Report and research summary:

ENCATC Advanced Seminar: *Rethinking Cultural Evaluation: Going Beyond GDP*

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Evaluating outcomes of arts engagement: a holistic model

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*In October, CDN's Research Program Manager Kim Dunphy made a presentation at the Advanced Seminar, **Rethinking Cultural Evaluation: Going Beyond GDP** organized by ENCATC, Europe's leading network on cultural management. Presenters included Melika from UNESCO's project on Cultural Indicators for Development and Lorena Sanchez from OECD"s Better Life Index. The seminar was attended by more than 50 cultural managers, researchers, government and arts organisation representatives from across Europe and elsewhere.*

*The report below is a summary of Kim's presentation. The powerpoint of the presentation is available from www.culturaldevelopment.net.au/publications/research-reports/ and the full paper will be published in the book **Making Culture Count: the politics of cultural measurement**, co-edited by Kim with colleagues from VCAM's Centre for Cultural Partnerships Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Lachlan Macdowall published by Palgrave and due out in mid-2015.*

More information about the event: http://encatc.org/pages/index.php?id=372

Evaluating outcomes of arts engagement: a holistic model

In the emerging professional field of cultural development, funders and host organisations, including local councils, increasingly seek to understand the impact of work they support or lead. Yet arts leaders and those who manage their programs are challenged to explicate outcomes fully. Evaluation approaches infrequently take a holistic approach to evaluation, often focusing predominantly on social or economic outcomes. Other outcomes are sometimes categorized as *intrinsic* and therefore considered immeasurable. Consequently, much of the benefit of arts engagement can be missed. Evaluation approaches commonly only consider benefits, and offer no assessment of negative or neutral outcomes, or proportion of benefit to costs.

A solution to those dilemmas is proposed in a holistic framework for evaluation of outcomes of arts engagement. It is offered as an effective approach for those seeking to contribute to positive community outcomes through their work, including local government professionals and arts organisations that have a community change agenda.

This framework has particularly been developed for practitioners and managers who may not have specialist expertise in evaluation, but who need, as part of offering quality professional services to be monitoring and evaluating their work, and reporting to non-specialists about this.

The framework pre-supposes an intention by program leaders and funders to make a positive contribution to the lives of participants, and in so doing, to the wider community. It is proposed as useful for government, (national, state and local), non-government and community organisations as well as individual artists and arts workers who have a positive change goal and seek to understand the implications of their work.

The framework offers a means of considering different: *perspectives* of change (who perceived and experienced the change); *dimensions* of change (what type of change occurred); and *degree* of change (how much change occurred), to arrive at an overall assessment of project outcomes.

Perspectives of change: In this framework, data is first categorised according to the *perspectives* of different stakeholders. This strategy was informed by Most Significant Change methodology (Dart & Davies, 2003), which acknowledges that different levels of stakeholders, from beneficiaries to program staff, manager and funders may all have different, yet valuable, perspectives regarding valued outcomes of an initiative. For arts initiatives, the stakeholders might include project participants, audience members and their communities, arts leaders, managers, decision makers and funders. A second consideration is that an initiative might also impact on these stakeholders in different ways. Consequently, these should be considered in an evaluation. Figure 1 below offers a pictorial representation of the different types of stakeholders and their proportionate significance. This indicates that a project might primarily be expected to impact participants (active participants), audience members (receptive participants), artistic leaders, the host organization and funders (investors) and the wider community (public), in lesser degrees, and each of these groups might perceive outcomes differently. These circles can be adjusted in size depending on the particular focus of an initiative or evaluation.

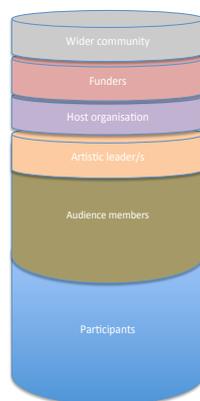**Stakeholders in arts engagement processes.**

Figure 1: Stakeholders in arts engagement processes

Data collection processes need to include categorization of the stakeholder group each piece of data is derived from. This is not likely to prove difficult as data collection processes would most likely be different for each stakeholder group.

