

Assessing the impact of **culture and creativity in society**

A magazine

What is the
social impact
of **arts, culture
and creativity?**

Theory of Change

Impact **education**

This magazine describes the journey of a course at Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. 'Assessing the impact of culture and creativity in society' was piloted in 2021, as a collaboration between the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication and Impact Centre Erasmus. Ellen Loots and Marjelle Vermeulen have been the driving forces behind the course and this magazine, which were co-created with students and cultural organizations as key stakeholders.

Colophon

Assessing the impact of Culture and Creativity in Society
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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With the support of Impact at the Core

Publisher

Erasmus University Rotterdam
February 2022

Design

PanArt communication and media design

Editing

Erica Peaslee

Reference

Loots, E., & Vermeulen, M. (2022). Assessing the impact of culture and creativity in society. A magazine. Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Erasmus School of
History, Culture and
Communication

Impact
at the Core

Assessing the impact of **culture and creativity in society**

A magazine

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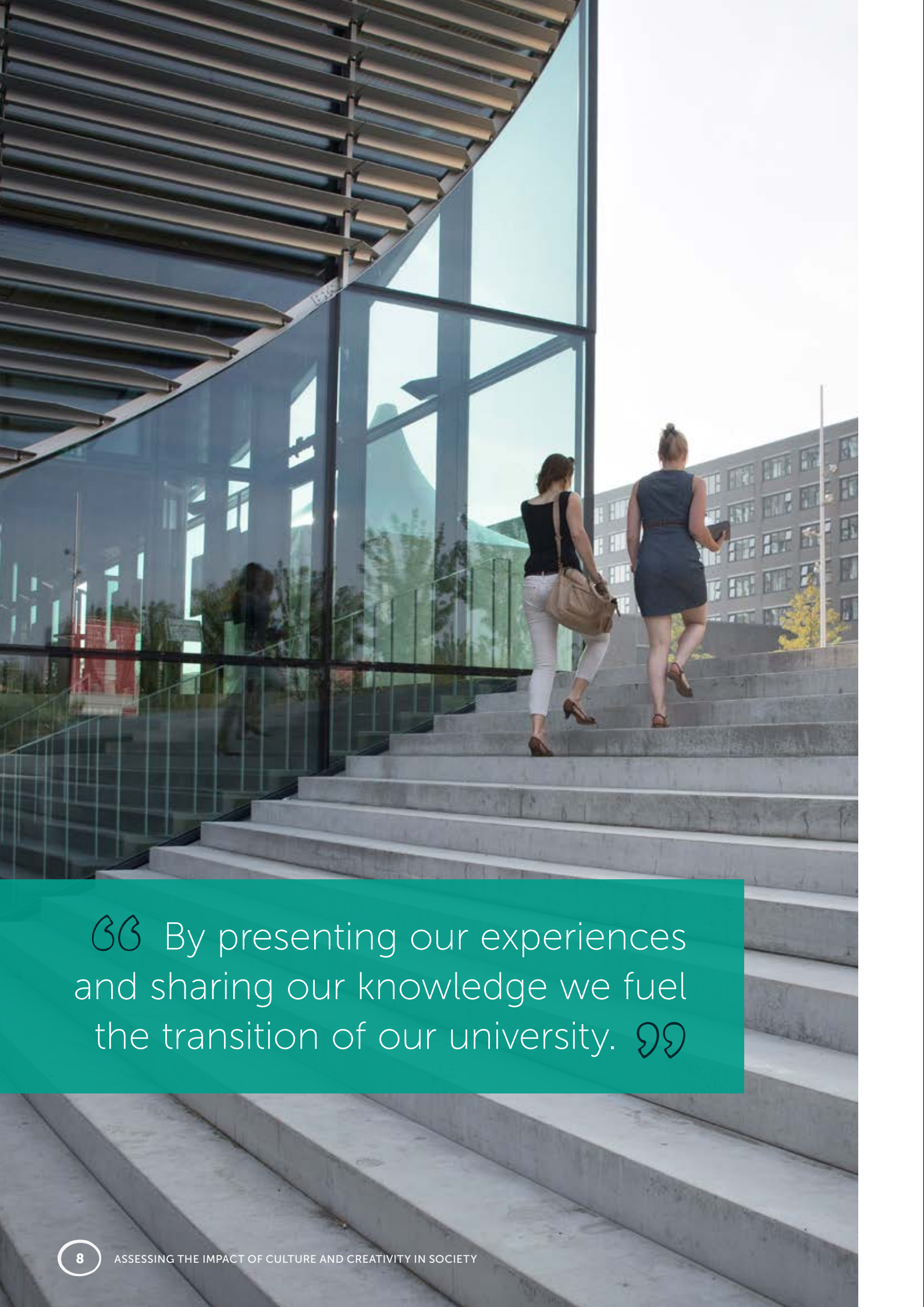
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Assessing the
impact of **Culture
and Creativity
in Society**



