

# ***Developmental Evaluation***

Evaluation to support the  
development of  
innovation in complex  
situations



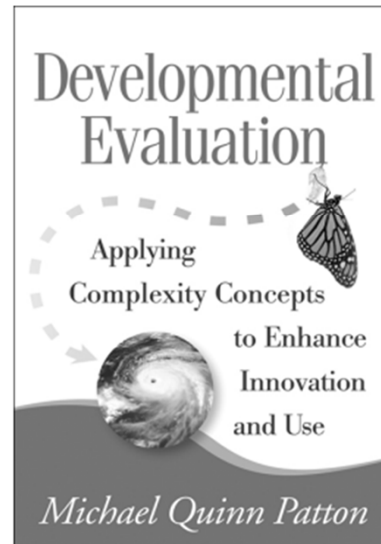
“No go. The evaluation committee said it doesn’t meet utility specs. They want something linear, stable, controllable, and targeted to reach a pre-set destination. They couldn’t see any use for this.”

In Michael Quinn Patton, *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*, Guilford Press, June 2010

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## *Sources for this presentation*

First and foremost is the book by Michael Quinn Patton to be published by Guilford Press in June 2010



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This presentation is based on the concept of Developmental Evaluation elaborated by Michael Quinn Patton over the past 20 years and now crystallised in a book – *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*, to be published by Guilford Press in June 2010

## *Sources for this presentation*

My own experience:

Commenting in the course of last year on the manuscript of *Developmental Evaluation*

Working as a developmental evaluator for two international social change networks, a US-based NGO, an action-research project in Peru, and a Dutch foundation

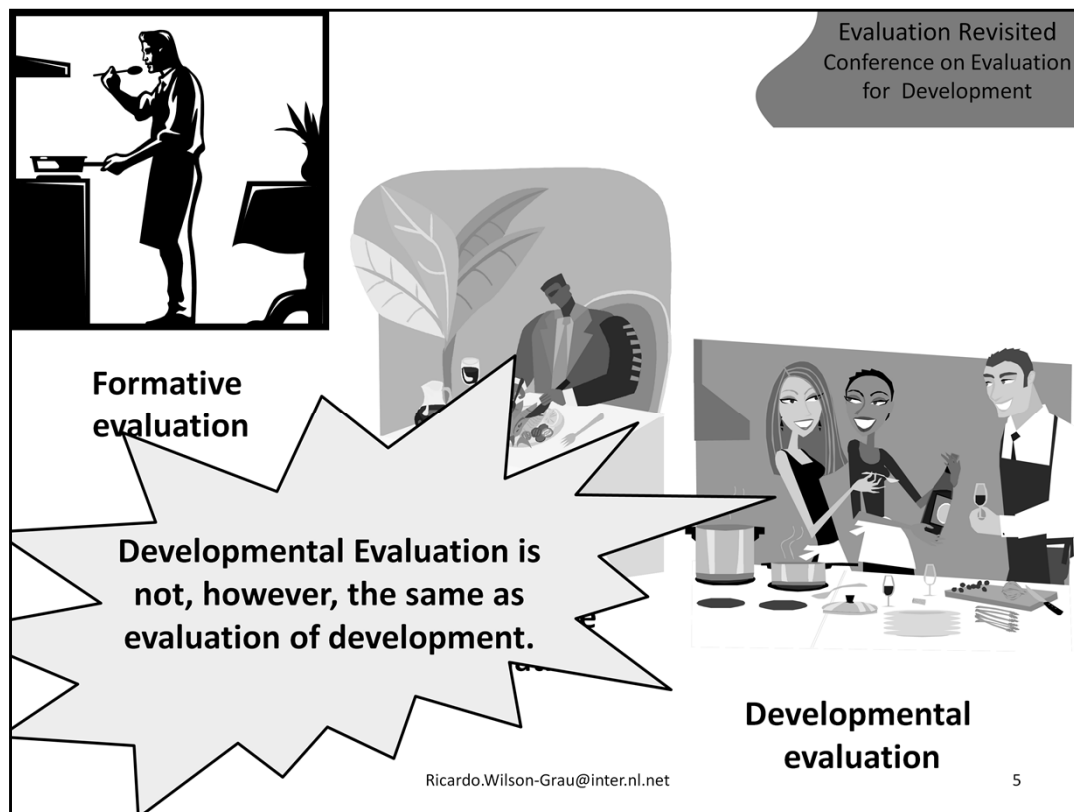
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*At his request, in the course of last year I commented on his manuscript.*

In addition to engaging with Patton as he wrote his manuscript, my practical experience has been working as a developmental evaluator supporting five organisations. I have been involved in creating planning, monitoring and evaluation systems for four organisations. They include the Global Water Partnership and its 70-plus national water partnerships in 13 regions around the world; the NGO Free The Slaves in India, Nepal and Western Africa; the Global Platform for the Prevention of Armed Conflict in 15 regions; and an IDRC-sponsored action-research Eco-Health project in Lima, Perú. In addition, I am advising a fifth organisation, the Dutch Doen Foundation's development of a new strategy for arts and culture grant making in Senegal, Mali, Kenya and Uganda.

