

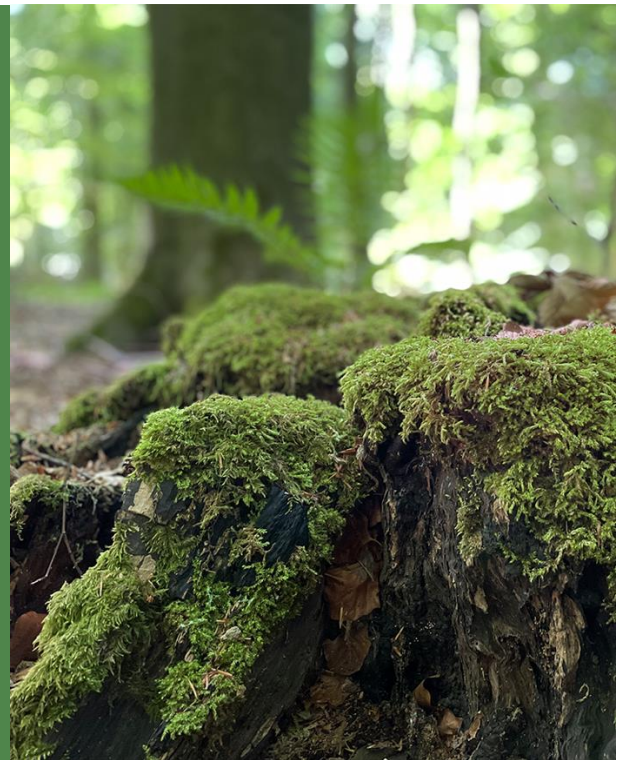


SDS 4HEI

HIGHER EDUCATION MISSION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Module 5

Community Impact



October 2024
WP 4 - Massive Open Online Course
(MOOC) for Strategic
inter/transdisciplinary

BY
Jessica Siegel & Judith Terstriep



Co-funded by
the European Union

Imprint

© Copyright 2022-2025 the SDS4HEI Consortium, consisting of:

Westphalian University of Applied Sciences Gelsenkirchen, Institute for Work and Technology (IAT), Germany

Momentum Marketing Services Limited (MMS), Ireland

European E-Learning Institute (EUEI), Denmark

Bursa Uludağ University (BUU), Turkey

Atlantic Technical University (ATU), Ireland

International Center for Knowledge Resilience, Institut Mines-Télécom Business School (IMTBS), France

Citation

Siegel, J., & Terstriep, J. (2024). Module 5, Community Impact. Deliverable of WP4 – Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for Strategic inter/transdisciplinary Implementation of the SDGs in HEI curricula of the SDS4HEI project. Gelsenkirchen: Westphalian University of Applied Sciences Gelsenkirchen, Institute for Work and Technology.

Acknowledgement

This MOOC module is published as part of the Erasmus+ project »Sustainable Development Strategies for Higher Education Institutions« (SDS4HEI) funded under the Erasmus+ Programme KA222-HED – Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education, project no 2022-1-DE01-KA220-HED-000088936, co-funded by the European Union.

Legal notice

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the authors' sole responsibility. They do not reflect the views of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Copyright

The copyright is by the authors. The document is available in open access and licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See credit lines of images or other third-party material in this report for license information.

Table of Content

1	Why Impact Matters	1
1.1	What is Impact?	1
1.2	Community Impact for the SD	3
1.3	Case Study 'Local Carbon Footprint Currency'	5
2	Identifying the Community & Understanding Root Causes	7
2.1	What is a Community?	7
2.2	Elevating Voices	9
2.3	Geographic Scope of Actions	11
3	Building Effective Partnerships	14
3.1	Strategies for Effective Collaboration	14
3.2	Exercise: Exploring Local Actions for Impact	18
4	Assessing Community Impact	21
4.1	What is a Theory of Change?	21
4.1.1	Overview	21
4.1.2	Principles & Schools of Thought	22
4.2	Defining and Measuring Outcomes and Impact	24
4.2.1	Overview	24
4.2.2	Impact Assessment	26
4.3	Identifying Assumptions and Risks	30
4.4	Deciding on Inputs	32
4.5	Exercise: Elaboration of a ToC	33
	References	35

Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation
Activities	The actions one takes.
Assumptions	The conditions and beliefs must hold for the expected outcomes of an initiative to be realised. They are a causal connection between events and [or] activities.
Attribution	The process of identifying perceived causes of an outcome, such as the success or failure of an intervention and its linkage to one's intervention
Causality	The relationship between something that happens (effect) and the reason for it happening (cause)
Community	A group of people who share common characteristics, interests, or geographic location and who are collectively affected by and involved in initiatives aimed at improving their social, economic, and environmental well-being
Context	The interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs (e.g. political, economic, social, institutional framework)
Counterfactuals	Hypothetical scenarios that represent what would have happened in the absence of a particular intervention, used to assess the true impact of the initiative
Enabling Factors	Things that might help or hinder a theory of change and that are out of the control of oneself
Evaluation	Systematic assessment of an initiative's design, implementation, and outcomes to determine its effectiveness, relevance, and contribution to change
Impact	In evaluation and monitoring, impact refers to attributable effects or observable changes resulting from an intervention or activities that can be positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended
Input	The resources, such as time, funding, expertise, and materials, invested in an initiative to realise a specific output
Intervention	A deliberate action or set of actions designed to change a particular situation
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	A quantitative and [or] qualitative measure offering data/information for overseeing performance, gauging accomplishments, and establishing responsibility
Mixed Methods	An approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, utilising the strengths of each
Outcomes	Specific, measurable changes or benefits from an initiative will likely contribute to impact.
Problem	A specific challenge or issue that negatively affects a community and that an intervention aims to tackle

Term	Explanation
Stakeholder	Agencies, institutions, groups or individuals that have a direct or indirect stake or commitment in the project design, implementation, benefits, or evaluation
Sustainability Dimensions	Following a holistic approach, sustainability encompasses interconnected economic, ecological, social, and cultural dimensions that must be equally considered.
Target group(s)	The group(s) of people you believe you are addressing with your activities/intervention
Theory of Change (ToC)	A comprehensive explanation of how and why an intervention is expected to bring about specific outcomes, detailing the causal pathways and underlying assumptions that link actions to long-term goals

1 Why Impact Matters

1.1 What is Impact?



What to expect?

- The dichotomies of “impact.”
- The theory-informed definition of “impact.”
- The concept of causality and attribution in impact creation


Defining “impact” can be difficult, as the term is used frequently and in various contexts; for example, social media can significantly impact students’ lives, and startups can compete for a “Social Impact Award”. The Oxford English dictionary provides two definitions of the word. The impact can describe ‘the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another’ or “a marked effect or influence” (2024). The figurative meaning of impact has met much criticism, especially in the 1960s, because it was perceived as a “pointless hyperbole and a vague word” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2022). Unlike the impact of a giant asteroid, the impact of a project or initiative is not directly tangible and must be distinguished from its intermediate results (Serban et al., 2023). The impact can happen long after the actions or the project have been implemented and “is not a consequence of a single activity” but consists of a sum of components and circumstances” (ibid.).

A theory-informed definition of impact examines how and why a specific intervention leads to a planned and measurable change or effect on an entity, like the environment or a community (see Barker, 2023; Sevrain, 2019). Intervention is understood as a deliberate and planned action or set of actions to change a particular situation by either preventing something from getting worse or improving something. A theory-informed approach “maps out the causal chain from inputs to outcomes and impact and tests the underlying assumptions” backwardly (White, 2010). A causal relationship is assumed between actions/activities undertaken and any change resulting from these (Krelv et al., 2023; OECD/EU, 2024). The causal relationship applies to a series of interrelated events and conditions and does not need to be direct but traceable (Sevrain, 2019). Impact aims at a systemic change through possible snowball effects, either preventing or solving a problem (ibid.).

The term “sustainability” is equally abstract and closely linked to impact. Climate change adversely affects biodiversity, while the energy transition is expected to benefit nature by reducing carbon emissions. The concept of ‘impact’ encompasses three central dichotomies: it may describe either a positive or negative effect and either an intended or unintended consequence or change caused by something else (OECD, 2024). Furthermore, the impact can bring about direct and observable changes—such as through the active involvement of community members—or indirectly influence how individuals in the community think and feel. (Serban et al., 2023). Attributing what caused the change remains problematic, as multiple factors shape impact (Sevrain,

2019). Rather than a one-time unidirectional event, the impact is viewed as a relational and recursive process. This is what Wegener et al. (2024) term “impacting”.


Different types of impact can be evaluated; for example, monetary effects of actions can be described as economic impact (Sevrain, 2019; Krlev et al., 2023). Changes within a group of people sharing specific characteristics in common can be labelled “community impact”. Different forms of impact can be connected to other types of impact; for example, by focusing on changing the environment through more green spaces, which will probably lead to an improvement in the well-being of the community, an intervention will have an impact on the community as well as in the environment. To create impact through an intervention, it is essential to understand the current causes of the challenge through situation analysis, consider the potential negative and positive consequences of the intervention, and tailor solutions accordingly. An intervention must be intentional, ideally aiming for lasting outcomes (Sevrain, 2019).



TAKEAWAYS

- Impact is linked to its context and is challenging to attribute.
- Impact can be positive or negative, intended or unintended, direct or indirect; however, a theory-informed approach should be intentional.
- A theory-informed definition of impact assumes a causal relationship between actions undertaken and any change resulting from those. These assumptions have to be tested.

Learnings:
What to take with you?



REFLECTION

- Impact can be very personal. What challenges in your community are significant enough for you to work on a solution?
- What topic or challenge in your region moves or drives you?
- What do you value?

Reflection:
What to think about

Further Resources:

Sevrain, C. (2019). What is Impact? YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU7KLJDf038>

1.2 Community Impact for the SD



WHAT TO EXPECT?