Introduction



“ By presenting our experiences and sharing our knowledge we fuel the transition of our university. ”

Preface by Arwin van Buuren



Arwin van Buuren
Academic Lead Impact at the Core

You have before you an extraordinarily fine magazine. It is also a rather unique one. This magazine is devoted to an academic course. Of course, it can only be a very special course that gets the honor of its own glossy. And indeed, it is a course that is rather special.

This course goes into the question how to assess the impact of culture and creativity. It focuses upon the important question how we can come up with meaningful conclusions about the societal impact of the domains of arts and culture. In an era in which these domains face many difficulties and in which policymakers need authoritative information to justify decisions which are easily called into question, this is a pressing question.

That makes this course also a textbook example of a new generation of courses emerging at our Erasmus University. A generation of courses which is "impact-driven". These courses are

aimed at enabling our students to have an impact on society, to use their academic knowledge and expertise to contribute to today's societal issues. To develop the competencies, values and the professional attitude that helps them to make a difference.

This course is thus not only impact-focused, as it helps students to assess the impact of specific activities. It is also impact-driven: it helps students to find ways to put this knowledge into practice, to advise stakeholders about how to make their strategy more impact-oriented and to use impact evaluation as a building block in a process of learning and improving.

With this magazine the impact of this course gets another dimension. By presenting our experiences and sharing our knowledge we fuel the transition of our university. A transition in which we want to make minds matter. I wish this magazine a lot of impact!



“ I am very proud that the Impact Centre Erasmus has joined forces with Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication. ”

Preface by Karen Maas



Karen Maas

Academic director Impact Centre Erasmus, Erasmus University Rotterdam and professor Accounting and Sustainability at Open University Heerlen.

Impact Centre Erasmus is a research centre at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Already since 2015 we focus on impact strategy, impact thinking and impact management. What is the impact of your organization? Does your organization create social value? If so, how much? What would have happened if your organization had not been there?

These questions can be answered by strategically thinking about impact and by measuring the impact achieved. We work together with a wide diversity of organizations, initiatives, programs, and sectors to answer their impact questions and to continuously develop new knowledge about impact strategies. In recent years, the impact question is more and more important for the cultural and creative industry. We believe that impact strategy, impact thinking and impact management is extremely relevant for this sector. Measuring impact does not only provide insight

into the size of the impact, but above all, it offers the opportunity to learn from this insight and to better manage the intended impact.

In the cultural and creative field, there is an increasing need for insight into the impact achieved. However, there is little experience with measuring and managing impact by organizations. I am very proud that the Impact Centre Erasmus has joined forces with Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication, to educate the future cultural and creative professionals on impact. By doing so, the students are educated to use impact thinking and the frameworks and tools provided in their future career. In the end, the cultural and creative sector will be empowered to create even more impact – thanks to the students.