# *What Developmental Evaluation is and is not*

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- "When the cook tastes the soup, that's **formative** evaluation." (Bob Stake)

-When the guest tastes it, that's **summative** evaluation." (Bob Stake)

- "When a guest and a cook concoct a soup together, that co-creation is **Developmental Evaluation**." (Michael Quinn Patton)

- **Developmental Evaluation** is easily confused with international development evaluation. They are not the same, though Developmental Evaluation can be used in the evaluation of development. Developmental Evaluation supports the development of innovation, which can include an economic, political, social, cultural, technological, environmental or other type of development intervention. **Development evaluation** is about evaluating programmes, usually in developing countries, sponsored or funded through the different mechanisms of international development co-operation.

## *Developmental Evaluation Defined*

“Evaluate processes, including asking evaluative questions and applying evaluation logic, to support program, product, staff and/or organizational development.

“The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design and test new approaches in a long-term, on-going process of continuous improvement, adaptation and intentional change.

“The evaluator's primary function in the team is to elucidate team discussions with evaluative questions, data and logic, and facilitate data-based decision-making in the developmental process.”

-Michael Quinn Patton

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## *Right conditions*

Your intervention model does not yet exist; it is to be created

The model exists but must be developed (versus improved)

The situation is complex –the most important relationships of cause and effect are fundamentally unknown

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- Your intervention model does not yet exist; it is to be created
- The model exists but must be developed (versus improved)
- The situation is complex –the most important relationships of cause and effect are fundamentally unknown

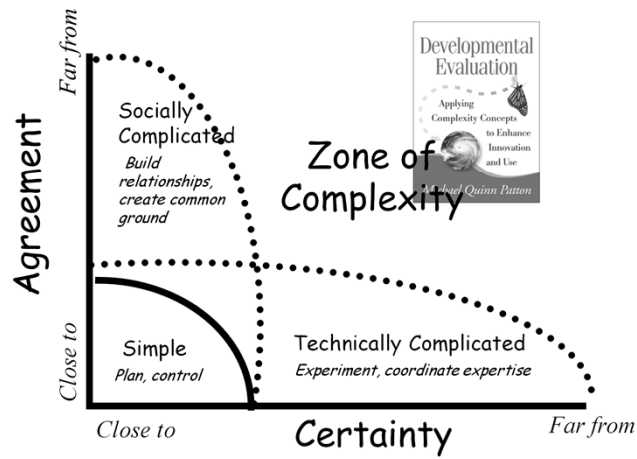
In sum.... Can you all read the text in the cartoon? *“No go. The evaluation committee said it doesn’t meet utility specs. They want something linear, stable, controllable, and targeted to reach a pre-set destination. They couldn’t see any use for this.”*

*Developmental Evaluation and  
complexity as we know it...*

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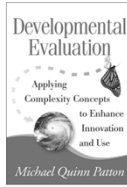
# In Zimmerman's matrix



Michael Quinn Patton The Evaluators Institute 2010

In Zimmerman's matrix, here is where Developmental Evaluation comes into the picture.

## *In Snowden's cynefin*



### **COMPLEX**

Cause and effect are only coherent in retrospect and do not repeat

### **KNOWABLE**

Cause and effect separated over time and space

No cause and effect relationships perceivable

### **CHAOS**

Cause and effect relations repeatable, perceivable and predictable

### **KNOWN**

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And in Snowden's cynefin, Developmental Evaluation fits here

## *Developmental Evaluation and systems thinking too*

In addition to complex nonlinear dynamics,  
Developmental Evaluation is especially appropriate  
when systems thinking is present in social innovation

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Michael Quinn Patton emphasises that in addition to complex nonlinear dynamics, Developmental Evaluation is especially appropriate when systems thinking is present in social innovation .

Of course, systems thinking and complexity come together with Complex Adaptive Systems but let me highlight the three systems concepts that are central to Developmental Evaluation, as I understand it at least.

# *Elephant Metaphor*

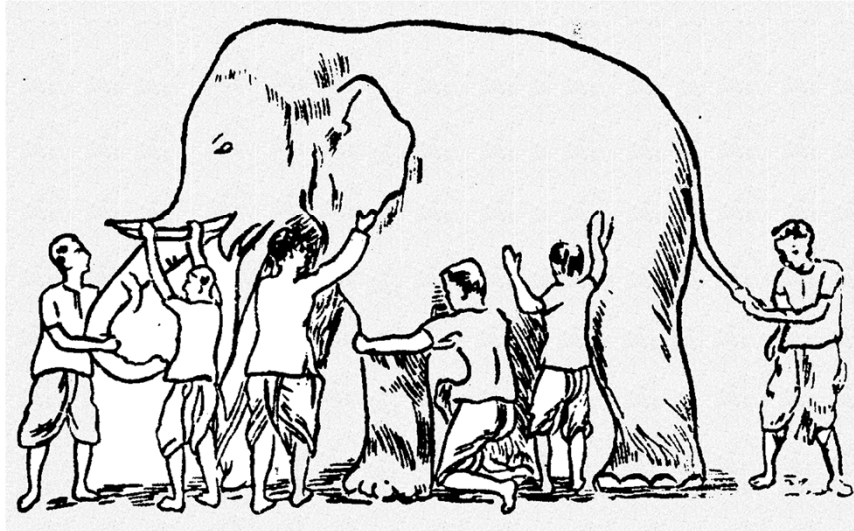
Inspired and informed by Michael Quinn Patton and Bob Williams