- The concept of community impact and its importance for achieving the SDGs
- The systemic character of sustainable development
- Impact and the different dimensions of sustainability (social, environmental, economic, cultural)

While all types of impact refer to changes or effects resulting from interventions, they vary in scope and focus. When an intervention occurs in a specific area, organisation, or group of people connected by shared interests or characteristics and establishes meaningful connections with measurable effects on these groups, it is called “community impact” (Serban et al., 2023). This concept can be understood as a commitment to benefiting local communities (ibid.). While social impact addresses broader societal issues and may drive systemic changes, community impact focuses on the well-being of specific groups within a community, aiming for direct, localised outcomes. These interventions often involve human interaction and reflect a shared vision for improving the quality of life and forming a better society (Eupraxia Training, 2019). Typical interventions might include improving local education, increasing access to healthcare, or enhancing public green spaces.

Community impact and sustainability are deeply interconnected, requiring us to consider the long-term consequences of our decisions and actions. The most widely recognised definition of sustainability comes from the Brundtland Report (1987), which describes it as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (1987). While sustainability describes the long-term goal of achieving balance for the well-being of people, sustainable development (SD) is an ongoing, open, reflexive, and path-oriented process (Siegel & Terstriep, 2023). SD is the “concrete and successful steps towards the best quality of life for everyone, both where we live and in the wider world” (ibid.). The systemic nature of sustainability requires change across different levels, from individual to societal and various sectors, as decisions in one area (e.g., energy, food production) can have far-reaching consequences for others (e.g., transportation, eating behaviour). Sustainability challenges, such as climate change, are often global and interdisciplinary, requiring complex trade-offs and coordination across sectors. Addressing these “wicked” challenges demands solutions at various levels of governance to create meaningful societal impact (Schnurr, 2021).

Sustainability also has a multidimensional character, encompassing environmental, economic, and social dimensions, with culture acting as a transversal influence on how these dimensions are perceived (Siegel & Terstriep, 2023). Actions that benefit one dimension might negatively impact another, making it essential to approach

sustainability with careful trade-offs and holistic strategies. Balancing short-term and long-term goals is also necessary, as current demands must be weighed against future needs and risks. Sustainability can be analysed from multiple academic perspectives, contributing to a broader understanding and creating potential solutions. As a result, stakeholders may hold different values and beliefs, leading to conflicting interests in sustainability efforts (Vanclay, 2003).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demonstrate the interconnected nature of sustainability and provide a global framework to address its complexities. The 17 goals and 149 subgoals represent a universally shared blueprint for action, offering a comprehensive guide to tackling global challenges. However, SDGs should not be viewed as top-down policies imposed by governments or UN agencies. Instead, they align global ambitions with existing grassroots, community-led initiatives (Henfrey et al., 2022). These goals help unite communities around shared objectives, encouraging collaboration to address pressing challenges such as inequality and environmental degradation (Schnurr, 2021). The local implementation of SDGs, known as localisation, can generate global ripple effects due to the systemic nature of sustainability. Evidence shows that community-led initiatives (CLIs) are already contributing to almost all SDGs at the local scale, particularly by fostering synergy between different goals (Henfrey et al., 2022). CLIs strengthen local action by promoting collaboration, collective learning, resource sharing, and mutual support. In this context, the well-known phrase “Think global, act local” is particularly relevant.

When local stakeholders are involved in developing solutions and understand their benefits, new sustainable practices are more likely to be adopted, reducing resistance to change. Strong community engagement and long-term behavioural change are crucial for successful sustainable development, while positive community impact supports broader sustainability goals (SDGs). Additionally, community impact helps ensure that sustainability interventions are culturally relevant, addressing local needs and challenges while fostering regional economic development, social cohesion, and environmental protection, reflecting the different dimensions of sustainability.

Ensuring that marginalised or vulnerable communities benefit from environmental, social, and economic improvements is vital to making sustainability more inclusive and just. Interventions for community impact might focus on improving people’s quality of life, the stability and cohesion of a community, and the extent to which individuals can participate in decision-making, including shifts in power relations (Hiruy et al., 2022). Enhancing well-being and environmental quality can drive community impact and sustainable development, ensuring that progress is localised and sustainable in the long term (Vanclay, 2003).



TAKEAWAYS

- 'Community Impact' describes a commitment to the benefit and well-being of a group of people who share certain commonalities.
- Sustainability is a long-term goal; sustainable development describes the concrete steps to achieving this goal
- Sustainability has a systemic character, stretching over different sectors, geographical areas, levels of engagement, dimensions and ecosystems, leading to global interconnectedness
- Sustainability is multidimensional, including environmental protection, social equity, economic development and culture.
- Community impact ensures the cultural relevance of sustainability interventions and that the right challenges and needs are addressed.

Learnings:

What to take with you?



REFLECTION

- Where can you detect the community impact of which local actors in your region?
- What would happen if they stopped doing what they were doing?
- Which sustainability challenges are prevailing in your region?
- Which community is most vulnerable?

Reflection:

What to think about

Further resources:

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programme is an EU funding programme for young people wishing to engage in solitary activities in various areas. Check it out: <https://youthforeurope.eu/european-solidarity-corps>

1.3 Case Study 'Local Carbon Footprint Currency'

The 'Local Carbon Footprint Currency' project introduces an innovative reward system that incentivises residents of Gelsenkirchen (a city in the Ruhr Area) to reduce their carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Citizens can earn digital points or a unique 'sustainability currency' to actively decrease their carbon footprints. These points can be redeemed at participating local businesses or invest in sustainable initiatives. The project's core revolves around developing a user-friendly mobile application designed by a student. This app not only calculates each user's individual CO₂ footprint but also provides personalised recommendations for behaviour changes that can reduce emissions. By tracking daily activities such as transportation, energy consumption, and waste management, the app allows users to see their impact in real-time. It offers

rewards for achieving specific sustainability goals. Key features of the app are envisaged to cover the following:

- **CO2 Footprint Calculation:** The app employs algorithms to assess users' carbon emissions based on their lifestyle choices. It considers commuting practices, household energy use, and food consumption.
- **Behavioural Incentives:** The app suggests alternative actions, such as using public transport, reducing energy usage, or opting for locally sourced products to encourage sustainable practices. Users earn points for implementing these changes.
- **Rewards System:** The sustainability currency earned can be redeemed at local businesses supporting the initiative and promoting economic growth within the community. This creates a win-win situation where the environment and the local economy benefit.
- **Community Engagement:** The project encourages community involvement by allowing users to share their progress and tips within a social platform integrated into the app. This fosters a sense of camaraderie and collective responsibility towards sustainability.

The 'Local Carbon Footprint Currency' project exemplifies the interconnection between ecological, economic, and social sustainability. Rewarding individuals for their sustainable actions reduces the community's carbon footprint and strengthens local businesses. Participating businesses benefit from increased patronage, while residents feel empowered to contribute positively to their environment.

The initiative demonstrates how technology can be harnessed to promote sustainability at a local level. By combining digital innovation with community engagement, the 'Local Carbon Footprint Currency' has the potential to provide a model for similar initiatives elsewhere. It highlights the importance of creating systems that reward sustainable behaviours, thus paving the way for a greener future while bolstering local economies.



NOTE

While many projects and discussions focus on the ecological dimension of sustainability, projects should keep sustainability's multi-dimensional character in mind. Community Impact addresses the quality of life, promotes equity and inclusion, contributes to social stability, and ensures a more holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development. Out of the 17 goals, 10 are directly connected to social issues.

2 Identifying the Community & Understanding Root Causes

2.1 What is a Community?



WHAT TO EXPECT?

You will learn how to identify your 'community' of relevant stakeholders and how to address the underlying complexities causing the need for change.

Defining what is meant by talking about a specific community is the first step for acknowledging and measuring the community impact (Serban et al., 2023). Unlike broader society, the classical community is often represented by a traditional village structured rationally around practical objectives (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al., 2021). Serban et al. (2023) argue that the core of any community lies in shared identity and belonging, reflected in social connections, collective actions, common perspectives, and shared spaces. Furthermore, being part of a community involves a personal commitment to the group's functioning (ibid.). Communities can range from neighbourhoods and interest groups to larger social units such as ethnic groups, all united by some form of commonality (University of Kansas, 2024). These communities frequently co-exist and overlap, creating complex social dynamics.


When designing interventions for community sustainability, it's essential to identify those directly or indirectly affected by a challenge, positively or negatively. The individuals or institutions most impacted by the planned intervention form the core community that must be engaged in the planning process. Interventions should begin by gathering comprehensive information about the community, including its defining characteristics, assumptions, and attitudes, to ensure relevance. Noble (2019) suggests considering objective factors like age, location, and education alongside subjective ones such as attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours.

Sustainable change can only be achieved if the community's culture—its needs, beliefs, values, and internal relations—are fully understood (University of Kansas, 2024). This can be done by reviewing existing documents, conducting research and observations, and engaging with community members through interviews, focus groups, and consultation (Schnurr, 2021). It is equally important to hear from those with lived experiences and those who may oppose the planned intervention, ensuring that all voices are included in the dialogue (Jackson-Harman, 2021). Collecting high-quality data on the community strengthens the relevance of the intervention. The findings can be documented in a community description, which records the development of the

community from its past to its envisioned future (University of Kansas, 2024). Another helpful tool is formulating a challenge definition—a brief statement clarifying the focus of the intervention and ensuring all stakeholders are aligned.

Tackling complex and urgent sustainability challenges requires a commitment to driving systemic change, which involves transforming a community's structures and behaviours to create lasting improvements (Jackson-Harman, 2021). Hence, systemic change is not just about responding to pressing challenges but solving its root causes (OECD, 2024). Loorbach et al. (2020: 251) pose systemic change necessary "to achieve just and sustainable futures within the ecological boundaries". They denote "transformative change" to non-linear systemic change that brings about significant, qualitative alterations in societies' cultures, structures, and practices (ibid.). It entails tackling the underlying or root causes of problems rather than merely addressing the symptoms, aiming to achieve enduring and widespread improvement.

