholders, and ii) periodically revisit the initial assumptions we used to design our Theory of Change.

##### **a pathway of change is...**

*a map that illustrates the relationship between actions and outcomes and also shows how outcomes are related to each other over the lifespan of the initiative.*

*the map that explains how long-term outcomes are brought about by depicting the preconditions of change at each task.*

*The Aspen Institute*

### 5.4.1 A SEQUENCE FOR THE DEFINITION OF OUR PATHWAY OF CHANGE

We will now go through a detailed process for configuring the Pathway of Change.

**Step 1 Review of Strategic Areas.** After looking back at our Desired Change (Rich Picture) we will review the Strategic Areas we prioritized.

- i. Are these the right Strategic Areas?
- ii. Do we need to review their objectives?
- iii. Does our mapping exercise consider all the major stakeholders involved in these Strategic Areas?
- iv. Do these Strategic Areas relate to the major institutions affecting our change process?
- v. What are the relations and interactions between the different Strategic Areas?
- vi. What is missing in our analysis?

**Step 2 Brainstorming session to identify the necessary conditions.** Once we have a clear idea of the big picture regarding our desired Change and related Strategic Areas, we need to touch ground and look at the conditions necessary for our change process to happen, such as changes in institutions, relations, behavior, organizational capacities, etc. At this stage we need to pay close attention to the assumptions we use to determine what a necessary condition is.

- i. What are the conditions necessary for these Strategic Areas to develop further?
- ii. What are the conditions necessary in the short, medium, and long term?
- iii. How do these conditions affect our process and its actors?
- iv. How do these conditions relate to the outcomes we want to contribute to happen?
- v. How realistic is to believe we can achieve or promote those conditions?

After finishing our brainstorming, we need to critically analyze whether these conditions are already present or can be realized in the near future (the time span of “our future” will depend on what was decided when defining our Desired Change). If we believe these conditions cannot be met then we may want to consider changing the scope of our Desired Change and Strategic Areas. This iterative process of going back and forth helps us to really frame our exercise, verify the validity of our assumptions, and make sure our desired change has a high probability of accomplishment.



**Step 3. Groupings and design of the pathway of change** Group together those ideas which could constitute a single essential condition and frame each of these groupings as a Process Result (Outcome). Some of these groupings are closer in time but also in range (they are more plausible and achievable than others). Some are easier to achieve when looking at them from our present moment. Some are very complex and require some other conditions to happen in the first place. Some are easier to envision and some others are a bit blurred. Some need the existence and complicity of other conditions, and so they work simultaneously. Some are almost self-reliant and others are strongly dependent and inter-related to other conditions. This type of analysis is needed in order to better understand the complex dynamics underlying our Theory of Change.

Due to the complexity of our processes, these conditions can occur in at least **three ways**:

*Sequential*: A cannot occur until B has happened.

*Simultaneous*: C cannot occur without the joint action of A and B.

*Emergent*: M occurs because of the un-predictable or not well known interaction of D, J, I and Q.

These conditions involve **changes** in: institutions, quality of the relations between actors, presence and action of certain actors, social and/or technical abilities, collective/organizational/individual behavior and attitudes, more conducive environments (legal, operative, physical, knowledge, technology, etc.).

Every condition must be elaborated as a process result at Outcome level so that we can link our actions and interventions to effects in the change context.

Once we have come to know these conditions better, we start developing the Pathway of Change. For this, there are at least two options. The first option looks at the Strategic Areas in detail and develops a Pathway of Change for each Strategic Area. The second option lies in developing a more general Pathway of Change based on a broader analysis of the Desired Change and Strategic Areas altogether.

For the first case, outline a Pathway of Change for each Strategic Area, bearing in mind the fact that conditions may evolve in sequential, simultaneous and emergent ways. Each Strategic Area will define, in terms of time, the key conditions (stages) for achieving the Strategic Area objectives. Therefore, the sequential and simultaneous linking of conditions will make up the Pathway of Change for that specific Strategic Area. We shall do the same for each Strategic Area and identify possible systemic connections between conditions in various Strategic Areas. In the second case, our Pathway of Change will encompass a more general and holistic analysis identifying general conditions for the desired change to happen.



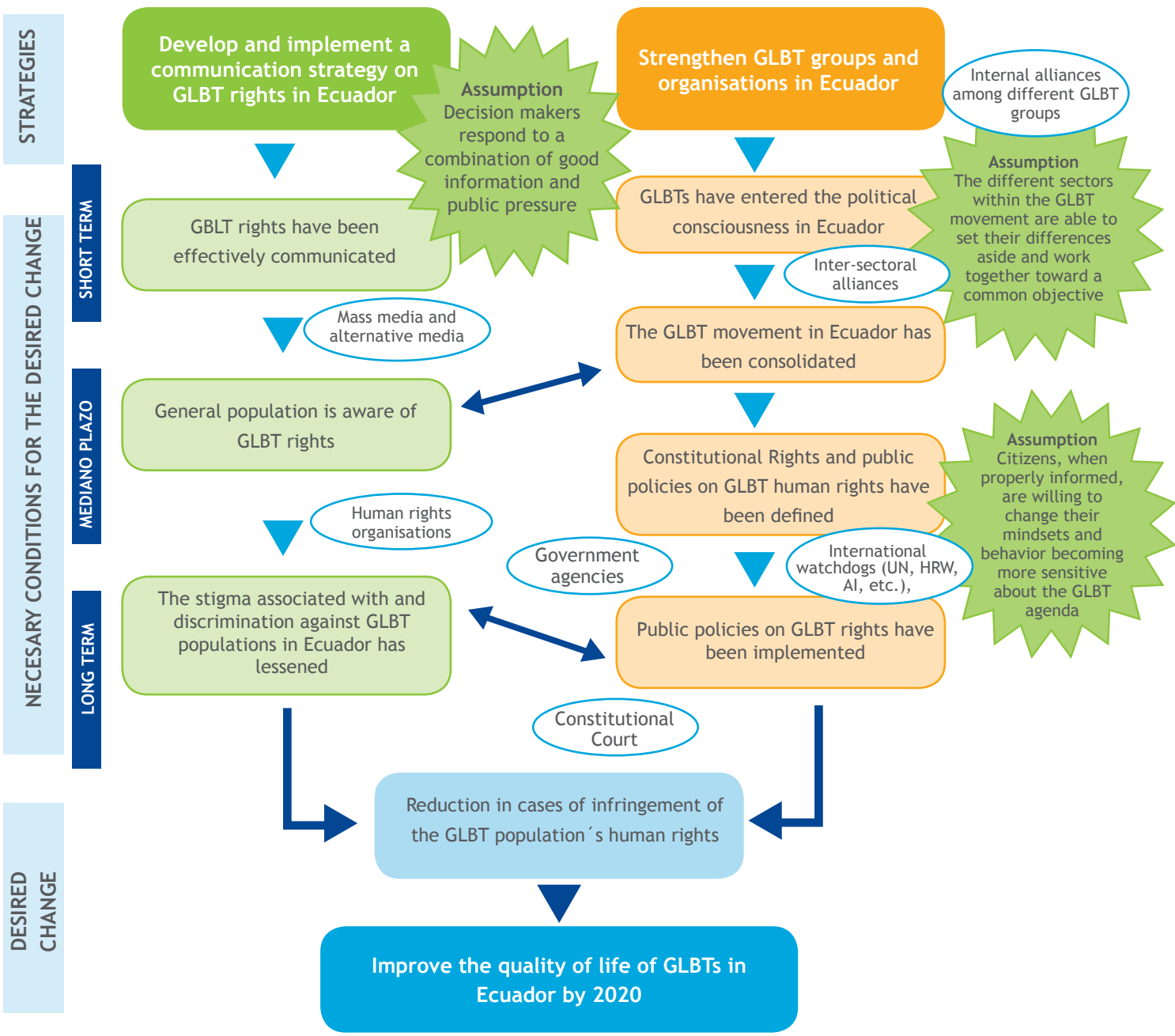
**WARNING:** There is a tendency to depict the Pathway of Change in a linear manner. This is because of the way our minds have been molded by the educational and social system. Nevertheless, we do not need to illustrate our Pathway of Change in a linear flow diagram. There are many other ways of “telling the story” and which reflect more effectively the richness of the conversations people have when developing their Pathway of Change. At the end, the most important achievement is not so much how well we illustrate our thought process but how comprehensive and pedagogical is the story we tell about our Theory of Change. Below a diagram reflecting a more linear thinking is shown and pictures are added so to have an idea of other ways which are more systemic and complex when telling the story. Story telling is a wonderful and simple way of making sense when describing the complexity in which our processes are embedded. Once we have visualized our thought process and build a story around it, we can easily capture and explain in a written document the complexity of our Theory of Change.



Source: Theory of Change workshop, San José de Costa Rica, 2009. Theory of Change on political participation of Mayan women in Guatemala



Source: Theory of Change workshop, San José de Costa Rica, 2009. Theory of Change on Agroecology in Nicaragua



Source: Theory of Change workshop with counterparts from Hivos, Quito (Ecuador), 2007 (HIV/AIDS Group - Human Rights)





Source: Theory of Change workshop, San José de Costa Rica, 2009. Theory of Change on promoting HIV/AIDS rights in Belize

**Step 4. Identify initial assumptions (simultaneously and repeatedly)** Identify the assumptions which underlie and support our change logic. We will review the conditions for change formulated earlier, and then identify the assumptions that support each of those conditions as being necessary for achievement of the Desired Change.