Domains of change

Next, data gathered about outcomes of an initiative are categorised within the six *domains* of: personal wellbeing, cultural, social, civic, economic and ecological change as represented in the diagram below. (*Ecological* rather than *environmental* is used to delineate this domain, as recommended by GCCP (2013) because it includes humans as part of the natural world). These domains are divided into seven sub-domains, which cover the major types of change that might be expected from arts engagement in each area. These subdomains have been informed by theory from a range of sources, including: the cultural domain from literature about arts impacts including Holden (2006), McCarthy et al (2004), Radbourne et al (2010), Throsby (2001) and UCLG (2006); personal wellbeing domain from wellbeing theory as discussed by Ostroff, O'Toole & Kropf, (2007) and DECS (2010, citing Goldspink 2009); social, civic and ecological domains (CIV, 2014; GCCP, 2013) and economic domain (UNESCO, 2009, 2014). Further details, outside the scope of this article, are available from CDN (2014).
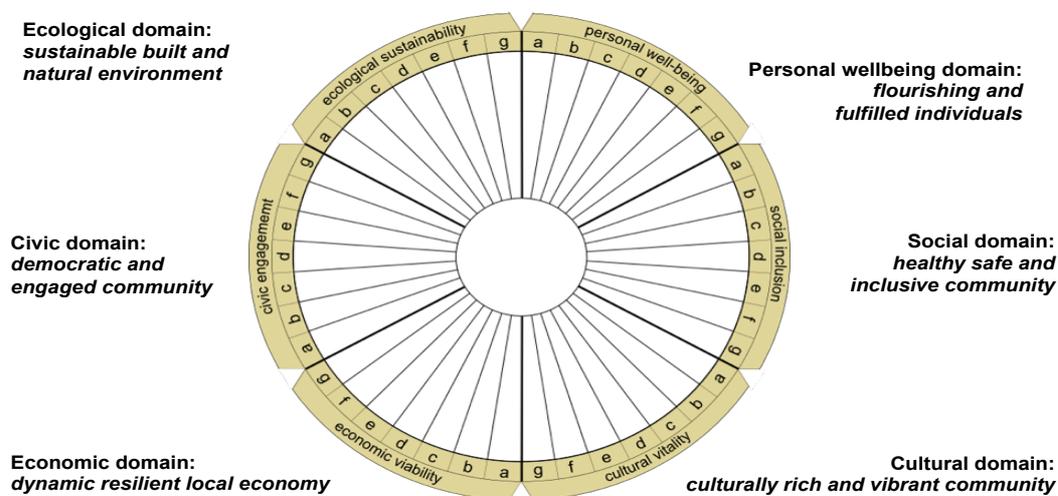

Ecological domain:
sustainable built and natural environment

Personal wellbeing domain:
flourishing and fulfilled individuals

Civic domain:
democratic and engaged community

Social domain:
healthy safe and inclusive community

Economic domain:
dynamic resilient local economy

Cultural domain:
culturally rich and vibrant community

Figure 2: Domains of change

This framework addresses several of the most salient challenges in evaluation of arts engagement, particularly how value can be determined and measured. It takes a fresh look at the ongoing dilemma of *intrinsic and instrumental* value, rejecting the classification of the value of the arts as *intrinsic* and suggesting instead that all outcomes of arts engagement

can be described and measured. Drawing from holistic models of community development and sustainability offered by Hawkes (2001), Ife (2002), GCCP (2013) and CIV (2014), these outcomes are classified into six domains of personal wellbeing, cultural, social, economic, civic and ecological. The value of the arts often considered as *intrinsic*, including the aesthetic, creative, historic, symbolic and spiritual dimensions, can largely be reconsidered as *cultural* within this framework. Enjoyment or pleasure generated through arts participation, most often considered as an *intrinsic* value, is included in the personal wellbeing domain.

The framework allows for consideration of different *perspectives* of a range of stakeholders, as recommended in participatory approaches to development. It also enables consideration of outcomes that are not as expected or desired, across *directions of change* that include positive and negative, and intended and unintended.

The framework addresses a further challenge for qualitative researchers in the need to distill easily digestible results from large amounts of data. A pictorial representation of outcomes of arts engagement offers a quantitative perspective on qualitative data. This allows complex qualitative data to be more accessible and easily interpreted. It is intended to assist managers, funders and policy makers better determine the impact of the work they support and thereby make more judicious decisions about use of resources.

Figure 3 below show results of the application of this model to a youth peace-building theatre project in Timor-Leste documented in Dunphy (2011). This project addressed goals and achieved most desired outcomes for stakeholders, particularly young active participants, but also audience members and wider community members. Positive outcomes were strongest in the personal wellbeing, social, cultural domains, with several unexpected positive outcomes achieved, including *bridging social capital* developed between Timorese people and foreign workers and visitors (*social domain)* and the *work-related skill* of English language learning
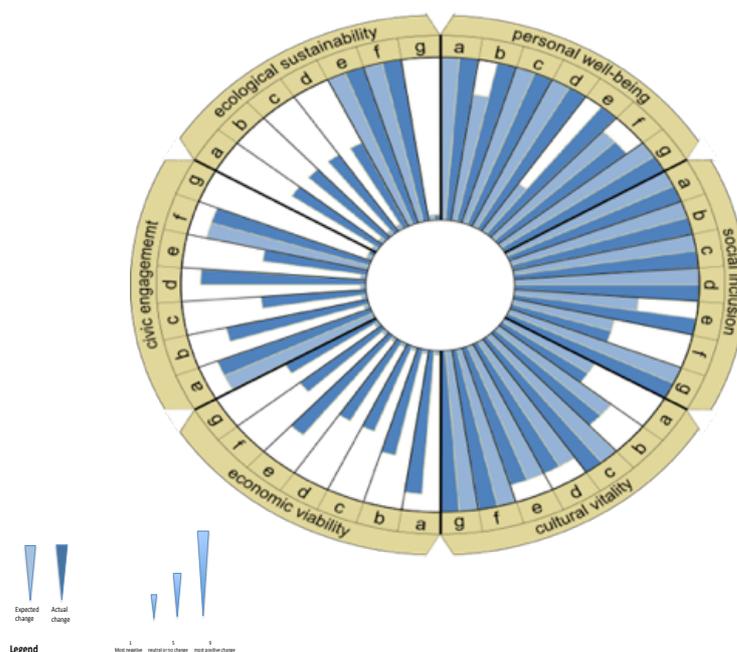

Figure 3: Outcomes of a youth theatre project represented across the six domains

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