Advancing theory of change thinking in the arts

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Definition

Two separate functions for TOC:

1. a “methodology to map out the logical sequence of an initiative from inputs to outcomes” (Vogel, 2012, p. 3); a process also known as “theory of action” (Funnell & Rogers, 2011, p. xiv). The desired long-term goals are identified first, followed by the steps to achieve these, and then the activities that need to be undertaken (Theory of Change, 2015).

2. The second function of theory of change is part of a “deeper reflective process amongst colleagues and stakeholders, reflecting on the values...and philosophies of change that make more explicit...underlying assumptions of how and why change might happen as an outcome of the initiative” (Vogel, 2012, p.3).
Overview

Definition: ToC as question

Using ToC in research

Function: asking why in planning and evaluation

Challenge in arts sector in utilization of ToC, focusing in local government in Australia

Solution: sector-wide technological tool

Conclusion and references
PhD research project
The role of participatory arts in social change in Timor-Leste
2009-2013
PhD research project
The role of participatory arts in social change in Timor-Leste
2009-2013

What difference does our work make?

How would we know?

Theory of change

The idea originated in the field of evaluation in response to the challenge of understanding causal factors that lead to desired community change (Anderson, 2005; Weiss, 1995).


Our Culture: Many Different Stories
community theatre project
Lospalos, Timor-Leste, Many Hands International
Using TOC principles in planning
Our Culture: Many Different Stories community theatre project

VALUES

- Fostering cultural vitality
- Improving social cohesion
- Stimulating economic development
- Exemplifying environmental sustainability

GOALS

- Opportunity for creative expression
- Peace-building
- Inter-generational learning
- Sustainable activities for tourists
- Introducing new ideas for income generation
- Low-impact event

- Recognition of cultural heritage
- Women occupying public space
- Inter-tribal sharing
- Job creation for local people
- Skill development for participants
- Drawing on local resources

- Inter-cultural exchange
- Inclusion of people with all abilities
- Enjoyable shared community activities
- Drawing govt resources to district
- Peace-building

Drawing on local resources
Using TOC principles in *Our Culture: Many Different Stories* community theatre project

**Inter-generational learning**

- Eriksen’s lifespan developmental theory
- Reciprocity: two-way learning

**Activities that bring young people and older generation together for mutual learning**

- sharing sacred stories
- creating art together
- presenting to the community
- celebrating achievements
Evaluation evidence substantiating ToC re outcomes

Our Culture: Many Different Stories theatre project

Lia nain (cultural elder):
Through this project we got the idea for the future, to develop a council of lia nain, who are patient to work with children to share stories.

Young performer:
Thank you for this experience. Because of this we can recognize our lia-nain and their ratu stories. I was happy because even though these are sacred stories we can open them to the public.
Similar challenges in other locations and settings

such as

• arts for social change
• creative arts therapy
• local and other level government cultural development
• Australia and other countries

Theories of change most often implicit, not explicit, articulated, documented or evaluated
Cultural Development Network
Enhancing the capability of local government
to support rich and vibrant local cultures

Local government in Australia

Significant and growing investment in
cultural development infrastructure, staff, programming

Strong activity focus-
building facilities, offering programs, engaging communities

Not yet strong articulation of why ....
Increasing development of cultural development plans

But little use of evidence to inform planning (why),
little focus on outcomes (what difference the work makes).

Therefore underdeveloped, implicit or absent theories of change

Theory of change in planning

Good planning is underpinned by a *theory of change*, to assist and explain choices of activities, informed by evidence.

A theory of change can be summarized as a three-step logical argument for making decisions about activities to undertake.

1. Looking for . . .
   intended outcome

2. Knowing . . .
   where we are now in relation to this outcome
   what has been effective previously (from research or our practice knowledge)
   how we can use this information to assist with our planning and action
   what resources are available (current or future)

3. We will do . . .
   a new activity, or change what we do
Theory of change in planning

A simple mnemonic device:

- *we are looking for* (intended outcome)...

- *and we know* (evidence)...

- *therefore, we will do* (... activity)....
Six planning principles

1. Based on values
   - Embodied in council policies and plans

2. Directed towards goals
   - Articulate the desired future towards which our effort is directed

3. Focussed on Outcomes
   - Apply measurable objectives (intended outcomes), that address the goals

4. Informed by Evidence
   - Draw on practice knowledge, research, existing and new data

5. Underpinned by a theory of change
   - Propose: Knowing what we know (evidence) . . . about how to address the goal (by objectives ) . . . we will do (something) ‘the activity’

6. Respondent to evaluation
   - Conduct evaluation that is consistent and impacts future decision-making, new evidence
WhiteBox

Outcomes Planning Platform.

