



10. Legacy and impacts of research

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to argue that once a project ends, any benefits will continue being enjoyed by participants and their communities.

As discussed in the previous chapter, sustainability in arts projects refers to the ability of a community to maintain an involvement in activities initiated by artists, researchers, NGOs and so on. It usually means that some aspects of a project can continue even though public or other funding is no longer available. If one went along with these interpretations of the terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘legacy’, then one could argue that the two are different characteristics of a project, while being related. However, one could also say they are not too closely related or inter-dependent. For instance, may a project be unsustainable and have a legacy? Yes. Inversely, may a project be sustainable but not establish a legacy? Yes.

One way of establishing a legacy for an arts project is to disseminate tangible results (works of art, artefacts, outreach programmes, reports, new educational material, and so on) and intangible results (improved participants’ self-confidence or motivation, improved recognition of a district’s assets, knowledge gained by participants, and so on) in order to spread information on a scale that is usually broader than the community within which the project was carried out. It often helps that a dissemination plan is discussed at the beginning of a project, to make sure that creative results and research findings are exploited well. A list of outcomes (developed at the beginning and updated later in the

project) will help researchers to target particular users or audiences.

Sometimes it also helps to consider which of these outcomes should be considered as the most crucial finding in a project and reflect on these questions: What is so significant about this product or finding? Why? Who would benefit most from this finding? How would they benefit?

A well-planned exploitation of outcomes helps to maximise the long-term potential of research by ensuring that they do not only benefit research teams. Amongst others, research is carried out and disseminated:

- To benefit participants (pride in their achievements)
- To benefit stakeholders (assuring that their resources have been put to good use)
- To benefit artists and the artistic community
- To benefit other projects (sharing best practice)
- To convince policymakers of the importance of the work
- To help change policy
- To attract funders for future projects

In order to achieve a broad range of benefits, a solid dissemination plan would target specific end users or channels that could help to communicate research to different audiences, such as:

- Print and other media (TV, radio, etc.)
- Social media

- Academic journals
- Conferences
- Webinars
- Local and international specialised magazines
- Opinion leaders
- Websites
- Training for organisations and other stakeholders
- Continuous professional development programmes
- Events for the general public

When making plans for communication, it is useful to consider the following issues:

- How much detail would you want to include to make sure that the communication of main research findings is effective and beneficial?
- Depending on the specific audience you are targeting, what kind of language should a report or article be couched in to maximise the use of a particular communication channel?
- How can you present your findings in a way that is relevant to targeted groups?

Value of Legacy

As suggested by the roots and development of the word itself, ‘legacy’ invokes the idea of something, such as a result, being tied to something else that preceded it, like a cause (‘legare’ in Latin and still used in Italian nowadays, meaning to tie, and later to delegate, and therefore represent, or speak on one’s own behalf). This bond, this consequence of action, as well as the idea of responsibility, allows us to identify an interesting connection between a project and what may follow it. An action that comes after a project ends may be intended or not; either way, that follow-up may be argued to be its legacy.

Many projects do plan for a legacy to take place in a certain way. Generally, such planning is required for funding applications, and

Evaluating the impact, value and success of research

When rigorous research methods like experimental design are utilised in arts projects, this can help researchers or artists to assess the impact of creative, educational and other interventions. If the societal impact of the arts is reported without the necessary rigour, this may negatively affect the possibility of using the research to influence policy. Besides, evaluating the impact of a research project may not be sufficient because it could overlook the fact that results do not correlate precisely with the initial goals of the project. A project

can also have an overall negative impact in the long-term; for example, the culture-led regeneration of certain districts in a town could appear like a positive impact initially, but might lead to gentrification in the longer term.

A research project studied culture as a participative process of co-creation in Umeå, which was the European Capital of Culture in 2014. It has been described as central in Umeå that residents and organizations were joint producers of meaning, but afterwards there were contradictory accounts as to how this cocreation of meaning was carried out in practice. This is referred to as the so-called participation paradox, which points towards a tendency to presume that co-creation benefits all and to ignore how destructive this might be unless it is carried out in a democratic spirit. The project studies experiences of co-creation with citizens and public officials within the cultural sector in order to look more closely at how cultural policy may contribute to social inclusion.” (Hudson, C. 2014 - 2016)

Cultural ‘value’ and impact include a wide range of aspects, some of which might be mis-represented to justify funding or for other reasons. Studying cultural value calls for multi-criteria analyses in order to understand the notion of value from different perspectives, including the perspectives of individuals or inhabitants in particular social contexts, civil society groups, people affected by urban regeneration, persons in different economic strata, art therapists and health care workers, educators, different ethnicities, and so on (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016).

A study about community transformation carried out in Toronto (Toronto Arts Foundation, 2013) identified different impacts of the arts on people:

- Sharing Experiences
- Building Connections
- Networking Opportunities
- Bridging Difference
- Understanding Issues
- Local Participation
- Neighbourhood beautification
- Legacy building

Apart from recognising a project’s impacts, it is also important to gauge its success. ‘Success’ may look different to a funder or a stakeholder than to an artist, or someone working closely with participants, so there is a measure of relativity in such evaluations, depending on the evaluator. Participants may be reluctant or too ‘nice’ to criticise a project - this is a risk in some post surveys, for instance. Reducing response bias is a crucial concern for researchers, so respondents need to be informed about the actual goals of a project and the importance of accurate data. For researchers and practitioners, it is crucial that objectives are clear from the beginning of an activity - this facilitates the evaluation of a project’s success later on. A good project evaluation studies a project’s results but also recommends possible improvements in future iterations. Researchers sometimes use indicators to measure progress in terms of quantity and quality. Some examples of indicators are: percentages, particular products, events like exhibitions, meetings with

participants or stakeholders, successful media coverage and policy-makers’ feedback.

While evaluation is central to most arts research projects, it should not become a mere bureaucratic exercise that possibly restricts artistic experimentation or community-led, dynamic processes. Artists’ views on a project’s outcomes and lifespan should also be respected and included in reviews, and can help to generate new outlooks on research and participatory strategies in the arts (Wright, 2018, p. 7).

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