Root causes are the fundamental reasons behind a specific challenge within a community (Lopez, 2020), and identifying these causes is key to developing effective interventions. Various methods, such as data collection, interviews, and surveys, can be used to uncover these underlying factors. Additionally, techniques like the "But why?" method help explore the root causes of a challenge (ibid.), providing a comprehensive overview of the issue and offering insights into potential courses of action. By understanding the root causes, interventions can progress on multiple SDGs through a multi-solving approach, where single actions can address multiple goals (Noble, 2019; Jackson-Harman, 2021). Rather than tackling all SDGs, focusing on the goals and targets that align with local priorities is often more effective, thereby maximising progress and leveraging synergies with existing sustainability efforts (Siegel & Terstriep, 2023; Schnurr, 2021). This helps narrow complex challenges, making the intervention more focused and impactful. In turn, it will consider current opportunities, the governments' and affected populations' future priorities, and the capacities of all involved actors (UNSDG, 2017). Tools like the "problem tree" can help visualise the relationships between root causes and specific work areas, enabling the creation of pathways that organise the work to address the identified challenges (ibid.).



TAKEAWAYS

- The community and the challenge must be identified and analysed at the beginning of an intervention.
- A 'challenge' definition in the form of a short statement can ensure the focus of the intervention.
- One should consult stakeholders to learn from their experience and make the intervention count.
- Evidence, research, and consultation are needed to prove the relevance of the intervention.
- A community is a smaller or bigger social unit that shares something in common.

Learnings:
What to take with you?

- 'Community' describes those most affected by the challenge and planned intervention.



REFLECTION

- What is the challenge, and why has it emerged (including individual capacities and relationships, institutions and organisations, professionals, and infrastructural systems)?
- Who is affected by the challenge?
- Who is particularly vulnerable?

Reflection:
What to think about

Further resources:

The University of Kansas (2024). The Community Tool Box. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents>

2.2 Elevating Voices




WHAT TO EXPECT?

You will explore the significance of engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships and discover effective ways to amplify stakeholders' voices—their concerns and aspirations—while learning about diverse formats for meaningful engagement.

As detailed in Module 6 – Impactful Partnerships for SDGs, systemic change, as reflected in the SDGs, relies on multi-stakeholder partnerships that unite diverse perspectives under a shared vision. These partnerships harness the skills and resources of different stakeholders, enhancing the effectiveness and impact of SDG initiatives (Filho et al., 2024). However, Jackson-Harman (2021) highlights that local voices are often overlooked in decision-making despite the growing focus on localism. Elevating the voices of those most affected by challenges ensures their needs and concerns shape decisions, leading to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes. Intentional strategies are needed to prioritise participation and collaboration in stakeholder engagement.


Practical methods include open dialogue and consultations to identify stakeholders (Vanclay, 2003), focusing on those most at risk of being left behind (Schnurr, 2021). Engaging with stakeholder networks, using accessible language, and employing diverse approaches like art-based methods fosters inclusivity (ibid.). Regular meetings and online discussions provide platforms for feedback and help shape interventions. Digital tools, such as social media and surveys, offer low-barrier options for amplifying community voices.

Capacity-building through training empowers stakeholders by improving communication and collaboration skills while raising awareness of sustainability challenges. Cross-sector and transdisciplinary collaborations further strengthen stakeholder engagement, integrating insights from industry, NGOs, and community groups. Co-creative workshops involve stakeholders in all stages of interventions. Finally, collaboratively developed guidelines ensure the intervention is well-directed and supported, facilitating the acceptance of change.



NOTE


Ensure inclusive communication and engagement by offering materials in multiple languages and accessible formats, such as those suitable for individuals with disabilities or limited literacy. It is crucial to involve diverse community groups representing different demographics, genders, and marginalised individuals. Providing safe spaces for these groups to share their experiences can be a valuable approach.



TAKEAWAYS

- Multi-stakeholder partnerships united diverse perspectives under a shared vision
- Stakeholder engagement should be inclusive. Formats need to be accessible and invite people whose voices are often not heard.
- Transdisciplinary collaborations are essential to create synergies and spillover effects.
- Stakeholders should be allowed to participate in decision-making processes.
- Collaboration and participation should be prioritized.

Learnings:
What to take with you?



REFLECTION

- Who is not sitting at my table? Who is being left out?
- Who are our opponents? What are their arguments?
- What desires and concerns do community members have?

Reflection:
What to think about

Further resources:

Jeffery, Neil (2009). Stakeholder Engagement: A Road Map to Meaningful Engagement. How to do Corporate Responsibility, #2. Doughty Centre, Cranfield University. <https://www.fundacionseres.org/lists/informes/attachments/1118/stakeholder%20engagement.pdf>

2.3 Geographic Scope of Actions



WHAT TO EXPECT?

You will learn how local actions drive global SDGs, assess the transferability of these initiatives, and uncover both universal and context-specific aspects of the ToC to design impactful interventions.

Jackson-Harman et al. (2021) posit that the SD mantra of “think global, act local” emphasises that one can only address universal challenges and ambitions through place-based initiatives. That is particularly true when acknowledging the systemic character of sustainability (Krlev & Terstriep, 2022), its challenges, contextuality and the interconnectedness of the SDGs and related trade-offs (Zhao et al., 2021). For example, place-based responses impact a community and the broader world by generating spillover—i.e. “unintended effects that influence the same or other SDGs across the scale” (Engström et al., 2021). All over the globe, communities are facing similar challenges, such as extreme weather and a loss of biodiversity; however:

“[...] local priorities can sometimes clash with overarching policies set at national or global levels. To effectively achieve the aspirations set forth in the SDGs, there must be a harmonious integration of local actions with global sustainability objectives while fostering coordination among all stakeholders to ensure a sustainable future for all” (Bandari et al., 2024: 1294)


Collaboration through multi-stakeholder partnerships, knowledge co-production, and strategic planning is key to understanding the trade-offs and synergies between SDG initiatives at different scales. Although the SDGs provide a global framework, they have been criticised for being inadequately inclusive and failing to represent social and cultural diversity, with limited impact on negotiations and outcomes (Henfrey et al., 2022). Government-led SDG initiatives often neglect grassroots actors crucial for transformation (ibid.). Rather than treating stakeholders as mere recipients of SDG interventions, actions for change should be rooted in genuine sustainability practices that reflect specific local and regional contexts, supported by relevant social institutions and cultural values. Top-down approaches often lack contextual relevance and can limit actions at other levels, making broad strategies unsuitable for diverse local needs (Foroudi et al., 2024; Henfrey et al., 2022). Establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships is essential for democratising the SDGs and tailoring their implementation to diverse social, ecological, economic, and cultural realities. A theory of change can assist in customising SDG strategies to fit these varied contexts.

To successfully transfer an intervention to a different context, it is essential to identify which aspects of the ToC are universal and context-specific. Analysing the local

situation allows for a more tailored approach to achieving change. Drawing on past experiences and other initiatives, actions and ideas that have proven effective in different contexts may be identified (UNSDG, 2017). This also provides a clearer understanding of the local cultural context, offering insights into values, beliefs, and their relevance to the intervention (Vanclay, 2003). The process involves decontextualising and recontextualising solutions to fit the new environment. Decontextualisation entails extracting a solution from its original context by identifying core elements and separating them from factors not relevant elsewhere. Recontextualisation involves adapting and integrating these elements into the new context, modifying the solution to align with its unique characteristics, needs, and constraints. This could apply to different communities or levels within a city or region. As Henfrey et al. (2022: 219) suggest, the SDGs might also need to be reconceptualised to suit the specific context:

“[...] not as goals or targets, but as visions or pathways in the making, or as questions to be posed in different ways and combinations in each locality, addressed through action learning collaborations across multiple stakeholder groups and building on existing local and translocal experience of practical action for justice and sustainability”.

Translocal networks that connect stakeholders from different local contexts can help share ideas and solutions globally; for example, the permaculture movement operates through national associations and regular meetings at various scale levels. Without diminishing the importance of local context, the SDGs enable highly localised efforts to contribute meaningfully to the 2030 Agenda, aligning them with a broader global initiative to achieve the SDGs (Jackson-Harman et al., 2021).



TAKEAWAYS

- Local initiatives play a crucial role in advancing global SDGs and addressing universal challenges.
- Solutions should be grounded in the lived experiences of local actors rather than imposed through generalised top-down interventions.
- Solutions require decontextualisation before being adapted to fit specific contexts.
- The SDGs should be viewed as evolving pathways or questions, reinterpreted to meet the unique needs of each locality.

Learnings:
What to take with you?

Reflection:
What to think about



REFLECTION

- What aspects of your theory of change are universal?
- What aspects are context-specific?

Further readings

Foroudi, P., Marvi, R., Cuomo, M. T., & D'Amato, A. (2024). Sustainable Development Goals in a regional context: conceptualising, measuring and managing residents' perceptions. *Regional Studies*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2024.2373871>

3 Building Effective Partnerships

3.1 Strategies for Effective Collaboration



WHAT TO EXPECT?

You will understand the importance of stakeholder engagement and participation in developing and implementing a ToC, as well as how to foster collaboration among governments, civil society organisations, businesses, and communities to ensure the ownership, legitimacy, and sustainability of interventions

Strong partnerships are the backbone of successful interventions for community impact. SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals explicitly advocates for a strengthened ‘Global Partnership for Sustainable Development’ that brings together governments, civil society, and the private sector to mobilise all available resources. Every industry and every person has a role to play in the global endeavour to create more sustainable and inclusive societies. Through effective collaboration, synergies for the SDGs can be realised, and commitment can be transformed into actions that leave no one behind (Schnurr, 2021). However, the impact is very subjective, as people bring different perspectives, interests and needs and thus perceive things differently. What we value enough to protect from adverse effects or change for the better varies. Therefore, it is indispensable to engage in discourse with those directly or indirectly affected by an intervention and openly talk about the values and principles the intervention envisages delivering.