Assessing the impact of culture and creativity in society: a course, a magazine

“As society in general is not consistent but, instead, continuously evolving, the relationship between art and society needs to be considered dynamic and reciprocal. Therefore, whenever the issue of the impact of art is addressed, the interdependence of both the arts and society needs to be emphasized.” (Anttonen et al., 2016, p. 19)

Welcome!

Thank you for landing on this page! The fact that you are here indicates that you have an interest in education and impact. Maybe you are an educator considering developing a course or lecture about impact, or want to make your curriculum more impactful. Or maybe you are an organizer of artistic events or cultural activities, curious to see how others deal with impact-questions. If you are considering engaging with impact research, we hope that this publication will provide some direction. You may know one of our former students, with whom this magazine was co-created; Eva, Denisa, Carmen, and Eva wrote essays that are happily shared. Additionally, brief summaries of the group projects of the course ‘Assessing the Impact of Culture and Creativity in Society (CC4123)’ are included in this publication.

Transformative education

With a pilot course that took place during eight weeks between February and April 2021, we hope to have taken some steps in developing transformative education. Cooperative work between students, problem-solving, seminar dialogue, and action research have been key aspects of the course under scope, fostering values such as respect, communication, sharing, and caring¹. The organizations that were the source of the students’ projects have been represented by generous members who took up roles as mentors and taught our students many aspects of the professional context.

A small win

For an elective course like this — organized in a small department with a group of 25 students — the goals of this course are ambitious (p. 91). However, as a small win, this single course can be a controllable opportunity that produces measurable results. According to Weick (1984), small wins have advantages and can be effective, because they are “small” (meaning that the

1 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>

problem that is being addressed remains understandable and manageable) and “wins” (the more clearly the problem can be seen, the more likely a fitting solution will be developed). We hope the results of the course planted some seeds for innovation and change. Also for us, this is a learning process, and we look forward to continue it with colleagues and societal partners.

Impact education and research embedded in Erasmus University

Two colleagues at Erasmus University Rotterdam found each other. One of us has been working for Impact Centre Erasmus for some years and has specialized in impact studies of cultural and socio-cultural organizations. Her ongoing collaboration with Van Gogh Museum has inspired the museum to develop inclusive activities for groups with migration backgrounds, and was shared with the international research community (Vermeulen et al., 2019; Vermeulen and Maas (2021); Vermeulen et al., 2021). One of us is affiliated with the Arts and Culture Studies department, which has a tradition of collaborating with the cultural field in the Netherlands and abroad. Diversity, inclusivity, sustainability, and wellbeing are naturally entrenched in much of ACS research and education, for example: collaborative practices, fair labor markets, and wellbeing at work (Loots et al., 2018; van Andel & Loots, 2021). Ongoing PhD-research at the Arts and Culture Studies department addresses themes of the representation of climate change in visual arts, arts-science-technology collaborations, and sustainable urban tourism.

Acknowledgements

Embedded in a university bolstered by its 2020-2024 strategy, “Creating Positive Societal Impact,” we were certainly not left to our own devices. We are grateful to Pauwke Berkers and Filip Vermeulen of the Arts and Culture Studies department, and Karen Maas and Jacqueline Scheidsbach of Impact Centre Erasmus. Colleagues from Impact at the Core, including Linda De Vreede, Bienenke Verheijke and Almar Bok, as well as Léonie Ridderstap from ESHCC have been enormously supportive during the course. We thank Alexander Ramselaar, Anna Bilker, Annelore Camps, Fatima Essahah, Ghyslaine Tromp, Inez Schatz, Kaat Zoontjes, Laila de Bruyne, Manon Sandee, Martin van Engel and Wing Tang who took part on behalf of the organizations. Last but certainly not least, the participants of the course earn a big “thank you,” for committing to this adventure, and – under challenging circumstances due to a pandemic – creating an impact of which the organizations as well as their teachers have been impressed!

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The more clearly the problem can be seen, the more likely a fitting solution will be developed.

Why this magazine?