These slides were inspired and informed by Michael Quinn Patton and by Bob Williams, whom many of you know as a leading thinker on systems and evaluation. As you can see, I stand on the shoulders of giants.

## *The system is more than the sum of its parts*

Evaluation Revisited  
Conference on Evaluation  
for Development



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I am sure many of you are familiar with the elephant metaphor to explain that *the system is more than the sum of its parts*.

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, "Hey, there is an elephant in the village today." They had no idea what an elephant is. They decided, "Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway." All of them went where the elephant was. Everyone of them touched the elephant.

"Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man who touched his leg.

"Oh, no! it is like a rope," said the second man who touched the tail.

"Oh, no! it is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man who touched the trunk of the elephant.

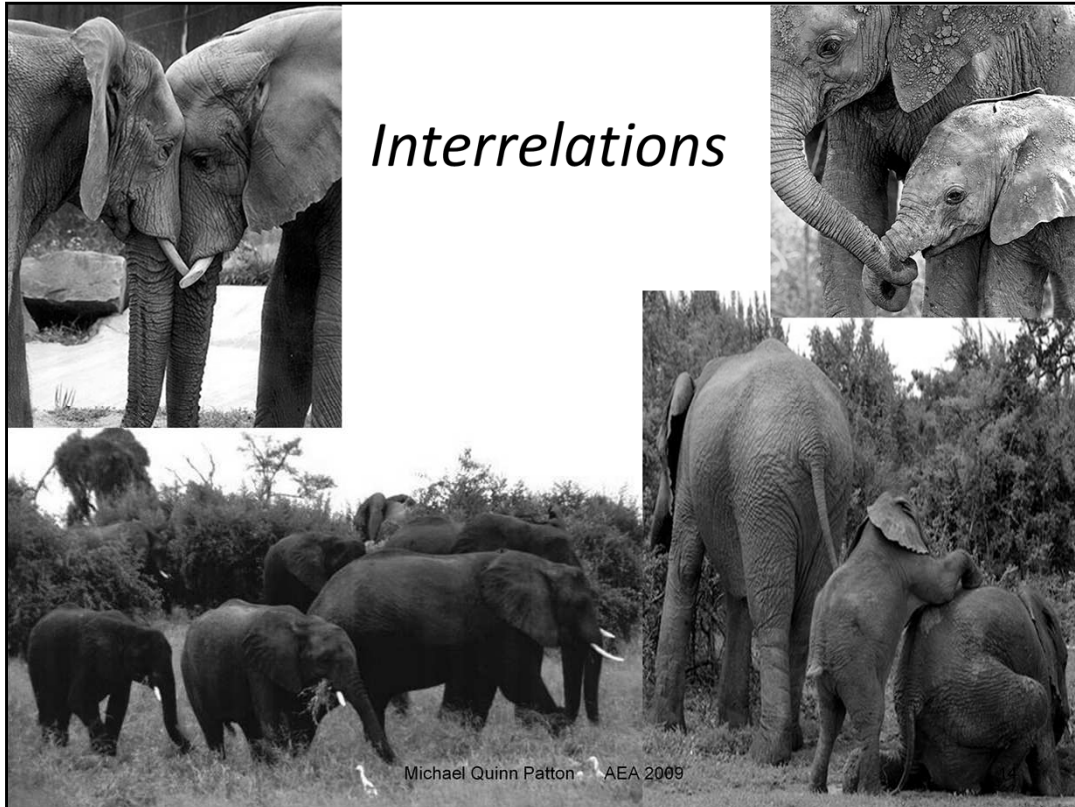
"It is like a big hand fan" said the fourth man who touched the ear of the elephant.

"It is like a huge wall," said the fifth man who touched the belly of the elephant.

"It is like a solid pipe," Said the sixth man who touched the tusk of the elephant.

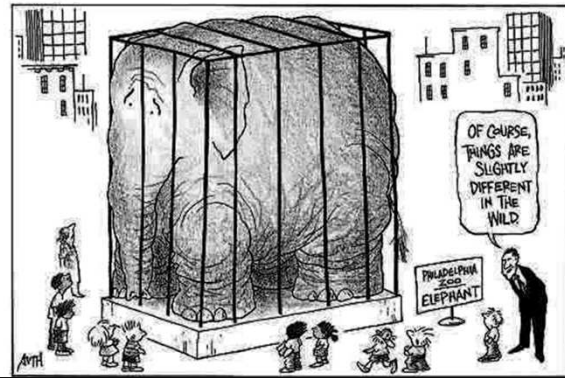
They could not agree what the elephant is like until a wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right. The reason every one of you is telling it differently because each one of you touched the different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all those features what you all said."