“If making social change is at the heart of an initiative, that needs to be explicitly discussed. We need to find collaborators who share those visions.” (Eupraxia Training, 2019)

Elevating voices (see [Section 2.2](#)) refers to giving agency to those who may not typically have a say in decision-making processes. In contrast, partnerships bring different stakeholders together to work towards common goals. It is about shared responsibility to create more comprehensive and sustainable solutions by combining diverse expertise and capabilities. There are several suggestions and strategies for building partnerships that cross boundaries, praising transdisciplinary and systemic thinking. Since the answer to the question “What matters to us?” differs in every community, it is essential to allow stakeholders to actively participate in the “envisioning phase”, for example, with the 17 Rooms approach. “Community-wide

visioning sessions can be used to establish what matters, identify the most pressing local needs, and envision what a better-shared future could look like” (Schnurr, 2021). Consulting stakeholders to discuss local SDG priorities will facilitate the development of a shared vision and aspirational goals (ibid.). During consultation and participation events, one should practice active listening to understand the concerns and desires of the stakeholders, while empathy allows them to see and feel the problem and develop the intrinsic motivation to work towards a solution (Sevrain 2019; Jackson-Harman, 2021). Participation throughout the process will likely contribute to problem ownership, facilitating commitment and creating bonds between citizens, local organisations and political actors (Bianchi et al., 2024; Rabadjieva & Terstriep, 2021).

The goal should be to work towards consent—i.e., a situation where there is no significant objection to a vision, challenges, or goals—rather than seeking consensus, which requires agreement from all participants. With consent, objections are a valuable source of insight for enhancing proposals rather than vetoes. Hence, consent-based decision-making leads to more efficient and effective results. It focuses on resolving objections and embracing “good enough” solutions that can be iterated upon, allowing for more flexibility and learning, especially in transdisciplinary partnerships where building consensus can be challenging.



Excursus:
Consent

Everyone should be allowed to share opinions and feel represented (Noble, 2019). Finally, participants should feel “a sense of accomplishment” in navigating the complex topic of sustainability and contributing to a clearer understanding of the desired future. Guidelines, as concise ‘action statements’, provide clear instructions for planning actions (Vanclay, 2003). Macro-statements, framed as “ought-statements”, outline general principles, while core values, expressed as “is-statements”, summarise fundamental beliefs, whereas values shape principles, informing guidelines (ibid.).

Another useful strategy is to explore the connections between global SDGs, local priorities, and specific challenges, helping to identify relevant actions (Siegel & Terstriep, 2023). Mapping local initiatives, strategies, and other documents through activities such as active listening, collaborative mapping, and co-creative exercises can reveal how actions targeting one goal might influence others (ibid.; Jackson-Harman, 2021; Schnurr, 2021). This process can highlight how existing community efforts already contribute to the SDGs and reveal any tensions between SDG objectives and community concerns (ibid.). By identifying local actors, trailblazers, and potential barriers to change, organisations and community members can better align efforts to advance the SDGs. Key stakeholders—such as community members, potential partners, social enterprises, local authorities, funders, and NGOs—should be engaged to avoid duplicating efforts and missing opportunities for collaboration (Jackson-Harman, 2021). Peer learning by connecting with a ‘mentor community’ to understand their successes and challenges is also a valuable tool (ibid.).

Ongoing stakeholder engagement is essential for developing and implementing SDG-focused community impact. Achieving sustainability requires systemic change involving complex governance, international agreements, and policy frameworks. Clear goals, transparent communication, and a well-defined ToC can help build strong partnerships by clarifying how interventions will lead to desired outcomes (Sevrain, 2019). A diverse group of stakeholders should coordinate the intervention (Jackson-Harman, 2021; Rabadjieva & Terstriep, 2021), as long-term shifts in behaviour and consumption are difficult to achieve due to entrenched habits, cultural differences, and resistance to change. Educating and motivating individuals to adopt sustainable practices is a complex task that can be accelerated through participation and dialogue.

Local leaders can act as intermediaries between communities and decision-makers, ensuring local voices are heard. Collaboration between governments, civil society, businesses, and the community is crucial to ensuring interventions' legitimacy, ownership, and sustainability. Resources, expertise, and influence must be shared to tackle complex sustainability challenges that no single entity can solve alone. A shared vision and a continuous flow of resources are key to building effective partnerships and enabling collective responses to sustainability issues. The following checklist offers practical guidance for forming strong partnerships for community impact (Gaines, 2020; Schnurr, 2021; Jackson-Harman, 2021).




TOOL

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the landscape by mapping key actors, identifying potential drivers and inhibitors of change, and connecting global SDGs to local priorities and tangible issues.
- Engage with key allies and often-overlooked individuals to ensure their voices are heard.
- Involve stakeholders regularly to gather their feedback through information sessions and surveys, emphasising two-way communication methods such as focus groups, forums, and digital channels.
- Raise awareness through extensive community engagement, linking the SDGs to local issues to inspire and build momentum for change.
- Showcase desired outcomes to motivate stakeholders, highlighting the needs of each target group and illustrating the intervention's benefits.
- Maintain transparent, open, and consistent communication to keep stakeholders informed about developments, challenges, and decisions. Regular updates ensure stakeholders feel valued and understand how their input is utilised.
- Create a community plan to advance priority goals, such as addressing climate change.

- ❑ Invite diverse voices to lead and provide support to encourage participation.
- ❑ Build networks of allies to amplify stakeholders' voices through media coverage, political support, and partnerships with influential organisations.
- ❑ Recognise community progress to celebrate successes and galvanise further action, potentially attracting additional local funding.
- ❑ Share community stories through local or digital media, events, or direct communication with other communities. Real-life examples can inspire stakeholders and strengthen connections.
- ❑ Use storytelling as a motivational tool by combining data with personal narratives to effectively engage stakeholders.
- ❑ Identify meaningful indicators that resonate with your community to measure progress.
- ❑ Track progress with an open and transparent approach.


Depending on the type of planned intervention, it might be fruitful to go beyond the urban centre and include surrounding suburban, rural or agricultural communities and other communities (Schnurr, 2021).



TAKEAWAYS

- Strong partnerships are the backbone of successful interventions.
- Consulting with and engaging stakeholders early and regularly can help to create synergies for the SDGs, a shared vision, shared problem ownership and commitment.
- Guidelines, understood as short and specific 'action statements', help plan the activities.
- Macro statements, written down as "ought statements", describe a general principle. Core values summarise the fundamental beliefs using "is-statements".

Learnings:
What to take with you?



REFLECTION

- Who is already working on the challenge (key allies)?
- How do these actions taken to address the challenge impact others?
- Whom and what are the SDG initiatives currently neglecting?
- What can you learn from similar interventions (peer learning)?

Reflection:
What to think about

Further resources

Robertson, W. C. (2024). The Necessary Skills to Navigate Change. Podcast, Collective Impact Forum, Episode 85. <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resource/the-necessary-skills-to-navigate-change/>

The Rockefeller Foundation (2018). "The 17 Rooms". <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/17rooms/>

3.2 Exercise: Exploring Local Actions for Impact

Explore the following examples of impactful actions in local communities, involving different stakeholders, such as students, teaching staff, citizens and sustainability-related groups. What (local) challenges were identified? What solution pathway can you detect?



Exercise on developing actions for impact! To start our discussion, first, we will present compelling examples that will help deepen your understanding of the task at hand. Engaging in this exercise is invaluable, as it enhances your insight into collaborative actions and equips you with the tools to plan meaningful interventions that drive SD. Let us dive in and discover how we can work together to create impact!


Example 1: Westphalian University of Applied Sciences Gelsenkirchen Event series "Sustainable on the road!"

Challenge	To shape a future worth living, we need ideas for new ways of consuming, doing business, and living. Numerous initiatives in the Ruhr metropolis already practice sustainable behaviour. The sustainability challenge, "Food production and food culture, " was among the topics covered.
Background	In the summer semester of 2023, the Ruhr University Alliance, an alliance consisting of three universities, introduced the "Sustainable on the Road!" event series, inviting students, faculty, university staff, and interested members of the public to explore local sustainability initiatives. The series aimed at highlighting sustainable mobility, attitudes, values, and local commitment, encouraging participants to engage actively and experiment with sustainable approaches. Participants visited different sustainability sights in their city. A community-supported agriculture set the scene for a discussion on "The Future of Agriculture - From Small-Scale Farming to Post-Agricultural Production". Each visit was accompanied by keynote speeches from academics and, occasionally, external speakers.
Target groups	Students, teaching staff, employees, citizens

Description	<p>With organic food gaining popularity, the pandemic, climate crisis, and war in Ukraine, we are facing intensified global hunger, moving us away from the UN's second sustainability goal of "Zero Hunger." The event at the Kümper Heide organic farm in Dortmund, Germany, invited participants to engage in sustainable farming practices and understand diverse cultivation processes.</p> <p>Following the hands-on experience, discussions addressed various solutions for feeding the world. Academics shared insights about community-supported agriculture and educational farms, presenting alternative food cultivation methods. Additionally, innovative food production techniques, such as vertical gardens and cell-based meat, were discussed. This exploration connected traditional farming practices with cutting-edge production methods, showcasing human ingenuity in the pursuit of sustainability.</p>
-------------	--

Example 1: Rede Convergir Online mapping platform

Challenge	<p>Map sustainable and inspiring projects to facilitate collaboration among network members, create synergies, and promote a balanced society with a harmonious relationship with the environment. This initiative aims to foster reflection and raise awareness of each individual's role in building a critical, constructive, active, and empowered society.</p>
Background	<p>The socio-economic crisis in 2011 resulted in declining living standards for many in Portugal yet simultaneously spurred the emergence of alternative projects, including self-organised cultural centres, urban gardening groups, and solidarity-based exchange networks. In this context, Rede Convergir serves as a hub platform (https://redeconvergir.net) that lists sustainable projects and events, fostering cooperation and encouraging participation. The platform details project goals, key ideas, founding years, and participant numbers and provides contact information with links to project websites. It also features an active calendar of workshops and events throughout Portugal, covering activities such as tree pruning, permaculture, and team building (Baumgarten, 2017). While it does not strictly define sustainability, the initiative describes relevant projects as those "contributing to local sustainability, based on alternative models" that challenge existing economic practices.</p>
Target groups	<p>Citizens, civil society groups, sustainability-related initiatives</p>
Description	<p>As of 2024, Rede Convergir lists 242 sustainability initiatives across Portugal, categorising them into types (e.g., permaculture, transition, land and nature management) across key areas like agriculture, livestock, eco-technology, art, education, and alternative economy. The platform distinguishes initiatives by their operational settings—urban, rural, or both—while considering accessibility for various visitor demographics,</p>



including children, families, and individuals with disabilities. It also assesses the developmental stage of each initiative (germinate, take root, fruiting, seed) and their geographic location.