The aim of this publication is to enthuse educators, organizers, and current and future students about impact research and education. We hope to be able to do so by sharing insight into the intentions and outcomes of a course that we recently developed. Students conducted admirable impact research, in teams, for a diverse group of organizations in the Netherlands and Belgium that included the Van Gogh

Museum, Women Connected, Cultuur+Ondernemen, 'Allez, Chantez!', Amsterdam Fashion College, and Eye Filmmuseum. This is how impact, education, research, and society come together.

We chose the format of a magazine. It is informative rather than mere entertaining, or instructive.

As a society, we face urgent global challenges like overcoming a pandemic.

Why this course?

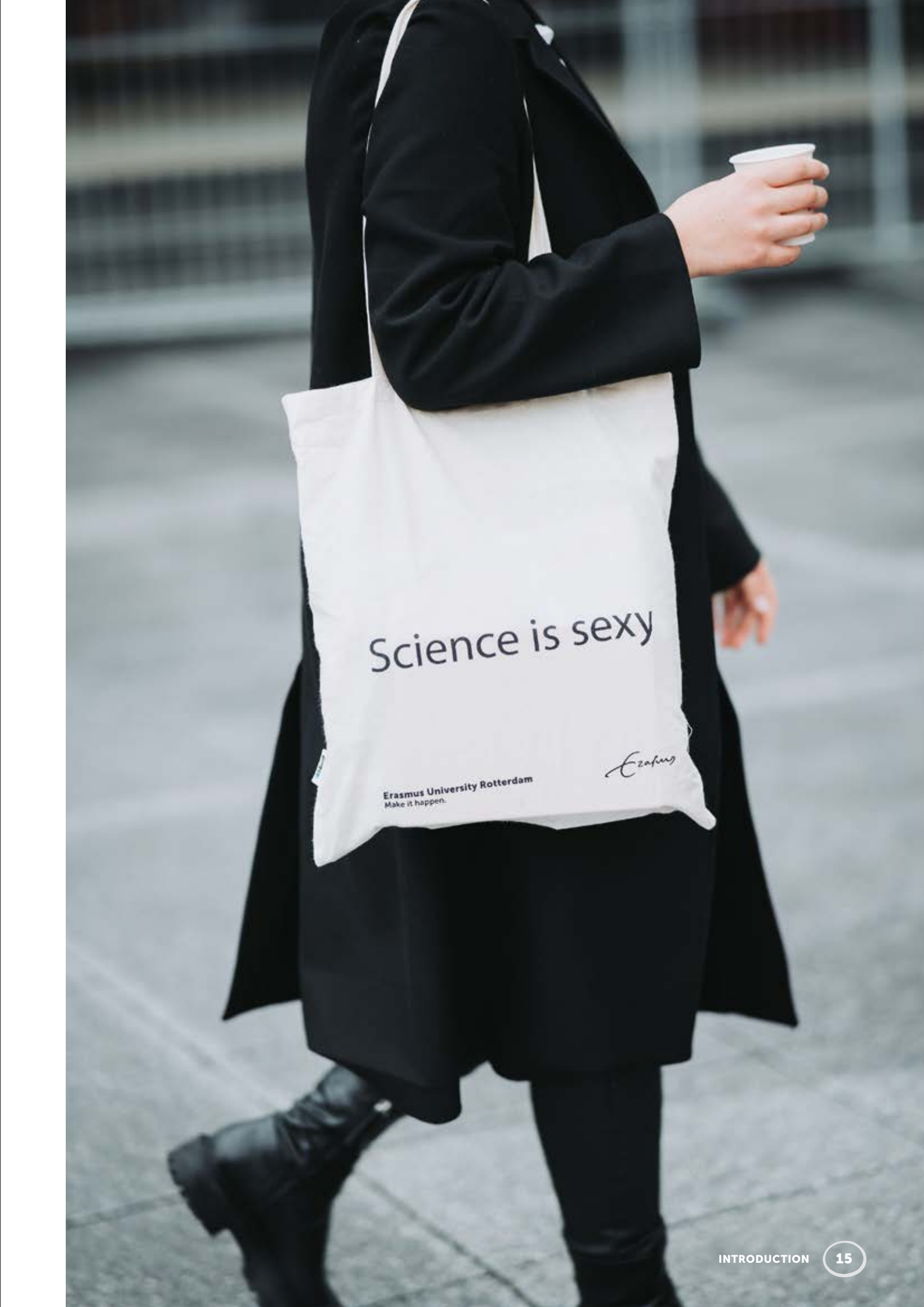
Why did we develop a course "Assessing the Impact of Culture and Creativity in Society"?