Australian Government  Australia Council for the Arts  Cultural Development Network  CREATIVE VICTORIA
**Eight Stage Activity Workflow**

**Goal**
- Goal from the organisation strategic plan. Long term ‘desired future’ in any policy domain e.g. cultural, economic, etc.

**Objective**
- The *Intended Outcome*. A measurable milestone to reach in the life of the project that addresses the goal

**Evidence**
- What we know about the objective: where we are now, what we know about the problem, and the solution

**Theory of Change**
- Wanting this *intended outcome* . . . , and knowing this *evidence* . . . we will do this *activity*

**Activity Plan**
- Decide on the project *activity* (outputs) considering resources, *(inputs)*, relationships and risks

**Evaluation Plan**
- Measuring the *outcome*. How much change, by when and for whom; selection of methodology

**Document**
- Record the project, (photos, publications, video, commentary ) and the evaluation data

**Outcome**
- Analyse, reflect and assess the outcome/s against the objective/s that address the goal

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**Measurable outcomes**

**TASK: Transfer the theories to an on-line system accessible to all producers and managers**
activity 1 – poetry reading in the library

Goal
The Intended Outcome. A measurable milestone to reach in the life of the project that addresses the goal.

Objective
What we know about the objective: where we are now, what we know about the problem, and the solution.

Evidence
Wanting this intended outcome . . . , and knowing this evidence . . . we will do this activity.

Theory of Change
 Decide on the project activity (outputs) considering resources, (inputs), relationships and risks.

Activity Plan
Measuring the outcome. How much change, by when and for whom; selection of methodology.

Evaluation Plan
Record the project, (photos, publications, video, commentary) and the evaluation data.

Document
Analyse, reflect and assess the outcome/s against the objective/s that address the goal.
Aggregate of inputs, outputs grouped by activity type and reported with outcomes

Outcomes grouped by combinations of cultural, social, economic, environmental and governance outcomes

Bank of evidence searchable by goals, activities, evaluation or outcomes
WhiteBox
A networked program logic builder and recorder for cultural development activities.

Workflow
- Goal
- Objective
- Evidence
- Theory of Change
- Activity Plan
- Evaluation Plan
- Document
- Outcome

Build activities
- New activities
- Repeat activities
- Grouped activities

Search database
- Organisations
- Activities
- Evidence database
- Artists/producers

Generate Reports
- Aggregate data
- Artists/producers
- Corporate reporting

Organisation Registration:
- Organisation type
- Organisation goal/s
- Links with internal & external systems

Find like activities in like organisations

Context-driven evaluation
Build support networks

Staff can:
- Build activities
- Invite internal/external team
- Searches and reports

Research and planning
- Analysis of inputs, outputs and outcomes
- Evaluation of cultural, economic, social, environmental and civic outcomes
- Instant status report
- Trend reports
Theory of Change: deeper reflective process … reflecting on values…and philosophies of change that make more explicit underlying assumptions of how and why change might happen as a result of an initiative

Ask yourself why....

-What difference will we make?

-How will we know?

WhiteBox Outcomes Planning Platform

www.culturaldevelopment.net.au
References


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Outcome schema: five domains of public policy and associated outcomes

- Culture
  - Vibrant and Rich Cultures
- Environment
  - Sustainable Built and Natural Environments
- Economy
  - Dynamic and Resilient Local Economies
- Society
  - Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Society
- Governance
  - Democratic and Engaged Governance

Flourishing and fulfilled individuals
Cultural Development Network

**Measurable cultural (intrinsic) outcomes of engagement in cultural development activities**

**Creativity stimulated (Stimulation)**
Sparking of the imagination, creativity, curiosity; resulting in increased desire to participate more and/or create new cultural works.

**Aesthetic enrichment experienced (Enrichment)**
Experiences (familiar or unfamiliar) that come through the senses and are special: evoking enjoyment or entertainment; beauty, joy, awe or wonder; sense of being moved or transcendent.

**New knowledge, ideas and understandings gained (Insight)**
Generation of intellectual stimulation, critical reflection and creative thinking experiences. Desired endpoint is deeper understanding, which is unlimited and can be continually generated.

**Cultural diversity appreciated (Appreciation)**
Appreciation of different forms of cultural expression: the diverse ways that people express themselves depending on their cultural backgrounds, life experience and interests.

**Connection to shared heritage experienced (Belonging)**
Illumination of the present through a sense of continuity with the past, and a pathway to the future, through connections to present and past. History, heritage, cultural identity appreciated.

www.culturaldevelopment.net/outcomes