Before listing initiatives, the platform highlights workshops and events in Portugal that participants from the listed projects are promoting.

Your task

Now that you have completed the first part of the MOOC on community impact, your task is to explore the examples of transdisciplinary actions, aiming for local impact. Review the examples provided and identify how the creation of the intervention unfolded. What key challenges were identified? Through what measures have they been addressed? What key stakeholders were involved in the intervention and for what reason? How might the results of the interventions contribute to systemic change? Consider how these elements could be applied to your project or community initiative.

4 Assessing Community Impact

4.1 What is a Theory of Change?



WHAT TO EXPECT?

By the end of this section, you will understand different approaches to measuring impact, gain insight into the concept of a logic model, and explore the two essential schools of thought behind these frameworks.

4.1.1 Overview

The term “Theory of Change” (ToC) is challenging to delineate as no common understanding exists in the scientific literature. As Almott and Mackinnon (2006) posit, the term describes anything from a detailed road map to a blueprint or a general storyline. Despite this ambiguity, generally, ToCs refer to conceptual frameworks and assumptions that explain how and why the activities of a given initiative—such as initiatives, projects or programmes—lead to specific outcomes (Mason & Barnes, 2007). Although the methods and processes for developing and applying ToCs can differ across initiatives (ibid.), they typically foster discussion among stakeholders about the anticipated and actual impacts of interventions. These conversations also explore the underlying assumptions about the mechanisms of change (Blamey & Mackenzie, 2007; Oberlack et al., 2019; Stein & Valters, 2012). Forasmuch, the participative elaboration of ToCs encourages critical reflection on the causal pathways of an initiative, often leading to adjustments that enhance effectiveness. In this vein, Stein and Valters (2012) refer to ToCs as “an articulation of how and why a given intervention will lead to specific change”. Or as posited by Aragón and Giles Macedo (2010: 89),

“(I)t [the ToC] explores underlying assumptions about the relationships between desired outcomes and the way proposed interventions are expected to bring them about.”

Accordingly, it is a logic model that helps plan, describe, manage, and evaluate programs, projects or interventions to build an effective impact strategy. It is a causal model of how inputs and activities lead to outputs and outcomes, including assumptions and evidence (Ogain et al., 2012). Developing a ToC can be seen as creating a framework that illustrates how activities lead to outcomes while highlighting assumptions, justifications, and pathways to clarify causal links or as an

ongoing process that emphasises conceptual thinking and continuous reflection. This approach fosters learning cycles to understand better the connections between activities and their outcomes (Gready & Robins, 2020). In this vein, Stein and Valters (2012) identify four primary purposes of a ToC: (1) strategic planning, (2) description, (3) monitoring, and (4) evaluation and learning.

4.1.2 Principles & Schools of Thought

The UNSDG (2017) defines three principles for crafting a ToC: (1) A ToC should be developed consultatively to reflect the understanding of all relevant stakeholders, (2) robust evidence should be the basis at all stages while (3) allowing for continuous learning and improvement. Oberlack et al. (2019) extend these ideas by calling for contextualising the causes of unsustainability, diagnosing these causes within specific contexts, explaining how transformations within the system of concern unfold, and characterising the role that knowledge plays in facilitating these transformative processes.

Two schools of thought can be distinguished in social impact measurement: Contribution and attribution logic. The contribution logic follows a linear time logic, differentiating between short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, where an intervention is one of several factors contributing to an outcome. The theory-based attribution logic centres on the relationship between activities and outcomes, clearly defining this connection as a central element of the ToC process (Krlev et al., 2023). It describes how an intervention is expected to lead to specific changes, drawing on a causal analysis based on available evidence (Noble, 2019; UNSDG, 2017). Following this approach, the ToC addresses the critical question of to what extent the outcomes can be attributed to the activities or intervention rather than to other external factors (Krlev et al., 2023). This approach allows accounting for positive and negative effects, (un-)intended impacts, and effects that would have happened regardless of the intervention (deadweight). It helps pinpoint solutions to address the root causes of issues hindering progress, guiding decisions on the best approach while highlighting potential risks and assumptions (UNSDG, 2017).


Attribution logic requires mapping the causal pathways or links between activities, outputs and outcomes. It defines how each action leads to a specific outcome, ensuring a clear and evidence-based connection between the intervention and the desired change. The various steps should also be validated against other stakeholders' perspectives to ensure that critical assumptions are shared and plausible, including assumptions about key actors' roles (UNSDG, 2017).

Hence, a ToC does not only describe the desired impact but also looks at the intermediate steps, allowing for a purposeful alignment of all activities. It illustrates the logical relationships between the five critical components: an intervention's resources (input), activities, outputs, intended outcomes and impact (Gaines, 2020). In summary, attribution logic is about demonstrating that the changes outlined in a ToC

are causally linked to the interventions, backed by evidence, and not simply coincidental or due to other unrelated factors. Summarising a theory-based ToC:


- Must be grounded in a thorough analysis of the situation, with a clear vision of how change is expected to occur
- Involves regular consultation with key stakeholders to evaluate what works in different contexts
- Identifies solutions to address root causes of problems hindering progress effectively
- Guides decision-making on the best approach to take
- Clearly outlines the pathway to achieve the desired change
- Considers assumptions and risks, revisiting them throughout the process to ensure success
- Establishes an impact assessment framework to test the paths and assumptions

Creating a ToC for Community Impact is vital because sustainability is often perceived as abstract and complex due to the many SDG sub-targets and the spillover effects, tensions, and trade-offs between them. Sustainability as a whole is characterised by its systemic and multidimensional nature. Hence, participatory ToC development systematically approaches the complex underlying root causes of sustainability challenges and analyses how they influence each other. It ensures that the activities and resources align with the intended change, enhancing effectiveness. Stakeholders will better understand how the intervention is supposed to work and how change will be achieved, facilitating problem ownership, consent, motivation, and strong partnerships. Regular monitoring and evaluation provide new insights and learnings, redefine assumptions, guide operational decision-making, and provide the basis for effective communication.



NOTE

ToCs should be understood as living documents resulting from a flexible and iterative process (Noble, 2019). ToCs allow for collecting data, discussions, learning over time, and adapting to changing circumstances, new theories, and unintended consequences (White, 2010).



TAKEAWAYS

- A theory of change helps ensure a sound logic for achieving change
- The four main reasons for creating a ToC are (1) strategic planning, (2) description, (3) monitoring, and (4) evaluation and learning.
- Attribution logic is about demonstrating that the changes outlined in a theory of change are causally linked to the interventions, backed by evidence

Learnings:
What to take with you?

- A theory-based ToC looks at underlying risks and assumptions of how change is supposed to happen.



REFLECTION

- What challenge is significant enough to motivate you to take action and create change?
- Imagine your ideal future where your challenge/problem is addressed/solved. How will you get there?

Reflection:
What to think about

Further reading:

Gready, P., & Robins, S. (2020). Transitional Justice and Theories of Change: Towards evaluation as understanding. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 14(2), 280–299. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijaa008>

4.2 Defining and Measuring Outcomes and Impact



WHAT TO EXPECT?

You will learn how to develop your own ToC, define clear outcomes, measure the impact of your intervention, explore the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation, collect relevant data, and adapt strategies based on feedback. Moreover, you will understand the meaning of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), both qualitative and quantitative, and be able to analyse best practices for measuring and evaluating community impact projects.

4.2.1 Overview

A ToC is usually developed in a backwards manner, (1) starting with the desired impact and then working backwards to (2) describe outcomes as the intended or unintended changes that your stakeholders will experience, (3) the outputs, (4) identify the necessary activities, and lastly (5) the inputs, to achieve the impact (Noble, 2019; Gaines, 2020; UNSDG, 2017). This reverse engineering approach, or backwards mapping, helps ensure that every action and intermediate outcome is aligned with the goal (Gaines, 2020; Noble, 2019).

“The theory unfolds as the planners work backwards from the long-term impact they’re seeking to achieve through specific goals, strategies, and milestones. At each step, they carefully probe the assumptions that underpin their beliefs about what will

work and why and how it is likely to have the effect they anticipate” (Mackinnon et al., 2006).

As outlined in Section 4.1.2, outcomes and impact are distinct. The main difference lies in the directness of the relationship to the intervention. While outcomes are all observed changes, impact describes those outcomes attributable to the specific intervention. That is, not all outcomes are impacts of a particular intervention, as part of these outcomes may be affected by other external factors, making attribution more challenging. The process of attribution—i.e. establishing causal links between an intervention’s activities and the observed outcomes—is essential to grasp those effects directly linked to the intervention. For instance, if your project focuses on providing training to farmers on sustainable agricultural practices, the aim is to attribute any improvements in their crop yields or income to the training rather than to external influences such as favourable weather conditions, changes in market prices, or government subsidies for sustainable farming.