But you will not understand the elephant, or a system, by seeing all the parts as a whole.



No elephant is an island. Understanding an elephant requires understanding the relations of its parts but also the elephant's relationships. To begin, an elephant is a highly social animal.

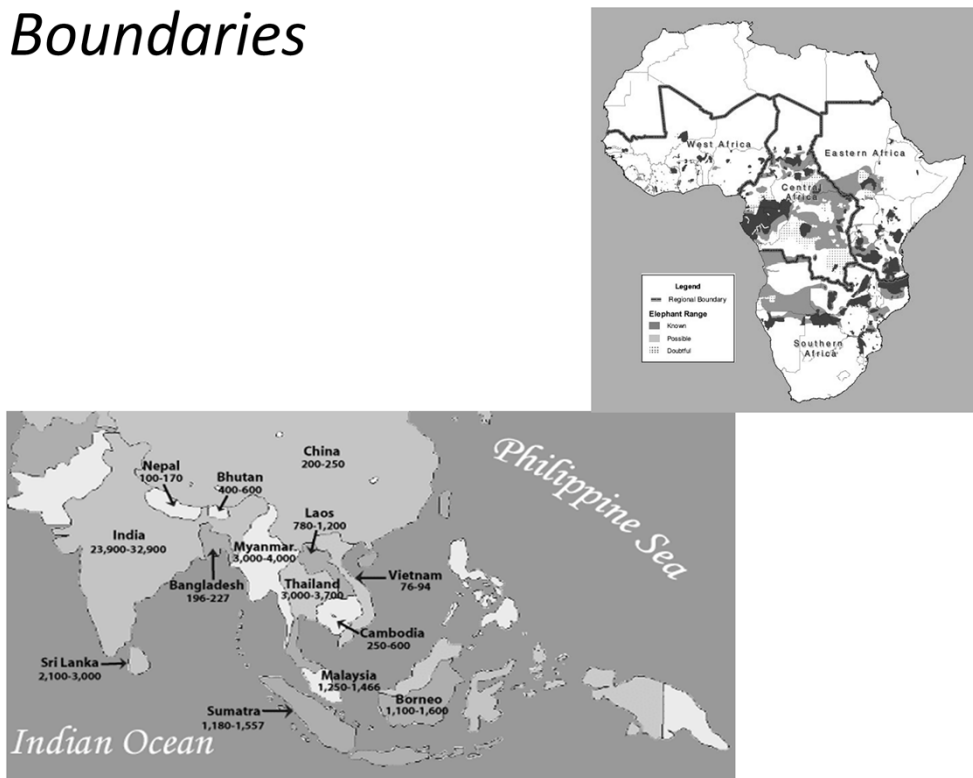
# Boundaries



Understanding the **boundaries** of the system is necessary to understand the system.

What are we talking about when we say “elephant”? We are not talking about elephant seals or elephant carvings. Do we mean elephants in the wild or elephants in the zoo.

# Boundaries



Similarly, do we mean African or Asian elephants.



## *Different perspectives*



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Relationships and boundaries are important to understanding an elephant as a system. So too are the different **perspectives** that exist about elephants. For some people, they are to be revered.



For some animals they are food, and for some humans a source of ivory.



For other humans, elephants are for work or play



*Or for fertilizer or leisure.*

*And as in many systems, elephants often can upset the best plans of men and women.*

(Note: I could not resist this somewhat risqué last photo but of course it depends on the audience. Can also end with the fertilizer pic.)

## *Developmental Evaluation and systems thinking*

Monitors and assesses:

- The changes in the **relationships** between the components of a system
- The appropriateness of the **boundaries** we use for the components of the system
- The different **perspectives** about what changes and how it changes through a development intervention

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In sum, from a systemic point of view, Developmental Evaluation monitors and assesses:

- The changes in the **relationships** between the components of a system.
- The appropriateness of the **boundaries** we use for the components of the system.
- The different **perspectives** about what changes and how it changes through a development intervention.

## *Comparing traditional and Developmental Evaluation\**

**Traditional** programme  
evaluation tendencies in  
development  
interventions

Complexity-sensitive  
**Developmental** Evaluation  
in development  
interventions

\* These next slides are adapted from Exhibit 1.2, Chapter 1, Michael Quinn Patton, *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*, Guilford Press, forthcoming 2010

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In these next slides, I will compare and contrast some of the most important aspects of traditional and developmental evaluation practice. They are adapted from the first chapter of Patton's book, which is full of fascinating examples from his own evaluation practice. Today, however, I will attempt to exemplify the points from my own experience.