Our assumptions must explain what the connections are between the outcomes we have identified as conditions in our Pathway of Change. They also need to justify why this particular set of outcomes will contribute to the desired change we look for.

In case our assumptions are not possible to maintain or there is no evidence whatsoever of them being realistic, we must revisit our Theory of Change and reconsider some of the results to be achieved.

*Your assumptions are your window on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while or the light won't get in.*

*Isaac Asimov*

*The creative individual has the capacity to free himself from the web of social pressures in which the rest of us are caught. He is capable of questioning the assumptions that the rest of us accept.*

*John W. Gardner*



## 5.5. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THINGS ARE CHANGING? INDICATORS OF CHANGE

As an initial comment, it should be noted that from a Theory of Change perspective, indicators of change are not the same as the performance indicators that we may find in a traditional Logical Framework. By defining indicators of change, we are seeking to better understand how to read the context in order to see what effects we can perceive in this context due to our action. These indicators allow us to better understand how change is really happening (or not) and what our contribution is to that change.

We develop indicators for each of the conditions in order to be able to understand whether that condition is developing and what effect this has in the change context. So, the indicators of change relate to the observation of the conditions identified in our Theory of Change, and should help us to understand to what degree and in what manner these conditions are occurring in the environment. We may want to prioritize some of those indicators for further follow up and monitoring.

We must be careful when designing the indicators, as they differ from other indicators (such as Logframe indicators). We should ask ourselves: what do we need to see in our context to understand to what extent our actions are contributing to i) the desired change, ii) the achievement of our outcomes. We want to know the effect of our actions in the change context, not just whether we implemented the action for the sake of implementing the action.

The regular review of these indicators will help us to adjust our Theory of Change at both the political/strategic level (action on the conditions for change) and at the cognitive level (assumptions supporting our change logic).

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE**

- Who is taking part in our monitoring process?
- Who determines what it is that must be observed in order to decide whether we have achieved the expected outcomes?
- Who recollects and analyses the data emerging from our monitoring?
- What signs of change can the observers see in the environment that allows us to determine that the conditions identified at the outset are actually taking place?
- How will the observers collect the evidence indicating the change?
- With whom, how, and for what purpose will the observers share this evidence?
- How will this evidence allow us to learn individually and as an organization, and to be mutually responsible for our actions?

## 6. WHAT ARE THE LEARNING, MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS?

The final question for our particular methodological approach to Theory of Change focuses on determining and promoting the relationship that must exist between learning, monitoring, and accountability. This is a relationship that, in practice, is not particularly clear, but it is essential to explain it and give it due attention. Let's look at some theoretical elements that will help us to better understand the importance of learning in processes of social change.

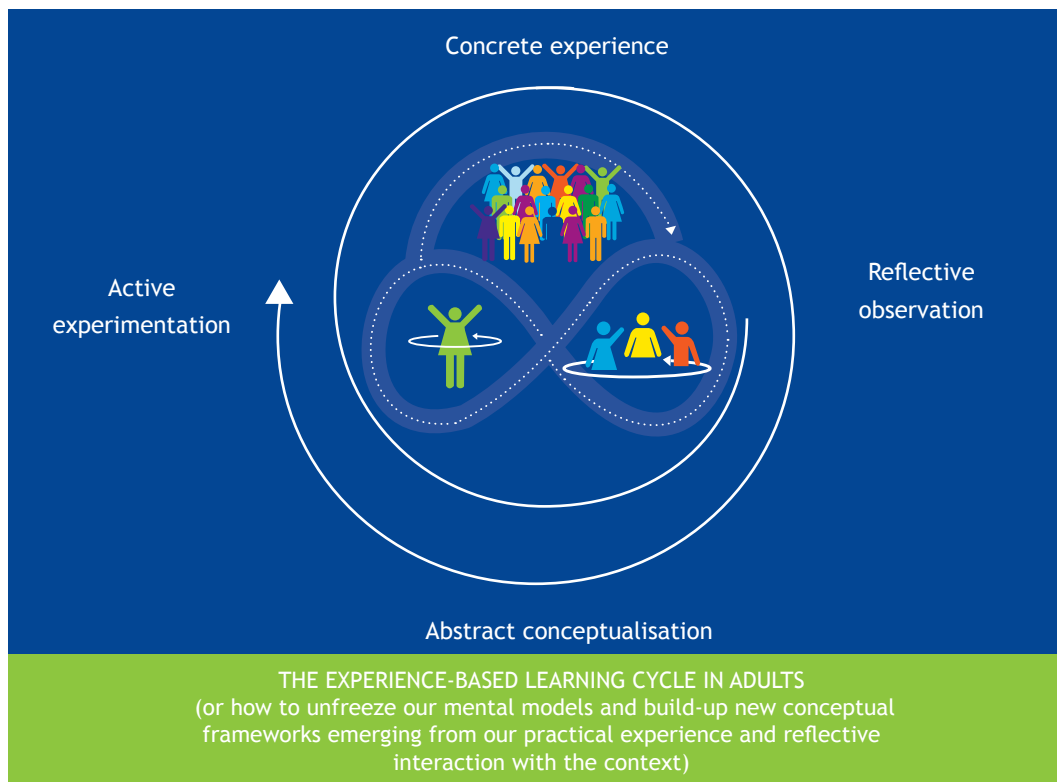


*The worst deceit is to believe that we do not need to know anything more.*

*Plato*

The learning approach in the Theory of Change stems from two sources. One, the adult learning cycle proposed by Kolb (1984) which highlights the importance our past experience has when shaping our present learning process (experiential learning).

According to this approach, learning involves 4 stages: *concrete experience* (experience gained through practice), *reflective observation* (analysis deriving from the application of certain questions and analytical lenses to our concrete experience), *abstract conceptualization* (summary of the theory and updating of assumptions made, based on our reflective observation), and *active experimentation* (our direct action in the real world, based on what we have reflected on and learnt as a result of our experience).



The second approach has to do with looking at the future as it emerges (Scharmer 2007). This is *emerging learning* responding to the question: *What do we need to learn from the emerging future?* This question helps us to develop new capacities in the present moment based on what we need to know how to do and see in the future we are proposing (our Theory of Change).

In the case of multi-stakeholder processes, this framework is enriched by elements of collaborative learning, in which it is recognized that the individual is a social being and therefore needs to interact with other peers, groups, and society as a whole to consolidate his or her learning process<sup>12</sup>. In other words, in order to expand and

*The real battle in the world today is not among civilizations or cultures but among different evolutionary futures that are possible for us and our species right now*

*Otto Scharmer*

accelerate her learning curve, the individual needs more contextualized, deeper, and richer learning processes. This fact must be underlined, because when these processes are immersed in conflictive or politically polarized contexts, social learning becomes difficult to achieve, due to the problem of generating learning interactions between some of the actors involved in the conflict. In these circumstances, it is not easy to generate learning processes with other actors holding different mindsets and interests. The problem often starts from something as fundamental as the impossibility of bringing together certain actors due to a lack of confidence between them. In other cases, the actors are simply not accustomed to learning with others holding a historically established different mindset or position. Or else, the actors are basically not aware of their need to learn or develop new skills for learning and change in complex and multi-stakeholder contexts. Here we find ourselves faced with a paradigm shift with regard to the generation of knowledge and its relationship with the power dynamics that often govern this kind of processes. Political and social actors are confronted with this, forcing them to understand and accept the need to learn with someone with a different mindset, interest and position. They need to develop new social skills, aimed at promoting collaborative learning and action as a mechanism of conflict management and social transformation. In practice, evidence shows the real difficulty and resistance that some actors face when entering into this dynamic. This is one of the greatest challenges posed by collaborative conflict transformation in the 21st century.

Finally, we need to link these learning spaces and dynamics with the accountability mechanisms and processes that every organization has (local and international NGOs, grassroots organizations, social movements, civil associations, public bodies, etc.).

12 I must thank Rosalind Eyben (IDS) and Carlos Mota (World Café Community) for helping me to study in depth the approach of the three dimensions of learning for social change: individual, organizational, and societal.

This involves adjusting the design of progress reports on activities, integrate new actors in the monitoring and evaluation processes, convening public hearings, and taking into account the learning dynamics suggested. These must be more participative, integrate various mindsets, interests and identities, recognize diversity, be flexible, and sustained in local practice.

In conclusion, the facilitation of multi-stakeholder learning spaces for social change demands the integration of our learning (experiential and emergent) with i) more transparent mechanisms for accountability, and ii) monitoring systems which are more participatory and inclusive. These are monitoring systems which are designed not only to satisfy the needs of any given organization/donor but also to promote social (un)learning, involving a broad set of stakeholders who are all engaged in the change process supported by our programs and projects.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN REFLECTING ON AND DESIGNING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE**

- Who defines and participates in our accountability and monitoring system?
- How do we learn, as individuals and as a group, from our past and future?
- How can we, as social change organizations, facilitate spaces for broader and more reflexive social learning?
- What are the mechanisms to be implemented in order to include a more diverse set of actors in our learning, monitoring, and accountability systems?
- What are the strategies we use to integrate our learning into our actions?
- What are the methods we need to use in order to communicate our learning and monitoring to a broad and diverse constellation of stakeholders?





## ANNEX I: A THEORY OF CHANGE WORKSHOP. THE METHODOLOGICAL ROUTE

This annex details the methodological pathway followed during a Theory of Change workshop which took place in La Paz city (Bolivia) on November 8-11, 2010. The group was highly diverse with participants coming from Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, Perú and Bolivia. It was comprised by 24 participants belonging to 12 different organizations (two participants for each organization) working across different sectors: indigenous rights, human rights, HIV/AIDS, gender, sex workers, GLBT rights movements. There were different disciplines present in the space: social scientists, administrators, engineers, and non academic knowledge too. 17 were women and 7 men; in both cases there were homosexual and heterosexual participants. Along with this, Hivos staff was present with delegations from Ecuador, Bolivia and The Netherlands.