First, we care about the professional futures of our students. We live in a volatile and uncertain world, one that requires skills that can be addressed in higher education. The course seeks to convey knowledge and methods as well as appeal to competencies and skills including so-called "21st century skills," (e.g., critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and complex problem solving) and life skills such as social skills and flexibility.

Second, all involved (students, teachers and organizations) have a heart for the arts and culture, and are convinced that creativity is a source of inspiration and connectedness. While a global pandemic has put a major burden on the organization of cultural events, it has also shown that arts and creativity have the capacity to comfort, energize, and connect people. In order to keep their heads above water, organizations in arts and culture

are constantly preoccupied with proving their worth, while precious energy could go to strengthening their connection with society. This type of course foresees a space where those precise connections can be reinforced, and where young future professionals explore how to deal with these demands.

Third, as a society, we face urgent global challenges like overcoming a pandemic, working toward a European Green Deal and global Sustainable Development Goals. Organizations and individuals that are preoccupied with artistic and cultural expressions, as well as producers of creative goods and services, may take up important roles during any expected transition. The arts and culture sectors can create impact by touching people, creating awareness, and provoking changes in attitudes and behaviors; a younger generation of change-makers aware of the potential roles of arts and culture can take up their civic and environmental responsibilities.



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Erasmus



Assessing the
impact of **Culture
and Creativity
in Society**



Impact of culture and creativity

The social impact of arts, culture and creativity: what is it?

The subject of the impact of arts and culture is complex and entails a rhetoric confusion of speech. Why is that? The notions of impact, value, benefits, and effects are closely related, but not entirely the same. The idea of impact suggests something needs to be proved. Impact can be measured, assessed, or studied, which are, again, closely related, but not the same. And social impact, does it refer to the economic benefits for society, or benefits for people and communities (beyond the economic)? Let's explore the literature on the subject just a bit, before two students provide their perspectives on impact studies in arts and culture.

The economic angle

Many impact studies serve as cases for the arts, and are conducted to *prove*. Two types of economic studies express impact in monetary terms.

1. Economic impact studies

The arts are believed to have economic benefits because they are associated with expenditures that induce a multiplier effect, raising the total economic impact (Frey, 2019). This can be studied by means of economic impact studies. When calculating the economic impact of a cultural activity or organization, the direct net economic impact and indirect impact are taken together (Snowball, 2007). Even if these studies are frequently conducted, many economists tend to be critical of economic impact studies, because they frequently fail in measuring the 'marginal' value of an artistic activity and lack in comparing the benefits of investing the available resources in other uses (Frey, 2019). Several

researchers explain the advantages and dangers of economic impact studies, for example Jen Snowball (2007).

2. Willingness-to-pay studies

Economists also undertake willingness-to-pay studies, in which they make an effort to measure the value of art to society (Frey, 2019). The arts are believed to have non-market benefits; social values produced include the external effects of the arts that are not taken into account by the market: existence, option, bequest, prestige, and education values (Frey, 2019). These external effects can accrue above the direct benefits provided by cultural activities and organizations.

- Existence value: people benefit from the mere existence of the arts, even if they never attend it.
- Option and bequest value: people who do not currently participate in the arts may want to have the option to do so in the future, or may want other people (like their children) to be able to attend.