## *Evaluation focus*

### **Traditional**

Evaluation is top-down  
(theory-driven) or bottoms-up  
(participatory)

### **Developmental**

Evaluation helps innovators  
navigate the “muddled middle  
ground” where top-down and  
bottom-up forces intersect and  
often collide

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### **Evaluation focus**

Traditional Evaluation *tends to be top-down (theory-driven) or bottoms-up (participatory).*

In contrast, Developmental Evaluation *helps innovators navigate the muddled middle ground where top-down and bottom-up forces intersect and often collide.* For example, the DOEN Foundation’s art and culture programme wants to develop a policy to guide decisions and activities for their international cultural programme informed by what the ultimate beneficiaries consider most important to themselves as artists. They agreed to contract an artist evaluator who would use the Most Significant Change methodology to understand the meaning of the artistic and cultural activities they have been supporting. This was aimed at generating insight on the strategies DOEN and its grantees have been using.

The MSC methodology addressed precisely the “muddled middle ground” by involving first those who had ultimately benefitted (the “bottom”) in Senegal, Mali, Kenya and Uganda in telling their stories, and then the DOEN grantees who had provided cultural opportunities and services to those artists and others (“top” to beneficiaries but “bottom” to DOEN), and the DOEN staff (“top”) based in Amsterdam.

## Evaluation questions

### Traditional

Where have problems encountered in implementing the intervention model solved in a way that is faithful to the model?

To what extent have the intervention model's specified outcomes been achieved as predicted?

What has been learned about how to fully and faithfully replicate the model?

### Developmental

What intervention model is being developed?

How is what is being developed and what is emerging to be judged?

Given what has been developed so far and what has emerged, what is next?

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### Evaluation Questions

Typically, Traditional Evaluation poses questions such as:

*Where problems encountered in implementing the intervention model solved in a way that is faithful to the model?*

*To what extent have the intervention model's specified outcomes been achieved as predicted?*

*What has been learned about how to fully and faithfully replicate the model?*

Developmental Evaluation, however, is more interested in answering other questions about the *intervention model under development*:

For example, the Global Platform for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) introduced an Outcome Mapping PME system in 2007. In 2009, the person in charge asked me to advise her in doing a review. Her questions were basically:

*How is what they were developing – the monitoring system – and what is emerging to be judged?*

*Given what has been developed so far and what has emerged, what is next in GPPAC's adaptation of Outcome Mapping to meet their needs?*

They had used the methodology for planning and now wanted to use it for monitoring. Since the purpose of GPPAC's PME system is to support the achievement of results, we decided to focus the review on the outcomes that GPPAC was achieving and based on those findings, GPPAC is now making decisions to modify their adaptation of Outcome Mapping.



## Modelling approach

### Traditional

Designs the evaluation based on a linear cause-effect logic model: specifies inputs to activities/processes, then outputs to outcomes to impacts

Causality is modeled, hypothesized, and predicted, then tested

### Developmental

Designs the evaluation using systems thinking to capture and map complex systems dynamics and inter-dependencies, and track emergent interconnections

Causality is based on pattern-detection (inference to the best explanation), retrospectively constructed from observations

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### Modelling approach

Traditional Evaluation designs the evaluation based on a linear cause-effect logic model. It specifies inputs to activities/processes, then outputs to outcomes to impacts. Causality is modeled, hypothesized, and predicted, then tested.

Developmental Evaluation designs the evaluation using systems thinking to capture and map complex systems dynamics and inter-dependencies, and track emergent interconnections. For example, in the Peruvian EcoHealth action research project supported by IDRC, we designed and are experimenting with a M&E model to enable the project-implementers to understand the systemic impact they are and are not having. The monitoring consists of “harvesting” in real time results understood as changes in the behaviour, relationships, actions, policies or practices (“outcomes” as understood in Outcome Mapping) of the a) garbage recyclers and their families, of b) the local authorities and of c) the action-research team – the three social actors who form part of the system we are focusing on. We then periodically analyse those outcomes through the lens of the three systems concepts I mentioned earlier. We look at the interrelationships between these actors. Then we find out what are their varying perspectives on the range of outcomes. And we also consider whether or not the boundaries we established are appropriate – for example, are there other social actors whom we should consider as part of the system?

Another dimension is that we in the tradition of forensic science, we seek to understand *causality* – how did the action-research project contribute to the outcomes? We do this by *detecting patterns of activities and outputs retrospectively constructed from the changes we observed*.

# Counterfactuals

## Traditional

Counterfactuals a dominant concern to deal with attribution

## Developmental

Counterfactual formulations fairly meaningless because of complexity

Far too many variables and possibilities emerging and interacting dynamically to conceptualize simple counterfactuals

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## Counterfactuals

In Traditional Evaluation *counterfactuals are a dominant concern to deal with attribution.*

In Developmental Evaluation, *counterfactual formulations are fairly meaningless because of complexity*, as well as politics or ethics. For example, Free the Slaves works principally in Nepal, India, Western Africa and Haiti. I am supporting them in adapting Outcome Mapping to their PME needs with their partner organisations in those countries. In theory they could have populations that they consider their control groups...if the work was on a sufficient scale and they had very large sums of money available for the research. In any case, the magnitude of the problem of slavery is so large that there are *far too many variables and possibilities emerging and interacting dynamically to conceptualize simple counterfactuals*. Furthermore, there is an ethical issue too: The cost of properly researching a hidden problem like the presence and prevalence of slavery is quite high. Thus, under-taking the in-depth, necessarily participative research necessary to understand the problem in a community, only then to go away without taking some action – keeping them as a control group – presents ethical challenges.