The workshop was conducted by a team of two facilitators: Iñigo Retolaza (lead facilitator) and Paola Rozo (co-facilitator).

The objectives of the workshop were the following:

### **Process Performance Objectives**

1. Participating organizations have furthered their organizational capacities for strategic analysis and collaborative action.
2. Participating organizations invest in an organizational culture and have processes in place that support them to reflect regularly and critically on their practice and context, to learn in a systematic way, and to be accountable to and communicate effectively with their stakeholders.

### **Workshop Learning Objectives**

#### *Personal dimension learning objective*

Participants will raise awareness about the role they play in complex social change processes and develop capacities needed for observing at themselves critically (reflexive practice)

#### *Organizational dimension learning objective*

Participants will share and learn from each other's organizational practices when dealing with social change processes and explore innovative ways of learning, monitoring and accounting for organizational results in these processes



### *Societal dimension learning objective*

Participants will gain analytical knowledge in understanding societal dynamics related to change processes from a complexity perspective

The workshop was designed on the basis of a set of premises:

*Experiential and collaborative learning.* The foundation for the learning process is based on the experience people bring to the space. Although facilitators will use small presentations to introduce every methodological step, participants' experiential knowledge is the main source of learning. Several mechanisms and dynamics are used to mobilize participants' knowledge base at individual, organizational and societal level:

- a. *Learning peers.* Participants will be asked to choose a partner with whom they will spend some quality time every morning reflecting on the workshop process and the effect it has on them. They will be invited to choose someone different from themselves (different country, gender, discipline, sector, etc.).
- b. *Individual reflection.* In the learning sessions happening every morning, participants will be asked to reflect on individual basis about their own learning. This moment will be supported by the learning journal used to enhance participants' inner dialogue.
- c. *Sector-wise group work.* The heart of the workshop is founded on the elaboration of a Theory of Change. Four sectoral groups will be installed, each of them developing a Theory of Change based on a real case selected among all the ones present in each of the groups. Every organization has been asked in advance to prepare a case to be worked on during the workshop.
- d. *Rotational monitoring.* In several of the methodological steps groups will mingle in different ways right in the middle of the group process so to cross-check with members from other groups the content developed and assumptions used when designing their respective Theories of Change. This mirroring exercise is of much help for scrutinizing the undergoing group work and enriching their own cases with fresh ideas coming from other sectors, disciplines and life experiences.
- e. *Plenary.* Participants will be given the chance to share their progress in most of the methodological steps through collective plenaries. These spaces are ideal for constructive criticism among participants and clarification from facilitators.
- f. *Introspective action-thinking dynamics.* Deep breathing, synchronized breathing, body movement, learning peers, and a personal learning journal will be used to trigger and deepen self-awareness among participants.
- g. *Informal spaces.* Lunch and other informal moments (dinner, city touring, etc.) are of great use when sharing personal experiences among participants.

*Enriching the cognitive field.* Facilitators will introduce several new concepts to help participants widen their knowledge base about the dynamics related to complex social change processes. These brief presentations are interactive and help to trigger small collective conversations about several issues related to change processes and the use of a Theory of Change to explain that social complexity. The visualization of new emerging realities requires some new conceptual inputs so to avoid falling into the same conversational practice and thought process.

*Iterative cycles of action-learning.* The workshop methodology is designed in such a way that participants are “forced” to revise previous methodological steps before starting a new one. This iterative process of going back and forth is of much help for i) making assumptions explicit as the group moves along, ii) framing and grounding the content and approach of each of the Theories of Change developed in the groups.

*Results-based group work.* A generous amount of time will be invested at early stages of the workshop in building group dynamics and trust. This will have an enormous effect later on when groups are put under pressure in the second part of the workshop. Participants will move from a group dynamic to team work as days pass by. During the second part of the workshop (day 3 and 4), every team will work under a lot of pressure and react collectively by appointing several commissions so to be able to deliver the results requested by facilitators.

*Creative visualization.* The first day facilitators will stress the importance of using creative ways of expressing in a simple (not simplistic) manner the complexity of social change processes such as the ones participants are currently involved in. Facilitators will invite and motivate every group to use new and creative ways of explaining their change logic. This is accomplished by using different materials and ways of communicating the advances done by the groups in several methodological steps (3D installations, storytelling, interactive and iterative presentations, a wealth of different materials, etc.).

*Capturing the narrative.* Every group will be asked to commission one of the members for writing down a document that will synthesize the change narrative developed by the group. Reporters will be supported by facilitators with some inputs (table of content based on a Theory of Change logic). A final document will be elaborated.

*Having a good time.* It is crucial to nurture and build a conducive environment wherein adults feel safe and comfortable so to be themselves, question with others their assumptions and ways of seeing and thinking, and be able to create something new and coherent with people they did not know or work with before the workshop. Facilitators’ attitudes and behaviors plus some serendipity and complicity from group members help all participants to rapidly feel safe and enter into a relaxed mood.



DAY 0. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7

MODULE	PROCESS	TIME	LOGISTICS
<p><b>FRAMING THE SPACE</b></p> <p>An introductory group conversation on social change processes</p>	<p>Welcome words by Corina Straatsma, Regional Representative. Introducing the facilitation team and Hivos staff.</p> <p>Looking at social change processes from a ToC perspective. A 20 min. video produced by Ecuadorian gay movement will be displayed followed by an introductory group reflection.</p> <p>Driving questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What social change process is being addressed?</li> <li>2) What are the characteristics of that social change process?</li> <li>3) What are the strategic areas being addressed?</li> <li>4) Who were the main stakeholders?</li> <li>5) What sorts of alliances were sought among the main stakeholders (usual vs. unusual, expected vs. unexpected, planned vs. emergent)?</li> <li>6) What were the necessary conditions for the change to happen?</li> <li>7) What actions did the gay movement take for making those conditions come to life?</li> <li>8) How could they tell changes were happening?</li> </ol> <p>Each question will be given in a small paper to participants (peer-wise). Every couple will be asked to analyze and look at the documentary through the lenses provided by the question given to them. After 10 minutes of peer-wise conversations, they will be asked to comment on what they saw depending on the question given. The couples will respond based on the order of the questions as presented above. In this way, participants will build a collective narrative of what they saw from a Theory of Change perspective. The facilitator will make this process explicit so to help participants understand what the workshop process is about in terms of the methodological steps to be followed.</p>	<p>18.00-18.15</p> <p>18.15-19.30</p>	<p>Circle of chairs in main venue, data display, laptop, list of questions, CD on Ecuadorian gay movement</p>

## DAY 1. MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8

MODULE	PROCESS	TIME	LOGISTICS	
<p><b>FRAMING THE SPACE</b> Participants i) are aware of workshop learning objectives and approach, and ii) know each other and choose a learning peer to deepen their personal inquiry (learning mirrors)</p> <p><b>STEP 1. DESIRED CHANGE</b> Creative visualization for expressing the desired change they want to pursue/contribute to happen in their social change processes</p>	<p><b>Knowing each other.</b> Quick presentation dynamic for participants to know each other (name, country/region of origin).</p> <p><b>Identity map.</b> Grouping people based on different criteria (gender, country, sector, discipline, age, rural-urban, etc.). Brief commentary of multiple identities (individual and social), perspectives, experiences, etc as an added value to complex understanding of reality.</p> <p><b>Inquiry map.</b> Ask participants to reflect on the key inquiry question they want to explore during the workshop. This inquiry will be revisited and further explored in the learning session every morning individually and with the learning peer. This will allow participants to reflect on how far they have gone in their inquiry and what new inquiries emerge from their learning experience during the workshop itself. The inquiry map will help the facilitator to understand what brings people to the space and what clarifications and adjustments must be done and communicated to the participants (what the space is meant for and not). Cards will be collected, categories identified, and displayed somewhere in the space for them to revisit and for the facilitator to use as refreshment at different moments of the workshop.</p> <p><b>Learning peers.</b> Participants choose a peer for the individual learning process. Criteria: someone they do not know and has different background/identity (different gender, country, sector, discipline, age, etc). Previous dynamics will help them to map out who inhabits the space providing them with some criteria to choose a learning partner based on the initial criteria given by the facilitator.</p> <p><b>Workshop objectives, agenda, and approach.</b> Brief introduction by the facilitator to frame the space and invite people to be creative, open, collaborative, reflexive, etc.</p>	<p>9.30-9.45</p> <p>9.45-10.00</p> <p>10.00-10.15</p> <p>10.15-10.30</p> <p>10.30-10.45</p>	<p>Circle of chairs in main venue, cards, markers, masking tape, learning journal, data display, laptop, powerpoint presentation, hand-outs on reflective practice (self-inquiry questions)</p>	
	<b>Coffee break</b>	10.45- 11.00		
	<p><b>Sector grouping and ToC case selection.</b> Participants will group themselves sector-wise, share their cases, discuss them, and choose one among them all so to develop a ToC on it during the workshop. Four groups will be assembled.</p> <p><b>Creative visualization.</b> Brief introduction by the co-facilitator. The power of creative visualization tools for expressing complex concepts and dynamic contexts. A three step dynamic to work and link i) emotions to ii) ideas and iii) complex concepts using diverse and creative pictures displayed in the screen.</p>	<p>11.00-12.00</p> <p>12.00-13.00</p>	<p>Chairs set as in the cinema in front of a screen in main venue, data display, laptop, cards, markers</p>	
	<b>Lunch</b>	13.00-14.30		
	<p><b>Formulating the desired change.</b> Each organization will draw a rich picture in which they illustrate the change they want to contribute to happen in the social change process selected by the group. The picture will have two moments: current situation and the situation they want to see in 5 years time.</p>	14.30-16.00	Four learning stations in two different venues separate from main venue (2 learning stations in each venue): table with 8 chairs and wall panels, pack of materials (cards with different shapes, sizes and colors, markers, glue, local materials, flipcharts, etc.), hand-out for Step 1, powerpoint presentation	
	<b>Coffee break</b>	16.00-16.20		
	<p><b>Reporting to plenary.</b> A walking gallery plenary while visiting each of the four learning stations. Methodological comments by facilitators, content-wise comments by all.</p>	16.20-17.00		
	<p><b>Writing session.</b> Each group will be asked to write a narrative around the desired change and the strategic areas prioritized.</p>	17.00-18.15	Laptops, notes taken by group reporters	
	<p><b>Closing the day.</b> Brief round to sense participants' perceptions on the day. Brief chat with a small committee of participants to have direct inputs.</p>	18.15-18.30		