Counterfactuals or control groups play a vital role in the attribution process, especially in SD, as they provide deeper insights into causality and impact. Considering alternative scenarios—what might have occurred with different decisions—enables a more precise assessment of an intervention’s effectiveness (Mengel et al., 2021; Gertler et al., 2016; Morgan & Winship, 2015). For instance, if the intervention involves planting trees to combat soil erosion, the output is the number of trees planted, and the outcome is the reduction in soil erosion observed. However, the impact is the difference between the erosion reduced due to the tree planting and the erosion that would have occurred without the initiative. Hence, attribution and counterfactuals help isolate the specific contribution of your initiative, allowing you to demonstrate its impact, i.e. its ‘true’ value in promoting sustainability.

Counterfactuals represent hypothetical situations that explore what would have happened to your beneficiaries if they had not been part of the intervention. Counterfactuals assist individuals in reasoning about explanations that reveal cause-and-effect relationships (Byrne 2019; Miller 2019). The cause refers to the specific feature values of the input instance that led to a particular prediction, while the effect is the resulting predicted outcome. In the context of SD, if a programme distributes solar panels to rural households to increase access to electricity, attribution would involve confirming that any rise in household productivity is due to the solar panels rather than other factors like grid expansion or improved battery storage. Counterfactuals would include comparing the productivity of these households with what it would have been if they had not received the solar panels, helping to isolate the true impact of the intervention.



Excursus:
Counterfactuals

4.2.2 Impact Assessment

Impact assessment entails defining outcomes, monitoring intervention progress, and analysing alternative pathways (Noble, 2019). The IOOI scheme (input, output, outcome, impact) serves as a blueprint for social impact measurement (Krlev et al., 2023). As previously noted, attribution logic relies on indicators and evidence to show that the observed outcomes are directly linked to the intervention. This requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to track changes and support the ToC. Given the complexity of community projects' impacts on the SDGs, it is crucial to choose appropriate indicators that represent the change process and demonstrate the project's effectiveness by assessing proximity to the desired outcome. Indicators help track progress over time and enable comparisons between similar initiatives or systems.

The IOOI framework begins with inputs (I), encompassing all the resources required to initiate an action. These inputs are utilised in the action to generate specific outputs (O), typically consisting of measurable items or events. However, the evaluation does not stop here, as outputs are merely meant to induce changes for the target group or beneficiaries. Changes only become evident in the outcomes (O), whereas the impact (I) reflects the 'attributable' outcomes.



Excursus:
IOOI Scheme

Indicators are essential when designing, monitoring, and evaluating a theory of change (ToC). An indicator is "a quantitative or qualitative variable providing a reliable means to measure a specific phenomenon or attribute" (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al., 2021). Indicators should be developed early in the ToC process and monitored continuously at various stages. Different types of indicators can be distinguished (WHO, 2014; Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al., 2021):

- Input Indicators refer to the resources needed to implement an intervention, including required finances, materials, policies, and human resources. For example, an intervention for SDG4 quality education may require funds, teachers, and training materials.
- Process / Output Indicators track how the intervention is executed and its immediate outputs, focusing on activities, such as the number of meetings held or materials distributed. Quality must also be assessed, such as measuring the percentage of time spent practising new skills or the number of experts consulted.
- Outcome Indicators These measure societal changes that result from the intervention. They reflect why the intervention was implemented in the first place, based on both the quantity ("how many") and quality ("how well") of activities. For example, an outcome of sustainability training might be increased awareness of sustainability issues. As outcomes can take time to materialise, intermediate indicators should be identified to track progress.

Indicators should meet quality criteria, as, for example, described with the SMART system (Siegel/Terstriep. 2023; Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al., 2021; Then et al., 2012):

- **Specific:** The indicator must be clearly defined, detailing what is being assessed.
- **Measurable:** It should be possible to quantify or objectively assess the indicator.
- **Achievable:** The indicator must be realistic and feasible, considering the available resources and circumstances.
- **Relevant:** It should be directly linked to the intervention's objectives, including SDGs and intended and unintended outcomes.
- **Time-bound:** A set timeframe should be established for evaluating the indicator.

Following Then et al. (2012), four aspects should be considered when elaborating SMART indicators:

1. Utilise existing resources and data, such as public statistics and similar projects.
2. Collaborate closely with the community to develop and select indicators.
3. Adopt a stakeholder perspective to create a more accurate picture of the intervention's effects.
4. Encourage stakeholders to report on progress towards intermediate objectives, not just final goals.

A theory of change also clarifies what needs to be evaluated, when, and how. Defining meaningful indicators begins with clear objectives for the intervention, specifying the ultimate goal (Sheth, 2024). Contextual analysis should inform this process, helping to outline a precise, measurable target (Compass, 2023). Research on local conditions, regional sustainability issues, and other stakeholders' achievements can provide valuable insights (ibid.). Following this, direct (primary) and indirect (secondary) stakeholders must be identified and consulted to validate the objectives and participate in the ToC design. Metrics reflecting the impact on these stakeholders, aligned with the intervention's objectives and SDGs, can then be selected (Jefferson-Harman et al., 2021). Involving stakeholders ensures that the most significant changes are captured. Tools like 'problem' and 'solution trees' can help visualise issues, link solutions, and identify critical outcomes (UNSDG, 2017). High-level outcomes are best achieved through coordinated output-level results, with causal links between different outcomes.

Continuously collecting robust and unbiased data is crucial to ensure accuracy (i.e. the extent to which data correctly reflects the real-world situation it is supposed to represent) and validity (i.e. consistency within a defined domain or set of rules). Understanding the local data landscape—identifying existing sources, the frequency of collection, and any data gaps—can help build a network of potential partners (Jackson-Harman et al., 2021). Frequent data collection is necessary to track the progress of an intervention properly. Pre- and post-program assessment methods, surveys, focus groups, and interviews can offer a comprehensive view of the impact when combined

in a mixed-methods approach (Sheth, 2024). Establishing baseline data, for instance, through counterfactuals or control groups, provides a reference point to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour over time (Compass, 2023). Data analysis should identify patterns, trends, gaps, and synergies to guide decision-making.

Various software tools can assist in streamlining data collection and analysis (Hazenberg et al., 2022). Engaging stakeholders throughout the process is vital to maintaining motivation and ensuring practical impact. Sharing and discussing results and their consequences via presentations, reports, or visualisations invite valuable stakeholder feedback and facilitate shared learning and adaptation. Demonstrating successful outcomes is crucial to encouraging further stakeholder involvement and supporting scaling efforts (Gaines, 2020). These steps ensure that interventions are grounded in real-world experiences.

Interpretative evaluation methods—as opposed to positivist or critical theory methods—focus on involving relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries from the outset of impact measurement (Krlev et al., 2023). This process is co-produced with these groups, heavily relying on their perspectives. Impact measurement evolves alongside the intervention, sharing many characteristics with formative evaluation. Community impact can be quantified and qualified by monitoring causal relationships and using different methodologies to assess expected outputs and outcomes. Measurement will help recognise the direct impact of an intervention and the ripple effect of the efforts beyond the project's scope (Sevrain, 2019).

White (2010) summarises six principles that assist in answering the question of why an intervention can have an impact:

1. Mapping out the Causal Chain (ToC) by linking inputs to outputs and outcomes.
2. Understanding context, i.e., the social, cultural, and economic setting influencing how the causal chain is realised, helps to understand how the intervention might be adaptable to other contexts.
3. Anticipate heterogeneity, as there is no one-fits-all solution. The impact varies according to multiple factors, including the socio-economic setting and stakeholders' characteristics.
4. Evaluate impact using a credible counterfactual, ideally an appropriate control group.
5. Use rigour in factual analysis by comparing actual results to those expected. A targeting analysis could help answer the question of who benefits from the intervention and what negative, side—or unintended effects there are.
6. Use mixed methods by combining qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups, literature reviews), quantitative approaches (e.g., surveys, data analysis), and action research activities in an evaluation.



NOTE

ToCs should be understood as living documents resulting from a flexible and iterative process (Noble, 2019). ToCs allow for collecting data, discussions, learning over time, and adapting to changing circumstances, new theories, and unintended consequences (White, 2010).



TAKEAWAYS

- A ToC is usually developed in a 'backwards' manner, starting with the intended impact the intervention envisages to achieve.
- Indicators should meet quality criteria; for example, the SMART system, where indicators are to be defined for inputs, outputs and outcomes.
- Measurement should be grounded in meaningful data continuously collected.
- Formative evaluation accompanying the implementation of the intervention is most useful for unveiling unintended developments and shared learning and adaption.

Learnings:

What to take with you?



REFLECTION

- What are the consequences of the challenge?
- What are the barriers to change, and what are the opportunities to overcome these barriers?
- Who else is working to tackle the issue? Who are the other relevant stakeholders?
- What are alternative developments without the intervention (counterfactuals)?
- What do you expect to see if your intervention is successful?
- What shorter-term changes for your target group might contribute to the outcome?
- What would you like your target groups to know? What would you like them to think and do differently (e.g., behavioural change)? What assets will people gain or retain?
- What outputs are necessary to induce the defined outcomes?
- What activities and inputs are vital in realising those outputs?

Reflection:

What to think about

Further resources:

Peg (2024). A community indicator system is dedicated to tracking the health and well-being of Winnipeg, Canada. <https://www.mypeg.ca/about/>

Compass (2023). How to develop indicators. <https://thecompassforsbc.org/sbcc-tools/developing-indicators-smart-criteria-checklist>

International Institute for Sustainable Development (2024). Tracking Progress: Tracking Local, Thinking Global. <https://www.tracking-progress.org/about-this-tool/>

Sheth, U. (2024). Social Impact Metrics Guide. YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_pqZUa807M

Sheth, U. (2024). Transforming Survey Data into Powerful Impact Stories. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QG81Rvig8Fc>

4.3 Identifying Assumptions and Risks



WHAT TO EXPECT?