## Measurement approach

### Traditional

Measure performance and success against predetermined goals and SMART outcomes: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound

### Developmental

Develops measures and tracking mechanisms quickly as outcomes emerge

Measures can change during the evaluation as the process unfolds

Tracks the forks in the road and implications of key decisions as innovation evolves

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### Measurement approach

Traditional Evaluation *measures performance and success against predetermined goals and SMART outcomes: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.*

Developmental Evaluation is quite different. The Global Water Partnership operates in a highly complex, dynamic environment. It has thousands of members who are constantly changing, grouped into 60-70 country water partnerships, whose actual number at any given moment is unknown, and they are grouped into 13 regional water partnerships with a global secretariat in Stockholm.

GWP decided to first focus on results because they had a very successful track record of activities and outputs. Over ten years they had placed the issue of integrated water resource management on the environmental agenda. Thus, we created a monitoring procedure to *develop measures and tracking mechanisms as outcomes emerge*. We introduced the procedure into one region and according to what did and did not work, adjusted it for the next region. That is, *the measures could change as the process unfolded*. We *tracked the forks in the road* – specifically how different regions had to adjust the monitoring procedure – and used this information to point out *the implications of key decisions as the innovative monitoring system evolved*. Consequently, their donors have begun to be informed of the governmental policy and practice changes that had been and continue to occur constantly, and which GWP had – directly or indirectly, usually partially and often sometimes unintentionally – influenced.

## Organisational locus

### Traditional

Evaluation to demonstrate accountability to external authorities  
Often a compliance function delegated down in the organization and/or outside to an external evaluator

### Developmental

Evaluation supports the exercise of leadership by the innovator(s)  
Accountability centered on the innovators' deep sense of fundamental values and commitment to make a difference  
Stakeholders, including funders, must buy into what gets developed and learned as the focus of accountability

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### Organisational locus

Traditional Evaluation aims to *demonstrate accountability to external authorities and often is considered to be a compliance function delegated down in the organization and/or outside to an external evaluator*

Developmental Evaluation *supports the exercise of leadership by the innovator(s). Accountability is centered on the innovators' deep sense of fundamental values and commitment to make a difference. Thus, stakeholders, including funders, must buy into what gets developed and learned as the focus of accountability.* In all five experiences that I have had as a developmental evaluator, there has been, of course, a need to account for resources invested not only in me but in the intervention being developed. It has to payoff. I have found that when there is clarity about who is the leader or innovator, I am more effective in providing support than when leadership is undefined and diffuse.

## *Impact on organisational culture*

### **Traditional**

Evaluation often engenders fear of failure  
Building evaluative capacity usually not an objective  
Focus is on getting credible evaluation results based on rigorous methods

### **Developmental**

Evaluation nurtures hunger for learning  
Building ongoing and long-term capacity to think and engage evaluatively is a goal and built-into the process

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### **Impact on organisational culture**

Traditional Evaluation often engenders fear of failure and building evaluative capacity is usually not an objective. The focus is on getting credible evaluation results based on rigorous methods.

Developmental Evaluation nurtures hunger for learning, building ongoing and long-term capacity to think and engage evaluatively is a goal and built-into the process.

This raises an important point: Developmental evaluators are different from organisational development consultants – we engage in problem-posing and they in problem-solving .

## Key evaluator attributes

### Traditional

Methodological competence  
and commitment to rigor  
Independence  
Credibility with external  
authorities and funders  
Analytical and critical thinking  
Knowledgeable about and  
committed to evaluation's  
professional standards

### Developmental

Methodological flexibility,  
eclecticism, and adaptability  
Creative and critical thinking  
balanced; *high tolerance for  
ambiguity*; open and agile  
Team work and people skills:  
able to facilitate rigorous  
evidence-based reflection to  
inform action

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### Key evaluator attributes

In Traditional Evaluation they are:

*Methodological competence and commitment to rigor*  
*Independence*  
*Credibility with external authorities and funders*  
*Analytical and critical thinking*  
*Knowledgeable about and committed to evaluation's professional standards*

In Developmental Evaluation they are:

*Methodological flexibility, eclecticism, and adaptability*  
*Creative and critical thinking balanced; high tolerance for ambiguity; open and agile*  
*Team work and people skills: able to facilitate rigorous evidence-based reflection to inform action*

And lastly and appropriately, where traditional and Developmental Evaluation do have a meeting ground in that both require (CLIC) the evaluator *be knowledgeable about and committed to evaluation's professional standards*

## *Key evaluator attributes*

### **Traditional**

Methodological competence  
and commitment to rigor  
Independence  
Credibility with external  
authorities and funders  
Analytical and critical thinking  
Knowledgeable about and  
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Methodological flexibility,  
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# *When then is Developmental Evaluation useful?*

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**When then is Developmental Evaluation useful?**



## *My simple-complex acid test*

If you are confident that you know the relations of cause and effect between what you propose to do and what the results will be, you face a “simple” situation.