## DAY 2. TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9

MODULE	PROCESS	TIME	LOGISTICS
LEARNING SYNTHESIS	<p>Start the morning with a barefoot walk in the volley ground (sand). Ask participants to fill in the space and observe the dynamics when walking across the space. Link this to social spaces where different stakeholders fill the space and relate to each other in different, emergent and uncertain ways. Ask participants to walk in different speeds (speed 1, 2 and 3, forward and backward), make people stop and make still pictures of how they are placed in the space (picture 1, picture 2). Keep on walking and play around with speeds, backward and forward walking, going back to picture 1 and 2. Comment on the need for monitoring stakeholder relationships and positioning in a given context (relating picture 1 and 2 to monitoring processes).</p> <p><b>Learning peers and journal.</b> Learning peers will come together preceded by individual reflection using the learning journal. Invite peers to walk or enjoy the garden. They will focus on their inquiry question plus any other insight they may have developed during the previous day.</p> <p>Refreshing our memory with the <b>graphic recording</b> done by the co-facilitator (key elements of main steps developed so far)</p>	9.00-10.00	Volley playground, learning journal, graphic wall with workshop process (days and steps)
	<p><b>Power and participation.</b> Brief introduction to power dynamics. Everybody will make a talking statue for each of the different power dynamics explained. Group reflection.</p> <p><b>Introduction to stakeholder mapping tools</b> by the facilitator. Different stakeholder mapping tools sheets will be distributed to participants as a learning aid.</p> <p>Group work to develop one of the tools presented previously.</p> <p>Driving questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <i>Who are the main stakeholders to be considered (sectors, power dynamics, like minded and not like minded, etc.)?</i></li> <li>2) <i>What strategic alliances must be promoted (like and not like minded stakeholders, etc.)?</i></li> </ol>	10.00-10.45 10.45-11.30 11.30-13.00	Circle of chairs in main venue, data display, laptop, powerpoint presentation, screen, hand-outs for step 2, learning stations and materials
STEP 2. THE STAKEHOLDERS OF SOCIAL CHANGE Strategic mapping and analysis of stakeholders involved in the social change process	<b>Lunch</b>	13.00-14.30	
	<b>Plenary reporting (market rotation) and group reflection on stakeholder engagement.</b> Defining main issues emerging for enhancing (cross-sectoral, multi-) stakeholder engagement.	14.30-15.30	
STEP 3. OUR ASSUMPTIONS Making explicit our thought process when working on social change processes	<b>Assumption questionnaire</b> for introducing the theme.	15.30-16.00	Circle of chairs in main venue, data display, laptop, screen, powerpoint presentation, questionnaire, hand-out for step 3, learning stations and materials
	<b>Coffee break</b>	16.00-16.20	
	<b>Brief presentation</b> on (un)learning and assumptions we use when working on social change processes.  <b>Group work</b> for making explicit main assumptions of our ToC (desired change, stakeholder engagement). Prioritize 3-5 key assumptions. Each sector group will delegate one person to every other group so to question them when developing main assumptions (helping the other groups observe themselves and their group thought process, meta-observation). Then every observer will go back to their groups and enrich their own group assumptions based on what they experienced and learnt when interacting with the other groups.	16.20-16.35 16.35-18.00	
	<b>Writing session</b> on stakeholders and assumptions	18.00-18.30	Laptops, notes taken by group reporters
	<b>Closing the day.</b> Brief round to sense participants' perceptions on the day. Brief chat with a small committee of participants to have direct inputs.	18.30	

## DAY 3. WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

MODULE	PROCESS	TIME	LOGISTICS
LEARNING SYNTHESIS	<p>Refreshing our memory with the <b>graphic recording</b> done by the co-facilitator (explain key elements of main steps of the methodological process for sense making)</p> <p><b>Check-in session</b> with all participants to monitor how people feel at this stage of the process. Open question and answer session.</p> <p><b>Learning peers and journal.</b> Learning peers will come together preceded by individual reflection using the learning journal. Invite peers to walk or enjoy the garden. They will focus on their inquiry question plus any other insight they may have developed during the previous day.</p>	9.00-10.00	People sitting on round tables around the graphic wall, learning journal
	<p><b>Brief introduction to key elements</b> to be considered when working on social change. Explanation on how to develop a pathway of change. Dynamic conversation and group reflection using four dimensions of change (individual, relational, cultural, and structural).</p> <p><b>Group work</b> to define the main strategic areas and elaborate the pathway of change. Groups will define those strategic areas based on the case chosen. The group will develop a strategic objective for each of the areas (max 3 strategic areas). Develop the pathway of change in every sector group.</p> <p>In the middle of the exercise, each group will delegate half of the group to another one (half group 1 goes to half group 2, half group 2 to goes to group 1; same with the other two groups) and share their advance in the pathway of change. Suggestions and commentaries for 15 min and everybody goes back to their group, work on the feedback and finish the PoC.</p>	10.00-10.30  10.30-13.00	Circle of chairs in main venue, data display, laptop, powerpoint presentation, learning stations and materials, hand-out for step 4
STEP 4. PATHWAY OF CHANGE Identifying the conditions for successful social change action based on results	<b>Lunch</b>	13.00-14.30	
	<b>Group work continued</b>	14.30-17.00	
	<b>Plenary reporting</b> (market) and group reflection.	17.00-18.00	
	<b>Coffee Break</b> included		
	<b>Questions and Answers session with Hivos staff.</b>	18.00-18.30	Circle of chairs in main venue
	<b>Closing the day.</b> Brief round to sense participants' perceptions on the day. Brief chat with a small committee of participants to have direct inputs.	18.30	

DAY 4. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11

MODULE	PROCESS	TIME	LOGISTICS
<b>STEP 5. INDICATORS OF CHANGE</b> Defining main indicators for helping to understand to what extent our desired change is happening	<p>Brief introduction to indicators of change and its difference to other indicators (activity based, Log-frame, etc). Quick group survey to make sure people understood the difference.</p> <p>Group work for developing indicators of change. After a first period for preliminary definition of indicators (30 min approx.), one delegate from each group will rotate to other group to explain what the indicators are (15 min approx.), the group will listen and give feedback for improvement. Then, every delegate will go back to its group, share, and collectively adjust and improve indicators (30 min approx).</p> <p>Writing session on pathway of change and indicators of change. Reporters will work separately from groups asking members for any feedback needed.</p>	<p>9.00-9.15</p> <p>9.15-11.00</p>	<p>Circle of chairs in main venue, data display, laptop, powerpoint presentations, learning stations and materials, hand-outs for step 5 and 6</p>
	<p>Brief introduction to learning linked to monitoring and accountability. Group reflection.</p>	<p>11.00-11.30</p>	
<b>STEP 6. RESULTS ORIENTED PARTICIPATORY MONITORING SYSTEM</b> Developing a participatory monitoring system based on learning and results oriented practice	<p>Group work to develop a participatory and result oriented accountability and monitoring system. Use of graphic visualization (flow grams, diagrams, etc.) for creative thinking and simplifying complexity of participatory monitoring systems.</p> <p>Lunch</p> <p>Plenary reporting and group reflection.</p>	<p>11.30-13.00</p> <p>13.00-14.30</p> <p>14.30-15.15</p>	<p>Laptops, notes taken by group reporters</p>
	<p>Writing session on monitoring system. Reporters will work separately from groups asking members for any feedback needed.</p>	<p>16.30-17.30</p>	
<b>FOLLOW-UP PLAN</b> Designing an organizational follow up plan for further socialization	<p>Organizations gather separately and outline a follow up plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What activity are you going to undertake?</i></li> <li>2. <i>What support do you need?</i></li> <li>3. <i>What suggestions do you have for further support on applying the ToC approach in your organization?</i></li> </ol> <p>Coffee break included</p>	<p>16.30-17.30</p>	<p>Learning journals, cards, markers</p>
	<p>Learning peers gather for final check-out. Each participant will be asked to share a final session with their peers. Everybody will fill in a card where he or she is invited to write something he/she wants to remind him/herself one month from now. Then, every peer will write another card for his/her learning peer where he/she is asked to write something for his/her peer. Both cards are inserted in an envelope, address written, sealed and handed over to facilitators. These envelopes will be sent by Hivos to everybody one month after the workshop is over.</p>	<p>17.30-18.00</p>	
<b>CLOSING THE WORKSHOP</b>	<p>Final round with participants for sharing the experience.</p>	<p>18.00-18.30</p>	<p>Circle of chairs in main venue</p>