You will learn how to recognise and articulate the assumptions underlying your ToC, perform a risk assessment, and identify external factors that may influence the success of your intervention, such as political instability, social tensions, or lack of cooperation.

It is crucial to identify and explain the underlying assumptions that clarify the incremental steps toward a long-term goal and the connections between these actions and the intervention's outcomes to understand why an intervention has led to particular outcomes (Stein & Valters, 2012). It is necessary to explore the set of assumptions about how change will occur and why underpinning ToC. The assumptions will explain what conditions need to hold for the causal links to work as expected, carrying the necessary external and internal conditions and showcasing why and how the interventions will lead to the desired changes (Noble, 2019). Additionally, they will show the weak spots and uncertainties of the ToC (ibid.).

As outlined in the previous section, assumptions must be investigated and backed up through evidence and data collection, either by drawing from existing data or by collecting own data. Noble (2019) suggests that there are at least four different types of assumptions that can be challenged and questioned:

1. Delivery assumptions: Will all important target groups be reached? Do we have all the resources we need?
2. Outcome assumptions: Is the model going to make a difference? What does the external evidence say about the links and connections in the theory of change?
3. Unintended consequences: What could go wrong? What are the risks? What might be the negative effects and trade-offs?
4. ToC process assumptions: Have stakeholders'/community views, experiences and perspectives been genuinely and representatively reflected?

According to the UNSDG (2017), assumptions to be considered include the following:

- **Causality:** What leads to what, and how? Through what mechanism(s)? This includes how the proposed solutions contribute to the intended high-level development change. It is essential that the assumptions underpinning the proposed causal relationship between different results and other factors be made explicit (if X, then Y, because Z) and are assessed against the available evidence.
- **Implementation:** Assumptions about how interventions should be designed and targeted to deliver the intended results for the intended target groups.
- **External factors:** Assumptions about the influence of issues outside the area of work that can facilitate or hinder the expected change.

This involves identifying why specific solutions act as key drivers of change in a given context and the factors that may influence these drivers (UNSDG, 2017). Assumptions are those elements taken for granted and expected to occur (ibid.). Even the SDGs are not exempt from assumptions that may hinder transformative change. These include assumptions around continuous economic growth, the separation of people and nature, quality of life tied to material accumulation, and gender or racial blindness (Henfrey, Tom et al., 2022).

To test assumptions within a ToC, guiding questions from the UNSDG (2017) include: Does this assumption fully explain the expected outcome? Is it plausible? Does it need testing? A more rigorous method is counterfactual analysis, which examines what would have occurred without the intervention, helping to isolate its effects from other influencing factors (Noble, 2019; see Section 4.1.2).

Attribution logic includes the identification of risks and unintended consequences that might disrupt the causal chain. Hence, conducting a risk analysis is integral to a ToC design. A risk analysis helps to manage difficulties and plan adequate responses. It also involves strategies to mitigate these risks, ensuring that the theory of change remains robust and that attribution to the intervention is more likely. A method to identify risk is to imagine yourself as your worst enemy, seeking to point out weaknesses and risks (Noble, 2019). Risks often relate to assumptions and can cover different areas, such as contextual risks, opportunities, design and partnerships (UNSDG, 2017). Looking at the external environment, guiding questions could centre around how stakeholders and institutions affect the intervention. What can they do to support the ToC, and what should they avoid doing?

Anticipating a ToC's progress is challenging, and not all risks can be considered at the beginning; therefore, it is essential to discuss the key risks while also utilising formative evaluation results.



- Assumptions will explain what conditions need to hold true for the causal links to work.
- Assumptions testing is vital within a theory-based ToC, including investigating assumptions underpinning the

Learnings:
What to take with you?

TAKEAWAYS

proposed causal relationship between different results and other factors.

- Counterfactual analysis can be used to test assumptions
- A risk analysis helps to manage difficulties and plan adequate responses to key risks in advance.



REFLECTION

- What will help or prevent your target groups from engaging and achieving change?
- What actions do you need from other stakeholders or institutions to support your ToC?
- Who else could influence the delivery of your ToC? And how can you encourage them to contribute
- What external factors could impact your ToC? What factors outside your immediate control might assist you or hinder your progress?
- What other contextual conditions could influence your ToC (e.g., political, institutional, societal framework conditions)?

Reflection:
What to think about

4.4 Deciding on Inputs



WHAT TO EXPECT?

Having finalised this subsection, you will be able to determine which resources—such as funding, personnel (including volunteers), time, and training—should be invested in a project or initiative and how to ensure your ToC is purposefully designed, well-resourced, and achievable.

While designing a ToC backwards, the last step is to identify the necessary inputs—the resources or investment that must go into the intervention for the impact to be realised. Related questions are as follows (Jackson-Harman et al., 2021): What resources and capacity do I/we need to implement the activities outlined? What relationships with potential partners, decision-makers, trailblazers, etc., can be fruitful and support the ToC? Multi-stakeholder partnerships ensure that different resources, including expertise, connections and networks, can be utilised and synergies can be exploited. To decide on the inputs, a ToC should draw on the resources that create the most significant difference (Noble, 2019). To follow an attribution logic, a ToC can also detail why other resources and options were decided against.

A ToC should identify partners and actors and their specific roles. Emphasis should be laid on key actors likely to have a direct role in determining the success or failure of the change effort (Noble 2017).

Further resources:

UNSDG (2017). Quality Assurance Checklist to Ensure a Theory of Change. In Theory of Change. UNDAF Companion Guidance, p. 11.

<https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNDG-UNDAF-Companion-Pieces-7-Theory-of-Change.pdf>

4.5 Exercise: Elaboration of a ToC

Please develop a ToC for implementing the 'Local Carbon Footprint Currency'. The goal is to identify how this currency can reduce carbon emissions at the community level and foster sustainable behaviour. Please use the information provided for the case in Section 1.3. By completing this exercise, you will gain a deeper understanding of how to structure and implement a ToC, using practical strategies for creating a positive environmental impact at the community level.



Instructions

1. Understand the context: Research what a local carbon footprint currency entails. How does such a currency work, and what purpose does it serve in reducing carbon emissions? Consider existing case studies where similar initiatives have been applied.
2. Define the desired change: Identify the impact you hope to achieve with this initiative. What are the specific environmental and social outcomes? Who is your community, and what are the key stakeholders (supporters and opponents)? Use the stakeholder map.
3. Identify inputs and resources: List the resources required to implement this initiative.
4. Map activities: Outline the key activities required to establish and maintain the local carbon footprint currency.
5. Establish outputs: Determine the immediate results of these activities.
6. (Re-)Define the outcomes: Finally, articulate the change this initiative aims to achieve.
7. Develop the causal chain: Describe how inputs lead to outputs and outputs to measurable outcomes.

8. **Visualisation:** Use the template provided to visualise your ToC, including cause-effect-chains.
9. **Articulate assumptions and risks:** Identify any assumptions underlying your ToC. For instance, you may assume that people will adopt the currency or that local businesses will be incentivised to participate. Potential risks, such as low community engagement or technological challenges, should be considered.
10. **Reflect and discuss:** Once you have completed your ToC, engage in a group discussion to compare ideas and strategies. What factors contribute to success, and what challenges must be addressed to ensure the initiative's long-term sustainability?