Developmental Evaluation is not for you.

If, however, you cannot say with certainty what you will achieve, but are confident that by doing what feels right you will find the way forward to the change you want to see, your challenge is “complex”.

This situation is ripe for Developmental Evaluation.

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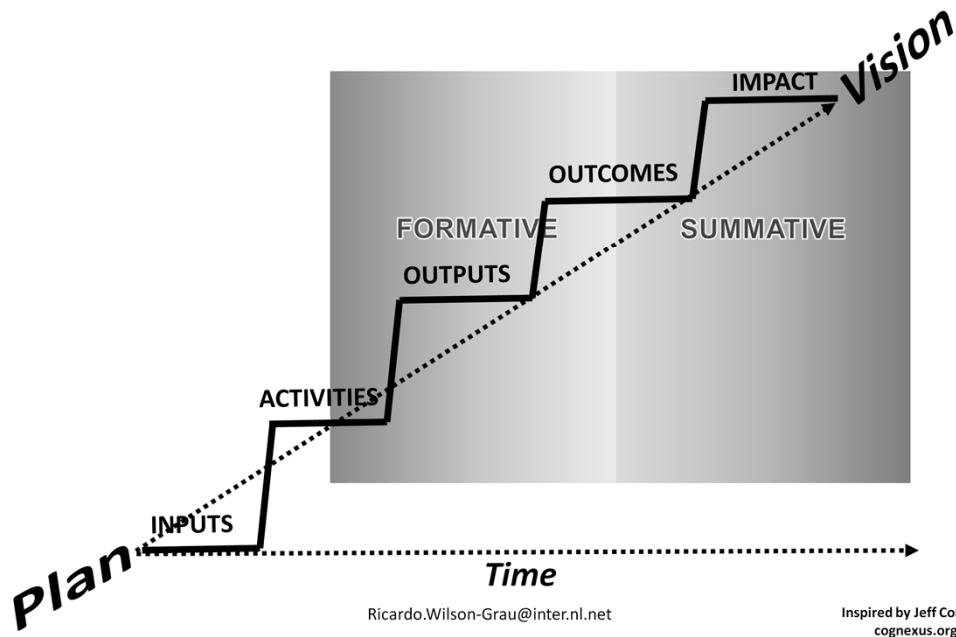
### **My simple-complex acid test**

As we were nearing the end of the review of his manuscript, Patton asked the four people who had been commenting, “What would you tell someone new to DE about doing it?” Our answers are in his book. My reply was this “*simple-complex acid test*”:

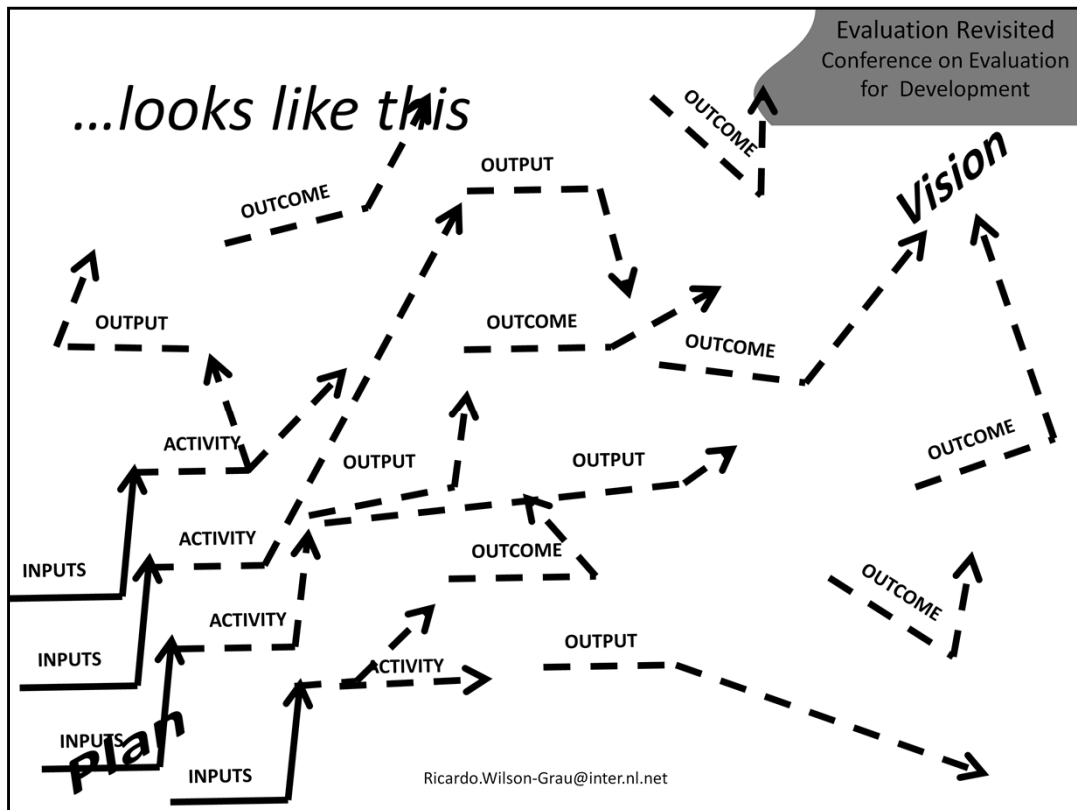
*If you are confident that you know the relations of cause and effect between what you propose to do and what the results will be, you face a “simple” situation. You are challenged to do the right things right in order to bring about change. And, Developmental Evaluation is not for you, although you would benefit from a formative evaluation mid-way through to make adjustments to keep yourself on track.*