## ANNEX II: A STORY ABOUT ASSUMPTIONS AND LISTENING SKILLS <sup>13</sup>

- a. Read the following story (twice) to the group
- b. Have participants respond to the statements about the story (limit the response time to no more than 5 minutes)
- c. Compare and discuss answers
- d. Start an open conversation stressing the importance assumptions have when making sense about what we listen and observe in our context
- e. Give a short presentation on assumptions, (un)learning, mental models and the ladder of inference

*A business man had just turned off the lights in the store when a man appeared and demanded money. The owner opened a cash register. The contents of the cash register were scooped up and the man sped away. A member of the police force was notified promptly.*

### STATEMENTS ABOUT THE STORY: TRUE (T), FALSE (F), INCONCLUSIVE (I)

1. A man appeared after the owner had turned off his store lights.
2. The man demanded money.
3. The man who opened the cash register was the owner.
4. The store owner scooped up the contents of the cash register, and ran away.
5. Someone opened a cash register.
6. After the man who demanded the money scooped up the contents of the cash register, he ran away.
7. While the cash register contained money, the story does not say how much.
8. The story concerned a series of events in which only three persons are referred: the owner of the store; a man who demanded money, and a member of the police force.
9. The following events were included in the story: someone demanded money, a cash register was opened, its contents were scooped out, and a man dashed out of the store.
10. The robber was a man.
11. The robber demanded money of the owner.

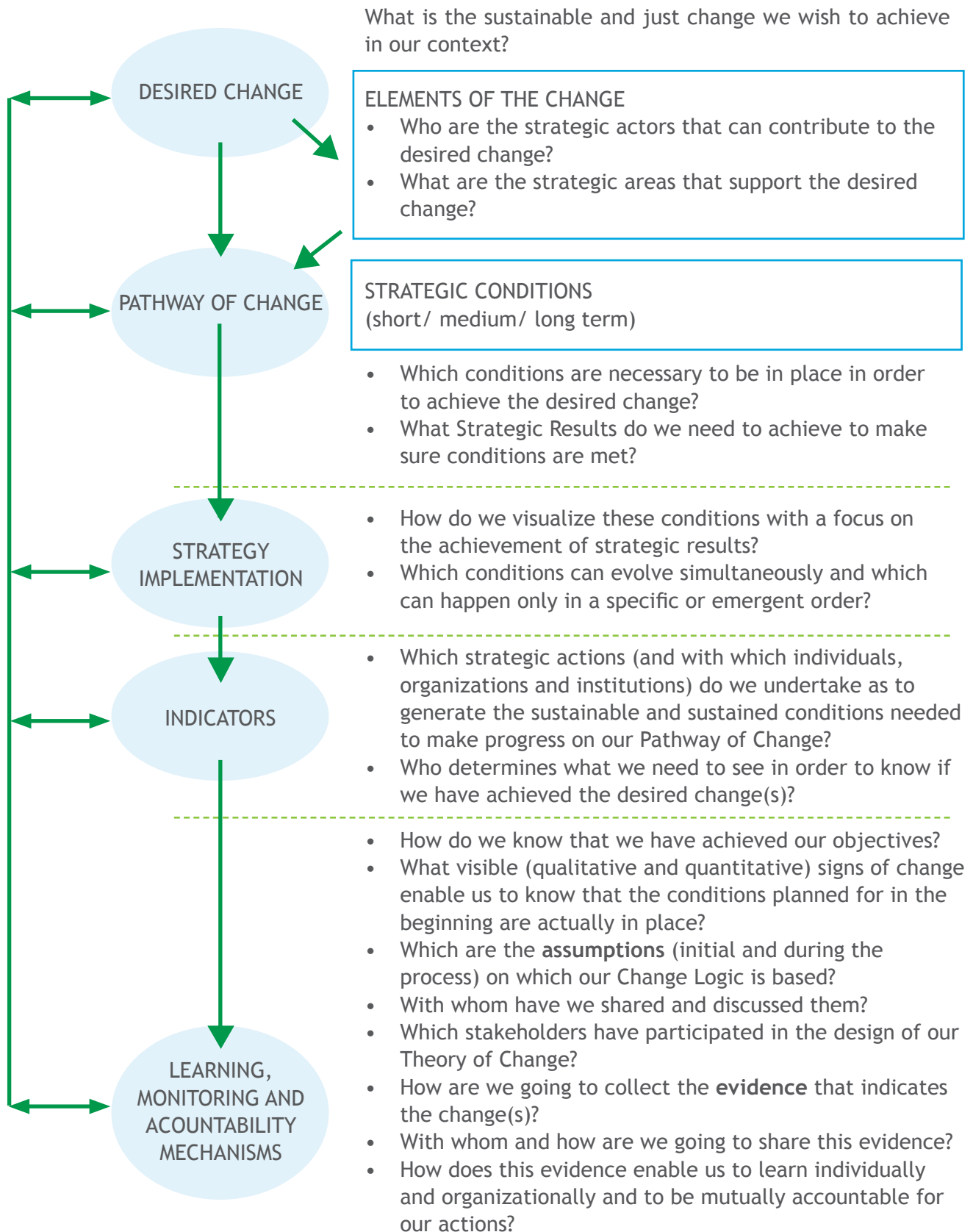
<sup>13</sup> Available at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/studentaffairs/pdf/sa/resources/communications/act.listening.pdf>

Misunderstandings are often caused by how our biases, mental models and past experiences affect what we see and hear.

### **CORRECT ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS FOR THE STORY**

1. I A business man turns off the lights. We don't know if this man is the owner.
2. T He did demand money.
3. I The owner opened the cash register but we don't know if the owner was a man.
4. I We don't know who scooped up the contents of the cash register.
5. T The owner, who is someone, opened a cash register.
6. I We don't know if the person who scooped up the contents was a man. Also, we don't know if the person ran away or drove away. We just know that he or she sped away.
7. I We do not know if there was money in the cash register. We just know that there were contents - could have been jewelry, important papers, anything.
8. I We don't know if the business man and the owner are one or two people.
9. I We don't know if the man dashed, walked, or rolled out of the store. We only know that he sped away.
10. I We don't know if it was a robbery or if the man who demanded money was a robber.
11. I We don't know if it was a robber.

## ANNEX III. THE LOGIC PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A THEORY OF CHANGE





## ANNEX IV. A THEORY OF CHANGE OUTLINE

The following annex proposes a basic content for the outline of a Theory of Change. Each of the sections is accompanied by a group of guiding questions designed to stimulate a better and deeper analysis.

### Name of the initiative

#### 1.- Desired Change

What is the purpose of the change we want to (contribute to) happen?

What are the issues we want to (contribute to) change?

Who are the main stakeholders involved in the change process?

What time span are we visualizing?

At what level are we visualizing those changes (events, patterns, structures)?

#### 2.- Context Analysis

What is the story that would explain the change we want to promote in our context?

Where is this change process happening?

What is the historical background to the process?

What are the political, social and economic conditions affecting or being affected by the change process?

What are the conflict areas and what are the causes?

What sort of relationships are taking place between the stakeholders involved and what are the relational patterns?

What societal structures (formal and non formal institutions) must we consider in our analysis, and how do they affect the process?

What other initiatives are underway and could push for or hinder the change process?

### 3.- Initial assumptions

What are the underlying assumptions of our Theory of Change?

How do we make sure those assumptions are valid and accurate when defining them?

What is it that we are not seeing and needs to be considered?

**NOTE.** It is compulsory to re-visit this section as we move along in the design process. Since the design process is an iterative one, there is a need for constant updating and adjustment. This applies both to the assumptions as well as to the conditions sustaining our Pathway of Change.

### 4.- The Pathway of Change

Which are the Strategic Areas on which we will focus our action?

Which are the Strategic Objectives for each of the areas?

Why these areas and not others?

What are the conditions to be met in each of the Strategic Areas so to achieve the desired change?

What conditions can happen simultaneously and which ones only in a specific order?

What conditions need to happen at short, medium and long term?

What are relationships existing between the visualized conditions and the different dimensions of change (personal, relational, cultural, structural)?

How do these conditions affect or are being affected by the existing dynamics?

How probable is it to achieve the realization of those conditions?

What are the adjustments to be made to the formulation of the conditions we have defined so far?

## **5.- Strategies for process facilitation**

What factors oppose or support our Pathway of Change?

What are the strategic alliances to be established with other stakeholders?

What new stakeholders need to be included in the process?

What are the social, political and strategic communication capacities to be developed by stakeholders so to accomplish a more inclusive and dialogic process?

What sort of power dynamics do we need to promote in the change ecosystem?

How can the change process benefit from both formal and non formal institutions?

Which of those institutions we consider can hinder the process?

What spaces and mechanisms for participation, accountability, learning and decision making are in place?

What are the other spaces that need to be put in place so to achieve greater inclusion and participation of key stakeholders?

## **6.- Change Indicators**

How do we know that the required conditions are evolving, becoming reality?

What are the evidences we see in the context that allow us to know whether we are contributing to the desired change?

Who decides what indicators have to be monitored and measured?

Who collects, selects and analyzes the indicators?

What use do we give to the selected indicators?

## 7.- Monitoring, accountability and learning systems

Who takes part in the design and implementation of the monitoring system? What are the implications regarding the political process of knowledge generation and decision making?