- Prestige value: the arts may contribute to the recognition of a city or region and as such, provide social value.
- Education value: the arts positively contribute to people's education.
- It refers to "people's lives," as the object of the impact, as well as the mediating mechanism through which long lasting impact can be effectuated (Landry et al., 1993).

Such social value can be measured by means of willingness-to-pay (WTP) studies that seek to assess whether the total social benefits of a project outweigh its total social costs. Only if there are external effects that are not captured by the market, according to classical welfare economics, there would be an argument for government support (Frey, 2019). WTP studies are far from perfect either, because they seem to be insensitive for the amount of what is being valued, and prone to biases in the minds of the respondents that report their willingness to financially support an activity or project (Snowball, 2007).

Outcomes for both economic impact studies and willingness-to-pay studies are expressed in monetary units. However, the price of something is just one measure of value; arts and culture may benefit from other forms of valuation as well. The market can provide some guidance for policy makers, but may not be sufficient to rely on in the case of goods with externalities, such as the arts (Snowball, 2007).

An alternative angle

Alternatively, the social impact of the arts, culture, and creativity has been referred to as "those effects that go beyond the artefacts and the enactment of the event or performance itself and have a continuing influence upon, and directly through, people's lives" (Landry et al., 1993, p. 50).

Such a reference entails a number of elements:

- It refers to effects beyond those of artefacts and performances, so beyond emotions, feelings of connectedness, arousal, or tension, and beyond the thoughts and ideas that are being provoked within someone who contemplates or enjoys a work, as well as beyond the (temporary) connections and social relations that are created by and through "consuming" an artistic or cultural object or experience.
- It refers to the continuity of the influence of the object or experience, so to the fact that the influence lasts for a longer time.

The impact of the arts relates to any positive change in society that has been created by purposeful activity. This description stresses two points:

- First, it talks about a positive change. Impact is more than just the activities or outputs of the arts. These should lead to positive changes.
- Second, purposeful activity refers to the consciousness of the ones that initiate, develop, and execute an arts activity. It suggests that goals must be pre-determined and entail the possibility of causing something.

According to Clark et al. (2004, p.7), impact is "the portion of the total outcome that happened as a result of the activity of an organization, above and beyond what would have happened anyway." Impact can be positive and negative; intended and unintended; direct, and indirect. This definition of impact is the foundation of the work by Impact Centre Erasmus, and served this course.

One of the greatest challenges in making a positive change in society — and thus in creating a social impact with the arts, culture, or creativity — relates to changing people's behavior (Anttonen et al., 2016). In this manner, creating a societal impact with the arts is a two-stage process: there needs to be an impact on individuals, before those individuals can then contribute to changes. Until now, knowledge about the mechanisms (cognitive, emotional, psychological, etc.) through which the arts are perceived to affect people's behavior and their understanding of themselves and the world around them, has been limited (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010).

While the question "what is the social impact of the arts, culture, and creativity?" can be answered in a speculative manner, grounded in numerous overlapping and some contradictory definitions— what the social impact of the arts, culture, and creativity actually consists of, and

how such impact is effectuated, is far from understood.

What is the social impact of arts, culture and creativity?

Many thinkers and researchers have tried to grasp and classify the manifold ways in which arts and culture could have an impact on the social system they operate within, called society. The notions of “social impact,” and “societal impact,” have been used interchangeably, and differently by different authors, with “social” commonly referring to people or the relations between people, and “societal” to the society that individuals live in, facing its various challenges and opportunities.