*If, however, you cannot say with certainty what you will achieve, but are confident that by doing what feels right you will find the way forward to the change you want to see, your challenge is “complex”. She does not know the relations of cause and effect. This situation is ripe for a developmental evaluator to help you identify and understand, in real time, your results and how you are contributing to them.*

## Situations in which this...



In order to visualise when is Developmental Evaluation appropriate, compare *situations in which this* conventional approach, in which formative and summative evaluation does apply...



*...looks like this.* You may have a plan for which you have obtained resources but as soon as you begin to implement it, the activities change and their outputs too. Some lead to outcomes and other do not. And outcomes emerge in the most unexpected places. So in these situations, one or more of the five types of Developmental Evaluation will be appropriate.

## *In sum*

Developmental evaluation can serve you well when you are in a complex, dynamic situation in which you think you have a solution but do not know if it will solve the problem at hand.

The annex presents five types of Developmental Evaluation that further specifies when this mode of evaluation can be useful.

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### **Five types of Developmental Evaluation**

*There are five types of Developmental Evaluation that are appropriate when you are in a complex, dynamic situation in which you think you have a solution but do not know if it will solve the problem at hand*

*These next slides are adapted from Chapter 10, Michael Quinn Patton, Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use, Guilford Press, forthcoming 2010*

*Many thanks!*  
*Do you have questions?*

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# ANNEX 1

## *Five types of Developmental Evaluation*



These next slides present five types of Developmental Evaluation adapted from Chapter 10 of Michael Quinn Patton's book.

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### **Five types of Developmental Evaluation**

*There are five types of Developmental Evaluation that are appropriate when you are in a complex, dynamic situation in which you think you have a solution but do not know if it will solve the problem at hand*

*These next slides are adapted from Chapter 10, Michael Quinn Patton, Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use, Guilford Press, forthcoming 2010*

# *1. Ongoing development*

You have visionary hopes and emerging ideas that you want to develop into an intervention

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## **1. Ongoing development**

*You have visionary hopes and emerging ideas that you want to develop into an intervention*

In all five of my Developmental Evaluation experiences, the principals clearly had visionary hopes and emerging ideas that they wanted to develop into, in the case of four, an effective PME system and for the Doen Foundation an effective grants programme for arts and culture.

## *2. Pre-formative development*

You have an innovative intervention that you want to explore and shape into a potential model to the point where it is ready for traditional formative and eventually summative evaluation

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### **2. Pre-formative development**

*You have an innovative intervention that you want to explore and shape into a potential model to the point where it is ready for traditional formative and eventually summative evaluation*

This was clearly the case with the GPPAC PME system. They are in dialogue with their donors about the superiority of the Outcome Mapping methodology to meet their needs and certainly want their PME system to be ready for the most rigorous external scrutiny.



### *3. Applying proven principles*

You have an intervention model that worked and want to adapt its general principles to a new context navigating top-down and bottom-up forces for change

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#### **3. Applying proven principles**

*You have an intervention model that worked and want to adapt its general principles to a new context navigating top-down and bottom-up forces for change*

For GWP the successful experience with the first regions created considerable interest and commitment in the global secretariat but nevertheless the value of the Outcome Mapping methodology still had to be persuasively presented region by region.

## 4. *Major systems change*

You want to project a successful intervention in one system to a different system – e.g., use a successful village market innovation (economic system) to change national laws and regulations (in the political system)

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### **4. Major systems change**

*You want to project a successful intervention in one system to a different system – e.g., use a successful village market innovation (economic system) to change national laws and regulations (in the political system)*

I have not yet had experience with this type of Developmental Evaluation.

## *5. Rapid response*

In the midst of a sudden major change or a crisis, you want to explore real time solutions and generating innovative and helpful interventions for those in need

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### **5. Rapid response**

*In the midst of a sudden major change or a crisis, you want to explore real time solutions and generating innovative and helpful interventions for those in need*

Nor have I had experience with this type either. As with all five types, and with Developmental Evaluation in general, their use is emerging. In fact, Michael Quinn Patton could not be here in Utrecht because of a prior commitment to support the coordination of an evaluation of the Haitian relief effort.

## Annex 2

### Sources of further information

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