How do we integrate the lessons learnt in relation to our future actions?

Who participates in the monitoring process?

What spaces and places are used for the monitoring process?

To whom do we account to for our actions? Whom do we need to put in the first place, and why?

What are the mechanisms and methods we use for the accountability process?

How do we integrate the lessons learnt deriving from the accountability process in relation to our future actions?

What sort of monitoring and accountability systems do we need to put in place in order to achieve a deeper and more contextualized social learning process?

What are the implications for our organization when applying these sorts of complex and participatory monitoring systems?

What implications does it have at a personal level?

## ANNEX V. METHODOLOGICAL HAND-OUTS

### SHEET

### The Desired Change (Developing the Rich Picture)

# 1

#### STEPS TO FOLLOW

1. Show the elements in the **context** in which we operate (background scenario) that are directly related to our particular case (temporal, geographic, social, cultural, economic, political, etc. dimensions).
2. Identify the **key issues** we face in our process of change.
3. Represent the **actors involved** (public, private, civil society, international community, etc.), **their relationships, values, attitudes, abilities and behavior** as they exist in the framework we are visualizing.
4. Incorporate the **formal and non-formal institutions** (policies, legal frameworks, standards, customs, cultural patterns, values, beliefs, consensual norms, etc.) that support the desired change.
5. The **desired change** can be projected 5-10 years into the future, depending on the decision taken by those who are designing the Theory of Change.

The Rich Picture emerges as a result of **visualizing the present** and, after analyzing current reality, **projecting an image of the future** that shows the **desired changes**. Thus, the **Rich Picture** is comprised of two parts: a reflection of the present and a visualization of the future after the desired change has happened.

Once the Rich Picture has been developed with its snapshots of the present and the future, we need to prioritize the Strategic Areas our organization is going to work on with the aim of **contributing** to the Desired Change. Here are some guidelines for this:

1. Consider the organization's experience and the capacities it has in place, and focus the work on the comparative advantages our organization has.
2. Take into account our affinities and ability to develop strategic alliances with other organizations and institutions.
3. Focus on what it is possible and necessary to work on in the time available.

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

What is the purpose of the change we want to (contribute to) make happen?

What are the political, social, historical and economic conditions that affect or are affected by the change process?

Which societal structures (formal and non-formal institutions and their standards, legal frameworks, cultural practices, etc.) must we consider in our analysis, and how do they affect the process?

What are the issues we want to help to change?

Who are the stakeholders involved in the change process and how do they relate to each other?

What time span are we visualizing?

What is the story we can tell to explain the change we want to promote?

## 2

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

Choose one of the mapping options presented by the facilitator and carry out the exercise by following the steps described here:

1. List the stakeholders in line with the key criteria in the selected method (influence, sectors, positioning, linkages, etc.). This should be an initial, descriptive identification, without going into a detailed analysis for the time being.
2. Prioritize those stakeholders we consider to be the most strategic and critical in relation to our **Desired Change**.
3. Analyze the prioritized stakeholders in detail, depending on where we have located them in the mapping exercise. Look at the situation now and the situation we would like to see in the future, based on our **Desired Change**.
4. Identify possible alliances and/or strategies for building relationships with the strategic actors who will help us to move toward our **Desired Change**.

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Who are the key stakeholders that affect or are affected by the change process?

What are the interests and positions of these stakeholders in relation to the process?

What types of relationships are currently taking place between the stakeholders involved and what relationship patterns exist?

What changes need to take place in these relationships to be able to generate synergies and shared interests in our change process?

What are the historical areas of conflict and the causes of conflict?

What are the assumptions underlying our analysis of the stakeholders, their relationships and strategic alliances



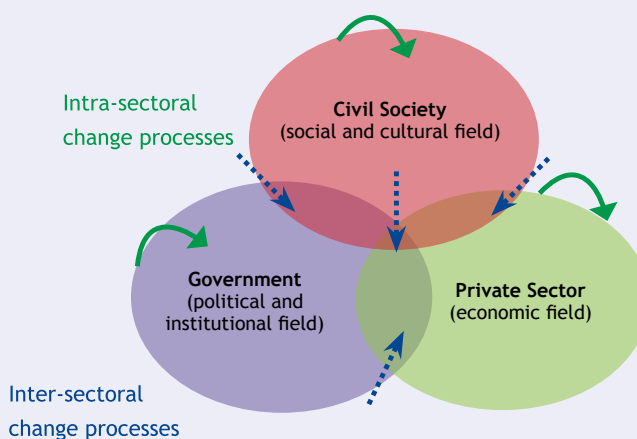
2<sub>a</sub>

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

This analysis is useful in those cases that require a focus on constellations of stakeholders who represent - **from a sectoral point of view** - the set of all the social actors affected by the change process.

The analysis usually starts by identifying and analyzing the actors in at least three sectors fundamental to every society: the public/government sector, the private/business sector, and the civil society/community sector. To complement these three sectors, we may also wish to add the political-party sector or others (eg. the international cooperation sector) on which we want to place particular emphasis.

## THE NEED FOR CROSS-SECTORAL DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIP



The overlapping areas are occupied by “bridge” actors who are capable of creating spaces and dynamics of positive or negative interaction between one sector and another. The quality of the interaction will vary depending on the interest these actors have in the desired change and the actors’ dialogue and negotiation capacity. We can distinguish between the type of actor and its influence on the process (positive or negative interaction) by using cards of different colors, sizes, etc.

If it is felt that the analysis needs to be more complex or detailed, the “level” variable can be incorporated: macro level (national, federal, etc.); meso level (departmental, regional, state, etc.); micro level (municipal, local, community, etc.).

SECTOR	MACRO LEVEL	MESO LEVEL	MICRO LEVEL
PUBLIC/GOVERNMENT			
PRIVATE/BUSINESS			
CIVIL SOCIETY/COMMUNITY			
POLITICAL-PARTY			
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY			
Etc...			

### CARRY OUT THE EXERCISE BY FOLLOWING THESE STEPS:

1. List all the key stakeholders that need to be taken into account, according to which sector they belong to (using different colored cards for each sector). This should be an initial, descriptive identification, without going into a detailed analysis for the time being.
2. Prioritize those stakeholders considered the most strategic and critical in relation to our **Desired Change**.
3. Analyze the priority stakeholders in detail, depending on where we locate them in our mapping exercise: inside the circles or in the overlap areas, possible alliances, conflict in the relations between them, etc.
4. Identify potential alliances and/or strategies for building relationships with those strategic actors who will help us to work toward our **Desired Change**.

### QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Who are the key stakeholders that affect or are affected by the change process?

What are the interests and positions of these stakeholders in relation to the process?

What types of relationships are there between the stakeholders involved and what relationship patterns exist?

What changes need to take place in these relationships to be able to generate synergies and shared interests in our change process?

What inter-sectoral alliances do we need to promote?

What intra-sectoral alliances do we need to promote?

What are the assumptions underlying our analysis of the stakeholders, their relationships and strategic alliances?

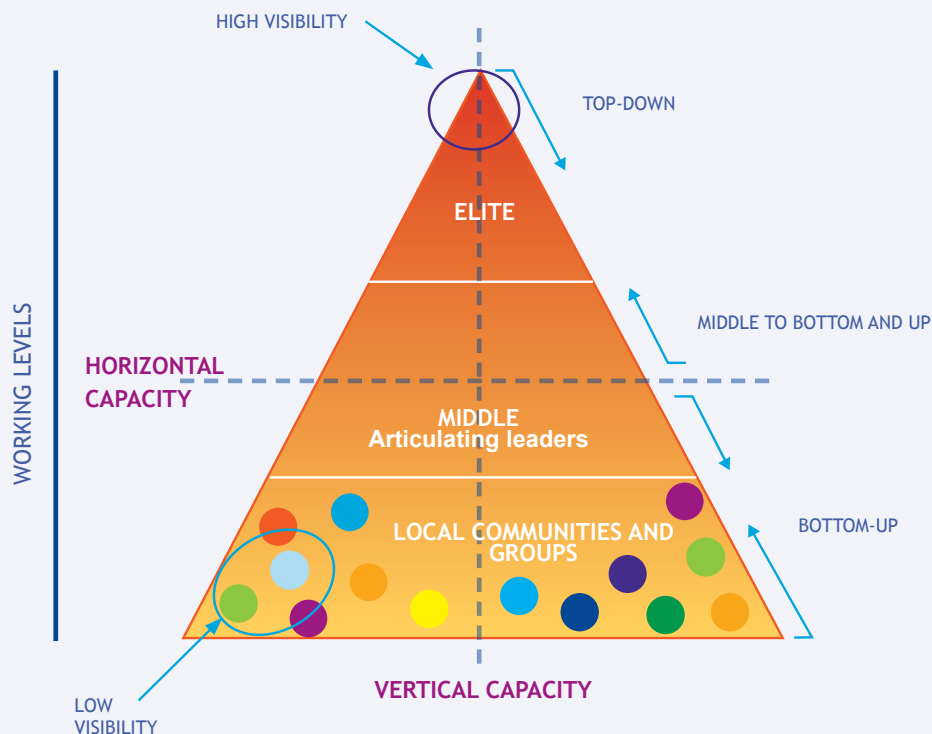
2<sub>b</sub>

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

In this case, the emphasis is on the actors' ability to make links with other actors. Specifically, the analysis looks at the ability to make links in two directions: vertical and horizontal.