Arts and culture have long been considered to possess the capacity to “trigger reflection, generate empathy, create dialogue, and foster new ideas” (Anttonen et al., 2016: p.19). François Matarasso, an artist, writer, policy advisor, and consultant with many years of experience, has argued that the social impact of participating in

the arts arises from the arts’ capacity to help people think critically and question their and other people’s experiences due to the excitement, colors, feelings, magic, metaphors, and danger that the arts can offer (Matarasso, 1999; Anttonen et al., 2016). According to Pascal Gielen and his colleagues, the core business of the cultural sector is to design and give meaning to ways of living together. Those individuals that engage with the arts, either professionally or as an amateur, guide individuals through the social order, bring structure, and/or emancipate individuals in order to claim their place within an order, or countermine it (Gielen et al., 2014).

Various impact domains

Based on a thorough literature review, McCarthy et al. (2004) were able to classify the benefits of arts and culture. These include cognitive benefits, attitudinal and behavioral benefits, health benefits, social benefits, and economic benefits. The social benefits that McCarthy et al. (2004) gained from reviewing the literature were mostly community-level social benefits.

Table 1: **Dimensions of the potential social impact of the arts and culture, based on Ateca-Amestoy and Casalini (2020), Anttonen et al. (2016), Gielen et al. (2014), McCarthy et al. (2004)**

Social impact dimension	Potential contributions of the arts, culture, and creativity
Communications and interactions	Openness to cultural beliefs and traditions, openness to minorities and their legacy, digital connectivity of communities...
Education and audience development	Lifelong learning, increasing employability, knowledge development, cognitive functioning, understanding and openness...
Health and wellbeing	Fostering psychological wellbeing, preventing social isolation and loneliness, arts therapy practices...
Social cohesion and community development	Integration of minorities, social cohesion, developing community identities, meaningfully living together, intergenerational dialogues...
Innovation and creativity	Fostering creativity and critical thinking, unraveling the societal relevance of new and unconventional ideas, artistic models for the prototyping of new goods and services...
Sustainability	Awareness and interest in the environment, attitudinal and behavioral changes...
Political influences	Cultural diplomacy, intercultural dialogue, improvement of the (self-)image of the territory...
Economic influences	Cultural resources as drivers for economic development and growth, cultural employment, tourism and cultural development of places, spatial regeneration, entrepreneurship through innovation...

These include benefits that create a sense of community identity and promote interaction between community members, and benefits that build the organizational capacity of a community and get people involved in civic institutions. In a similar vein, Gielen et al. (2014) distinguish between cognitive effects, health, experience values, and economic and social effects. Researchers of a European project state that the impact of the arts can be found in “health improvement, mental well-being, cognitive functioning, creative ability, professional performance and aesthetic development” (Anttonen et al., 2016, p. 25), as well as in city or community development, spatial regeneration, and a transition to a sustainable environment.

Recently, again based on a literature review, Victoria Ateca-Amestoy and Francesca Casalini have brought together no less than eight dimensions of societal impact in the arts, which range from individuals’ attitudes and behaviors in relation to various societal challenges; a community-centered capacity of meaningfully cohabiting a place; to political and economic influences including those related to territorial identities and economic development (Ateca-Amestoy and Casalini, 2020). Table 1 brings together some of the social impact dimensions of arts, culture and creativity.

So yes, there is definitely a sense of what the arts, culture, and creativity may contribute to. Quite a few of the social impact dimensions included in table 1, can be easily linked to one or more of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. There is also evidence for the contribution of arts and culture — albeit at times contested — because of a remarkable paradox: on the one hand, there is a strong opposition of reducing the arts to its instrumentality, on the other hand, various roles and functions in society have been attributed to arts and culture, not in the least in order to justify its public support.

Instrumental and intrinsic value

Numerous debates have surrounded the value of arts and culture (or its worth, but that may not be the same, as has been debated) (e.g. Klammer, 2004, 2017; Hutter and Shusterman, 2017; Throsby, 2003, 2010). An often made, pragmatic, distinction is between the intrinsic and instrumental value of the arts (Holden, 2006). McCarthy et al. (2004) stipulate that both instrumental and intrinsic benefits can be situated at one of three levels: pure private benefits, pure public benefits, and private benefits with public spillover. The authors observe the predominance of studies that focus on instrumental benefits of the arts, while people are drawn to the arts because the arts can provide them with meaning and a distinctive type of emotion.