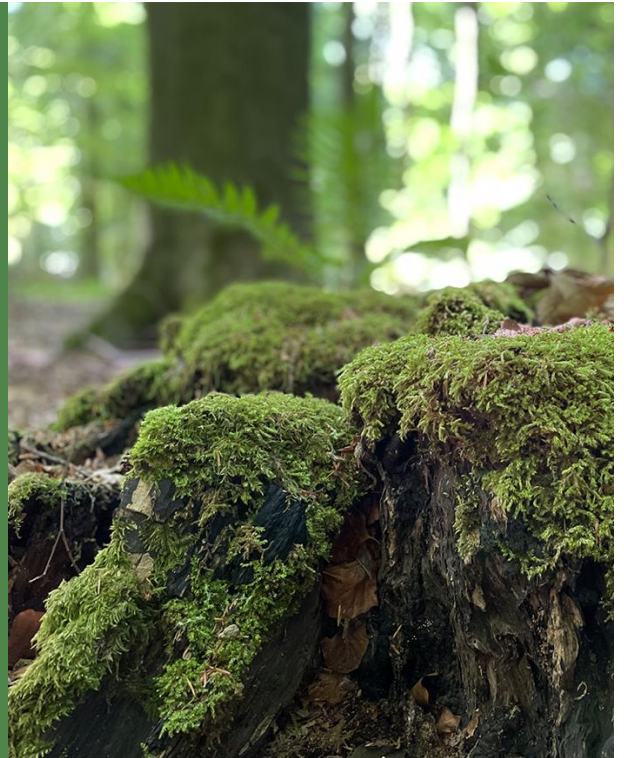
References

- Alomoto, W., Niñerola, A., & Pié, L. (2021). Social Impact Assessment: A Systematic Review of Literature. *Social Indicators Research*, 161(1), 225-250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02809-1>
- Amott, N. & Mackinnon, A. (2006). Mapping Change: Using a Theory of Change to Guide Planning and Evaluation. GrantCraft Series. https://learningforfunders.candid.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/theory_change.pdf
- Bandari, R., Moallemi, E.A., Kharrazi, A. et al. (2024). Transdisciplinary approaches to local sustainability: aligning local governance and navigating spillovers with global action towards the Sustainable Development Goals. *Sustain Science*, 19, 1293-1312. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-024-01494-6>
- Bianchi, G., Matti, C., Pontakakis, D., Reimaris, R., Haegeman, K. H., Miedzinski, M., Sillero Illanes, C., Mifsud, S., Sasso, S., Bol, E., Marques Santos, A., Andreoni, A., Saublens, C., Stefanov, R., & Toliás, Y. (2024). Innovation for place-based transformations. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2760/234679>
- Blamey, A., & Mackenzie, M. (2007). Theories of Change and Realistic Evaluation. *Evaluation*, 13(4), 439-455. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389007082129>
- Building Movement Project (2024). Tools to Engage: Resources for Nonprofits. <https://tools2engage.org/>.
- Coutu, Ash Coutu (2017a). "6 ways for students to get involved with community-engaged learning" Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (Project). Carleton University. <https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2017/6-ways-for-students-to-get-involved-with-community-engaged-learning/>
- Coutu, Ash Coutu (2017b). "7 steps to engagement for community-based organizations" Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (Project). Carleton University. <https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2017/7-steps-for-community-partners-who-want-to-engaging-in-cce/>
- Engström RE et al. (2021). Succeeding at home and abroad: accounting for the international spillovers of cities' SDG actions. *npj Urban Sustainability*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42949-020-00002-w>
- Filho, W. L. et al. (2024). The added value of partnerships in implementing the UN sustainable development goals. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2024.140794>
- Foroudi, P., Marvi, R., Cuomo, M. T., & D'Amato, A. (2024). Sustainable Development Goals in a regional context: conceptualising, measuring and managing residents' perceptions. *Regional Studies*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2024.2373871>
- Gaines, C./SoPact, (February 10, 2020). Theory of Change: Framework for Social Impact. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cg4J1g0IVHg>
- Garbaskaitė-Jakimovska, J. et al. (2021): Community Impact Indicators for Learning Mobility Desk research. Youth Partnership.
- Generation Unlimited (2024). News and Stories. <https://www.generationunlimited.org/news-and-stories>
- Gertler, P. J., Martinez, S., Premand, P., Rawlings, L. B., & Vermeersch, C. M. J. (2016). Impact evaluation in practice. The World Bank.
- Gready, P., & Robins, S. (2020). Transitional Justice and Theories of Change: Towards evaluation as understanding. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 14(2), 280-299. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijaa008>

- Hazenberg, R., & Paterson-Young, C. (Eds.). (2022). *Social Impact Measurement For A Sustainable Future. The Power of Aesthetics and Practical Implications*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83152-3>
- Henfrey, T., Feola, G., Penha-Lopes, G., Sekulova, F., & Esteves, A. M. (2022). Rethinking the sustainable development goals: Learning with and from community-led initiatives. *Sustainable Development*, 31(1), 211-222. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2384>
- Hiruy, K., Elmes, A., Qian-Khoo, J., Joyce, A., & Barraket, J. (2022). Placing People at the Centre of Social Impact Measurement: Current Approaches, Challenges, and Future Directions. In R. Hazenberg & C. Paterson-Young (Eds.), *Social Impact Measurement for a Sustainable Future* (pp. 27-48). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83152-3_3
- Jackson-Harman, K. et al. (2021). Thinking globally, acting locally: How community foundations are contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. UK Community Foundations. <https://www.ukcommunityfoundations.org/media/vxbk01u2/how-community-foundations-are-contributing-towards-the-sdgs-final.pdf>
- Jeffery, N. (2009). *Stakeholder Engagement: A Road Map to Meaningful Engagement*. Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility at the Cranfield School of Management. <https://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/bitstreams/565d03c4-2cd3-40eb-bff9-6a00fcb253fe/download>
- Kellogg, W. K. Foundation (2004). *Logic Model Development Guide*. https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/Programs/Public-Health-Infrastructure/KelloggLogicModelGuide_161122_162808.pdf
- Krlev, G., Mildenerger, G., & Then, V. (2023). Social Impact Measurement. In J. Howaldt & C. Kaletka (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Social Innovation* (pp. 433-437). Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800373358.ch75>
- Krlev, G., & Terstriep, J. (2022). Pinning it down? Measuring innovation for sustainability transitions. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 45, 270-288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2022.11.005>
- Loorbach, D., Wittmayer, J., Avelino, F., von Wirth, T., & Frantzeskaki, N. (2020). Transformative innovation and translocal diffusion. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 35, 251-260. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2020.01.009>
- Mason, P. & Barnes, M. (2007). Constructing theories of change: Methods and sources. *Evaluation*, 13(2): 151-170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389007075221>
- Miller-Dawkins, M. (2014). *9 Ways to Change the World? Theories of Change for Engaging People on Global Issues*. Corelab. Oxfam Australia.
- Morgan, S. L., & Winship, C. (2015). *Counterfactuals and causal inference: Methods and principles for social research*. Cambridge University Press.
- Moritz S., M. & Baur, D. (2013). *Regional Development. Education GPS*, OECD. <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/revieweducationpolicies/#!node=42869&filter=all>.
- Noble, J. (2019). *Theory of Change in Ten Steps*. NPC. <https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/ten-steps/#content>
- Oberlack, C., Breu, T., Giger, M., Harari, N., Herweg, K., Mathez-Stiefel, S.-L., Messerli, P., Moser, S., Ott, C., Providoli, I., Tribaldos, T., Zimmermann, A., & Schneider, F. (2019). Theories of change in sustainability science: Understanding how change happens. *GAIA - Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society*, 28(2), 106-111. <https://doi.org/10.14512/gaia.28.2.8>
- Ogain, E. N., Lumley, T., & Pritchard, D. (2012). *Making an Impact*. NPC. Public Services (Social Value) Act. (2012). <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/3/notes/contents>

- OECD/European Union. (2024). Measure, Manage and Maximise Your Impact. A Guide for Social Economy. OECD Publishing. DOI: [10.1787/2238c1f1-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/2238c1f1-en)
- Oxford English Dictionary (2024). Impact. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/impact_n
- Plan International (2022). Young People and Green Skills: Preparing for a Sustainable Future. <https://plan-international.org/publications/young-people-green-skills/>
- Rabadjieva, M., & Terstriep, J. (2021). Ambition Meets Reality: Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy as a Driver for Participative Governance. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010231>
- Robertson, W. Courtney (Host) (7. August 2024). The Necessary Skills to Navigate Change. [Podcast]. *Collective Impact Forum*, Episode 85. <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resource/the-necessary-skills-to-navigate-change/>
- Sachs, J. D., Lafortune, G., & Fuller, G. (2024). Sustainable Development Report 2024. The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. Dublin: Dublin University Press. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2024/sustainable-development-report-2024.pdf>
- Schnurr Laura, (2021). A Guide for Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in Your Community. <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/book/ten-guide-sdgs-2021>
- Serban, Adina et al. (2023). Creating Community Impact through Solidarity. OeAD-GmbH.
- Sevrain, C. (2019). What is Impact? YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU7KLJDf038>
- Sherpa Institute (2021). SDG8 Target Indicators Transformed into KPIs – Part 1. <https://sherpainstitute.org/sdg8-target-indicators-transformed-into-kpis-part-1/>
- Siegel, J. & Terstriep, J. (2023a). Taking Responsibility – HEIs' Role in Thriving Sustainable Futures. SDS4HEI Project Deliverable of WP2 – Paths to Implementing Sustainable Development. Gelsenkirchen: Westphalian University of Applied Sciences Gelsenkirchen, Institute for Work and Technology. <https://sds4hei.eu/download/548/?tmstv=1724933984>
- Siegel, Jessica; Terstriep, Judith (2024). Hochschulen als Acceleratoren nachhaltiger regionaler Ökosysteme, *Forschung Aktuell*, No. 02/2024. <https://doi.org/10.53190/fa/202402>
- Stein, D. & Valters. C. (2012). Understanding 'Theory of Change' in International Development: A Review of Existing Knowledge. JSRP Paper 1.
- TeachforAll (2024). Community Impact Lab Resources. <https://learning.teachforall.org/community-impact-lab/community-impact-lab-resources>
- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2022). Impact. 5th Ed., HarperCollins. <https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=impact>
- The University of Kansas (2024). The Community Tool Box. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents>
- Then, V., Münscher, R., Callegari, B., Stahlschmidt, S., Wedemeyer, L., Bungard, P., & Strifler, A. (2012). Creating Impact in Southern Norway. http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/18691/1/Creating_Impact_in_Southern_Norway.pdf
- United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) (2017). Theory of Change: UNDAF Companion Guidance. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/theory-change-undaf-companion-guidance>
- United Nations General Assembly (1987). Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. New York: United Nations. https://www.are.admin.ch/dam/are/en/dokumente/nachhaltige_entwicklung/dokumente/b_ericht/our_common_futurebrundtlandreport1987.pdf.download.pdf/our_common_futurebrundtlandreport1987.pdf

- Valters, Craig (2014). Theories of Change in International Development: Communication, Learning, or Accountability? JSRP, 17. <https://usaidlearninglab.org/system/files/resource/files/theoriesofchange.pdf>
- Vanclay, F. 2003. International Principles for Social Impact Assessment. Impact Assessment & Project Appraisal 21(1): 5-11. <https://www.iaia.org/wiki-details.php?ID=23>.
- Wegener, F. E., Lee, J. Y., Mascena Barbosa, A., Sharma, G., & Bansal, P. (2024). From impact to impacting: A pragmatist perspective on tackling grand challenges. Strategic Organization. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14761270241238915>
- White, H. (2010). Theory-Based Impact Evaluation: Principles and Practice, 3ie, New Delhi.
- WHO (2014). Child health and development. <https://www.emro.who.int/child-health/research-and-evaluation/indicators/Type-of-indicators.html>
- Zhao, Z. et al. (2021). Synergies and tradeoffs among Sustainable Development Goals across boundaries in a metacoupled world. Science of The Total Environment, 751, 141749. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.141749>



For further information visit
www.sds4hei.eu