The ability to link vertically refers to the extent of the actors' ability and legitimacy to create bridges of understanding, establish relationships of trust, transmit messages between parties, and propose multi-actor negotiation agendas between actors located on different levels. In general terms, those who are able to make links trigger relationships and processes of collective action between actors who hold greater decision-making power at a higher level (elites, national authorities, international organizations, etc.) and those who, although they are distanced from the spheres of hegemonic power, are directly affected by the decisions taken there and can in turn influence the process through collective action (grassroots communities, local producer associations, etc.).

Horizontal linking focuses on the actors' ability to relate to other sectors and leaders of the same rank but who may be located in other social groups or sectors that are also involved in the process of change.



John Paul Lederach, Public Conference, La Paz, 2008

### CARRY OUT THE EXERCISE BY FOLLOWING THESE STEPS:

1. List all the key stakeholders that need to be taken into account. This should be an initial, descriptive identification, without going into a detailed analysis for the time being.
2. Prioritize those stakeholders considered the most strategic and critical in relation to our **Desired Change**.
3. Locate the actors at the two extremes: the top (elites) and the bottom (grassroots organizations, groups affected by but with no participation in decision-making, etc.).
4. Next, identify the actors in the middle who are able to link upward to those above them and downward to those below them.
5. After that, locate those actors in the middle who are able to link horizontally with other sectors/actors who also belong to the middle level. You can use different icons or colors to differentiate between those who are able to make i) vertical links, ii) horizontal links, iii) both at the same time.
6. Prioritize those stakeholders considered the most strategic and critical in relation to our **Desired Change**.
7. Analyze the priority stakeholders in detail, depending on where we locate them in our mapping exercise.
8. Identify potential alliances and/or strategies for building relationships with those strategic actors who will help us to work toward our **Desired Change**.

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Who are the key stakeholders that affect or are affected by the change process (elites, grassroots organizations without decision-making power, etc.)?

What are the interests and positions of these stakeholders in relation to the process?

What types of relationships are there between the stakeholders involved and what relationship patterns exist?

What changes need to take place in these relationships to be able to generate synergies and shared interests in our change process?

What are the historical areas of conflict between them and what are the causes of conflict?

Which are the actors with the ability to link vertically?

Which are the actors with the ability to link horizontally?

Which are the actors with the ability to make links in both directions?

What strategies should we develop to strengthen the links between actors?

What are the assumptions underlying our analysis of the stakeholders, their relationships and strategic alliances?

2<sub>c</sub>

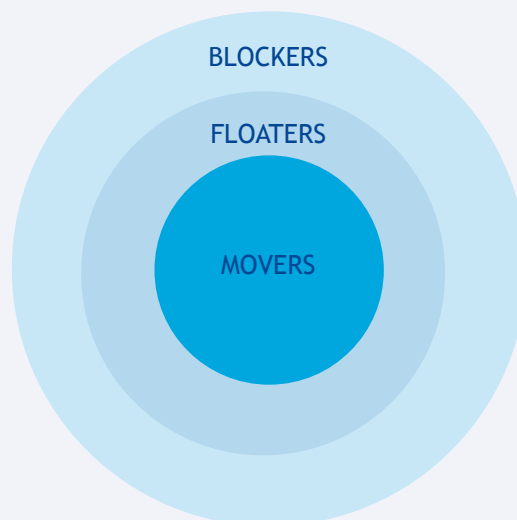
## STEPS TO FOLLOW

In this case, the aim is to identify the position of the stakeholder on the basis of its interest with regard to the desired change. Actors are identified and analyzed on the basis of three categories: movers, floaters and blockers.

*Movers* are those actors who are committed to contributing to the desired change. They are located in the inner circle. There is greater affinity in their interests and it is reasonably easy to establish spaces for relationships and strategic alliances between them.

*Blockers* are those who are against the process because their own interests are negatively affected. They may also block the process because they do not have the necessary information to help them understand that it is possible to incorporate their interests through negotiation/mediation processes. Similarly, they may be blocking the process for reasons of inertia or because of a historical rivalry with the movers or the subject of a change (for example, large landowners blocking an agrarian reform process taken forward by a government supported by less advantaged sectors).

*Floaters* are those actors who occupy a position somewhere in the middle: they do not actively block the process but neither are they committed to supporting it. These actors may also change their position (becoming a blocker or mover) depending on what is most beneficial to their own interests.



## CARRY OUT THE EXERCISE BY FOLLOWING THESE STEPS:

1. List all the key stakeholders that need to be taken into account. This should be an initial, descriptive identification, without going into a detailed analysis for the time being.
2. Prioritize those stakeholders considered the most strategic and critical in relation to our **Desired Change**.
3. Locate all the stakeholders classified as *Movers* in the inner circle. As you locate them in the mapping exercise, analyze the stakeholders' interests in detail.
4. Locate all the stakeholders classified as *Blockers* in the outer circle. As you locate them in the mapping exercise, analyze the stakeholders' interests in detail.
5. Locate all the stakeholders classified as *Floaters* in the middle circle. As you locate them in the mapping exercise, analyze the stakeholders' interests in detail.
6. After taking a general reading of the mapping, analyze the groups of actors categorized as movers or blockers. The aim here is to analyze the supportive or oppositional alliances that may exist between the different stakeholders.
7. Finally, develop possible strategies for approaching or influencing the actors. The purpose of this is to see what strategies would help us to attract the floaters, neutralize or divide the blockers, and/or strengthen alliances between the movers.
8. As in the case of the previous maps, we can carry out a more detailed analysis if we use icons and visual ways of differentiating the sector to which the actors belong. This allows us to arrive at an analysis on two levels: sector (with an emphasis on identity and knowledge), and position (with an emphasis on interest and the quality of relationships).

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Who are the key stakeholders that affect or are affected by the change process?

What are the interests and positions of these stakeholders in relation to the process?

What types of relationships are there between the stakeholders involved and what relationship patterns exist?

What changes need to take place in these relationships to be able to generate synergies and shared interests in our change process?

What blocking alliances and synergies exist between the stakeholders?

What sort of alliances should we promote between movers and floaters?

What sort of strategies should we implement to divide the blockers?

What strategies should we implement to bring the floaters and blockers closer to our position?

What are the assumptions underlying our analysis of the stakeholders, their relationships and strategic alliances?



2<sub>d</sub>

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

This map focuses on the actors' capacity to influence the process of change, either today or in the future. This type of analysis can be combined with the sectoral one, by identifying the actors according to sector, and then positioning them in the quadrants of the influence map. This can be visualized very clearly by using different visual codes (codification icons, cards with different colors or shapes, etc.)



## CARRY OUT THE EXERCISE BY FOLLOWING THESE STEPS:

1. List all the key stakeholders that need to be taken into account. This should be an initial, descriptive identification, without going into a detailed analysis for the time being.
2. Prioritize those stakeholders considered the most strategic and critical in relation to our **Desired Change**.
3. Locate each stakeholder in the influence quadrant it belongs to.
4. Analyze each stakeholder's influencing role (how and why does it exert an influence, etc.)
5. Analyze the relationships between actors from different sectors inside each quadrant.
6. Develop strategies for making alliances inside each quadrant between different stakeholders (from the same sector or different sectors).
7. Develop strategies for making alliances between the top two quadrants (among actors from the same sector or different sectors).
8. Develop strategies to influence the stakeholders located in the bottom two quadrants. Analyze how we can approach and strengthen those actors whose influence is weak. Analyze how we can deal with those actors whose influence is negative (by persuading them or putting them in quarantine).

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Who are the key stakeholders that affect or are affected by the change process?

What are the interests and positions of these stakeholders in relation to the process?

What types of relationships are there between the stakeholders involved and what relationship patterns exist?

What changes need to take place in these relationships to be able to generate synergies and shared interests in our change process?

What sort of alliances should we promote between the actors in the top left quadrant?

What sort of alliances should we promote between the actors in the top two quadrants?

How can we strengthen those actors whose influence is weak, in such a way as to benefit the process?

What type of strategies and actions are we going to take forward to minimize the impact of the actors whose influence is negative?

What are the assumptions underlying our analysis of the stakeholders, their relationships and strategic alliances?

## 3

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

1. Decide which stage in the methodology we are going to look at to analyze the assumptions (the Desired Change, Agents of Change, Pathway of Change, Indicators, Monitoring, etc.).
2. Review the main elements in this methodological stage and formulate the questions to reflect on.
3. Analyze whether the assumption is false or whether it is an assumption that leads to or allows the analysis, strategy or result to happen. If it doesn't, review/reformulate the methodological stage and the reasoning on which it is based.

**Note.** It is compulsory to revisit this section as we move forward in designing our Theory of Change. This is because the process of designing the Theory of Change is iterative and we need to keep reviewing both the assumptions and the elements and conditions sustaining the Pathway of Change.

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

What initial assumptions is our Desired Change based on? What are the assumptions underlying each of the methodological stages in our Theory of Change?

What are we not seeing that we need to see?

What mechanisms do we have for explaining and reviewing our assumptions?

With whom have we shared and argued these assumptions?

Which assumptions should we reconsider?

How do we react when someone questions our assumptions?

## 4

**STEPS TO FOLLOW****Step 1. Review of Strategic Areas**

Before starting to outline the Pathway of Change, we must look back on what we have done so far:

- i. Do we need to make any adjustments to the previous methodological stages?
- ii. Are the Strategic Areas we have defined the right and most relevant ones?
- iii. Do we need to adjust the Strategic Objectives?
- iv. Have we properly mapped and analyzed the key stakeholders or do we need to adjust this?
- v. Are we taking into account all the main institutions that affect or are affected by our change process?
- vi. How do the different Strategic Areas relate to each other? Is the relationship coherent?
- vii. Is there anything we have missed in our analysis so far? If so, should we include it?

**Step 2. Brainstorming session to identify the necessary conditions**

Once we have completed the previous step, we need to ground our analysis by identifying the conditions we need to work on if we are to make progress toward our Desired Change: changes in institutions, attitudes, behavior, social and institutional relations, organizational capacities, legal conditions, cultural practices, mental models, etc. Firstly, we must identify the conditions necessary for achieving change in the strategic areas (these in turn will lead us to the Desired Change).

We will now hold a brainstorming session to identify the conditions, based on the following questions:

- i. What conditions need to be in place for the Strategic Areas to develop?
- ii. What conditions need to be in place in the short/medium/long term?
- iii. How do these conditions affect our process?
- iv. How do these conditions relate to the outcomes we want to bring about in our context?
- v. How realistic is it to believe we can achieve or promote these conditions?
- vi. How can we set out these conditions in a Strategic Results format?

**Step 3. Groupings and design of the pathway of change** Once we have finished the brainstorming session, we need to critically analyze whether these conditions are already in place or whether there is a high probability that they can be met in the time span we have defined for our Desired Change. If this is not the case, then we need to review the scope of our Desired Change and its Strategic Areas to adjust it to what is probable and possible. This iterative process of going back and forth really helps us to properly frame the scope and likelihood of the change we want to work towards, verify the validity of our assumptions and make sure that our Desired Change has a high probability of being achieved to an extent that is acceptable and justifies our action.

Once the members of the group have finished brainstorming, we need to group those ideas that are similar so that we can synthesize them and identify new categories based on affinity and similarity. We should set out the conditions in a Strategic Results format. Some of these conditions will be closer to each other in time. When we look at them in terms of the present moment and context, some are easier and more likely to be achieved. Others are more complex and require some other conditions to be in place beforehand. Some are easier to envision and others are difficult to see clearly. Some need the complicity of other conditions, so they occur simultaneously. Some conditions are self-reliant and others have different degrees of inter-dependence with other conditions. Some are predictable and others less so. Some are specific and particular to a context and others are more general. There are some that we are never going to be able to envision at this precise moment in time because they arise from complex dynamics that we will only be able to understand retrospectively.

We need to carry out this type of analysis to reach a better understanding of the complexity of our Pathway of Change.

As we go along, we should identify the assumptions underlying our key conditions. This will help us to understand whether the conditions are based on verifiable and realistic assumptions, or whether we are working on the basis of false assumptions. If that is the case, we need to review the scope and definition of our conditions.

These conditions involve changes in: formal and non-formal institutions, the quality of the relations between key stakeholders, social and technical abilities, individual/organizational/collective behavior and attitudes, more conducive environments (legal, operational, physical, new or improved knowledge bases, technology, infrastructure, public policies, etc.)

Remember that each condition should be expressed as a Strategic Process Result so that we can connect our actions to explicit outcomes in the change context.

While we are doing this detailed analysis, we should develop our Pathway of Change, locating the conditions based on i) a time sequence (short/medium/long term), ii) an inter-dependent relationship (visualizing how some conditions influence others in relation to the Strategic Areas and the Desired Change).

We can either do this exercise for each Strategic Area or on the basis of a more general analysis of the whole process we have gone through so far.

**WARNING:** There is a tendency to depict the Pathway of Change in an excessively linear way that fails to reflect the complexity of our analysis. This is because our minds have been strongly influenced by the education system, our family, culture, etc. Reality, however, is neither strictly linear nor predictable. There are other ways of “telling the story” that more effectively reflect the richness of the conversations the group has had when collectively analyzing the dynamics of the Pathway of Change, how the conditions relate to the results we want to achieve, and how these in turn will help to bring about the Desired Change.

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

What are the conditions that need to be met in each of the strategic areas in order to achieve the desired change?

Which conditions can happen simultaneously and which are sequential?

What conditions need to be in place in the short, medium and long term?

How do the conditions visualized relate to the different dimensions of change (personal, relational, cultural, structural)?

How likely is it that we can bring about these conditions?

What factors obstruct or facilitate our pathway of change?

What sort of power dynamics do we need to promote in the surrounding environment?

How can we use formal and non-formal institutions to the benefit of our process?

What are the assumptions underlying our analysis of the Pathway of Change and our identification of the conditions?

## 5

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

First, a warning: the indicators of change in a Theory of Change are not the same as the performance indicators that we may find in a traditional Logical Framework. By defining indicators of change, we are seeking to better understand how to read the context in order to see what effects we can perceive in this context as a result of our actions. These indicators allow us to better understand how change is really happening and what our **contribution** is to that change. So, when we are defining the indicators, we should bear in mind that the mere fact of carrying out an activity does not necessarily mean that we are making a real contribution to bringing about the changes we initially envisaged. A regular review of these indicators will help us to adjust our Theory of Change at both the political-strategic level (action on the conditions for change) and at the cognitive level (assumptions supporting our change rationale). The change indicators will be related to the observation of the conditions identified in our Theory of Change. So, the indicators should help us to understand **to what extent and in what way** these conditions are occurring in the environment. Therefore, we should:

1. Review, and adjust if necessary, the conditions in our Pathway of Change and the steps we took beforehand.
2. Identify at least one change indicator for each condition, based on the following questions: *What do we see in the context that allows us to affirm that a certain condition is occurring? What evidence do we have of this?*
3. Identify whether these indicators show changes at the personal/relational/cultural structural level.

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Who decides what we need to observe in order to know if we have achieved the desired changes?

What signs of change can we observe in the environment that allow us to determine whether the conditions identified at the outset are actually taking place?

How are we going to collect the **evidence** indicating the change?

On what assumptions are we basing our analysis of the indicators?

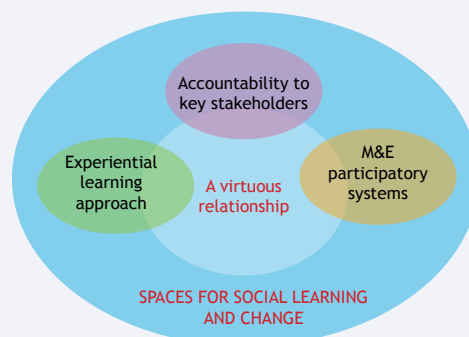
What strategies, actions and alliances can we identify as contributing to the change?

What factors may have had an influence in delaying or obstructing the desired change?

What have we not done/seen that we should have done/seen?

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

The final question in our methodological journey focuses on identifying and promoting the relationship between learning, monitoring and accountability. In practice, this relationship is not particularly clear, but it is essential to make it explicit and give it due attention.



Once you have reviewed the indicators and the assumptions underlying them,

1. Identify what mechanisms exist or must be put in place for gathering information based on the indicators. Analyze the extent to which these mechanisms i) are participatory (who participates in the design of the mechanisms, the information gathering and the analysis of the indicators?) and ii) include quantitative and qualitative elements (in the identification and gathering of evidence).
2. Analyze who is accountable for the results obtained on the basis of the monitoring analysis. Redefine these dynamics and identify what strategies and methods we are going to use to communicate progress or shortcomings in the achievement of results (eg. reports, radio spots, workshops, bulletins, opinion surveys, etc.).
3. Identify what type of information we are going to share with which stakeholders (donors, communities, grassroots organizations, allies, authorities, the general public, etc.) and how we are going to communicate it (different audiences need different media and different language).
4. Identify the feedback strategies and mechanisms we need to put in place to receive comments, suggestions, observations, new learning, recommendations for changing the approach/strategy, etc. from the key stakeholders identified in the previous point.
5. Design a learning system inside our organization that will enable us to i) analyze the emerging changes that are taking place in the context (conditions, actors, assumptions, legal-institutional frameworks, etc.), ii) reflect critically on the role that our organization is playing in the change process, iii) systematically identify the changes that need to take place in our organization and the capabilities we need to develop, based on the changes in the surrounding environment, iv) achieve other goals you think are important.



## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Who decides on the design of the indicators and the monitoring system?

What are the guiding criteria?

What mechanisms do we need to implement to achieve increased and more diverse participation in the review of our Theory of Change?

What strategies and mechanisms do we use to incorporate what we learn from participatory monitoring in our organization's work?

What conditions need to be in place for the organization to adopt monitoring mechanisms linked to learning and accountability?

What methods should we use to explain experiential learning processes to our team and the stakeholders we work with, and how can we strengthen these processes?

On what assumptions are we basing our analysis of the indicators?

How do we connect our personal and organizational learning with the monitoring system and accountability to key stakeholders?

## ANNEX VI. THE LEARNING JOURNAL. A POWERFUL TOOL TO DEEPEN OUR REFLEXIVE PRACTICE

The following inquiry questions are designed to help you deepen your reflexive learning process during the workshop. These are questions to be explored as you move along the workshop: with yourself and with your learning peer. It is not a checklist to be filled in every time you concentrate in your learning journal. You can choose to explore different questions everyday or you may want to focus just on some of them throughout the workshop. Please feel free to use them in such a way that helps you better reflect on yourself and the role you play in those processes in which you are engaged.

How do my mental models and multiple identities affect my relationships and the way I see the world?

What is the role I am playing in the processes I am engaged in?

What are the prejudices and pre-concepts I have that need to be questioned and changed?

What is it that I am unlearning?

What am I learning about myself and my organization?

What is it that I am not seeing but need to see?

What do I need to explore deeper with my learning peer?

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# THEORY OF CHANGE

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