The intrinsic value of the art relates to the *art for art’s sake principle* of art: art is valuable because of its aesthetic essence, which can be subjectively experienced by anyone, and everyone may have their own, personal experience with such an interaction; in line with the intentions the artist(s) had while creating an artwork, or not. The instrumental value of the art refers to its functional role: art can be a means to an end other than the artwork itself. In this sense, art can have social as well as economic, political, and environmental purposes (Holden, 2006).²

The impact approach to the arts and culture is mostly associated with instrumental value: what can arts and culture effectuate, what do they serve, what are they good for— either regardless of, or precisely because of their intrinsic value. However, making a strict division between the instrumental and intrinsic value of the arts may not be necessary as suggested by McCarthy et al. (2014, p. 52):

“... the arts, through their communicative power, enhance individual engagement with the world in ways that have both personal and public benefits. We even suggest that these effects are instrumental in that they can open people to life and create the fabric of shared values and meanings that improves the public sphere.”

² A third type of value that Holden (2006) distinguishes, is the institutional value of the arts, which refers to the processes and structures that are developed and used to create a shared appreciation of the art, mostly by those individuals and institutions involved.

Image 1: Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations



Arjo Klamer (2004) has argued that cultural goods are not exceptional because they have an intrinsic value that sets them apart from other goods. Rather, they are exceptional because of the “conversations” that make them cultural goods. Hence, values and value judgments are socially constructed through conversation and social interaction (Throsby, 2001). Read more on this perspective in the interview elsewhere in this magazine.

Why care?

In social impact research, social impact is defined as “the portion of the total outcome that happened as a result of an organization, above and beyond what would have happened anyway” (Clark et al., 2004, p. 7). Knowing and understanding its social impact can be the wish of each single organization that develops arts, contributes to culture, or engages with creative activities. Hence, examining social impact may clarify the connection between the activity that an organization pursues and what impact on society it seeks to achieve with this activity. This insight can help organizations to make strategic decisions and improve their social impact.

Measuring social impact can also occur for accountability reasons, for example, by funders who may consider it to be a means of justifying the allocation of tax payers’ money among competing ends.

Belfiore and Bennett (2010) situate the blooming of impact measurement within the tendency toward “evidence-based policy making” in many countries in the western world. The authors refer to a “toolkit mentality” to address the ongoing quest (by practitioners, policymakers, consulting agencies, et cetera) for an easily applicable and replicable method of impact evaluation; they rightfully observe that both arts professionals and researchers have criticized such a development, because of the focus on the instrumentalization of the arts as well as the methodological flaws and advocacy purposes of several impact studies (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010). Equally, they have pointed out the risk of using impact studies for “policy-based evidence making,” where they refer to the production of evidence to support advocacy and lobbying agendas, or to the legitimation of policy that would have been implemented irrespective of eventual evidence (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010, 2007).

One of those policy-makers, the British Council (2018), recognizes three objectives of evaluating an organization's activities and impact:

1. To support the development of an organization's activity (formative evaluation);
2. To ensure it is managed better next time (evaluation of processes);
3. To assess the final impact of the activity (summative evaluation).

In sum, social impact studies can be either requested by the funder, or proactively developed by the fundee, for legitimization, learning, and/or transparency purposes (Encatc, 2020).

Learning purposes of impact studies

In line with the British Council (2018), Impact Centre Erasmus (2019) argues that impact studies can serve one or more of the following research purposes: marketing and communication, learning and improving, and accountability. Many impact studies do not address one single research purpose. As Alnoor Ebrahim (2019) puts it, social impact measurement can be undertaken to *prove*, yet also to *improve*.

Consequently, impact studies can address reporting and/or learning questions. By means of reporting questions, an organization and its stakeholders gain insight into its achieved performance and increase, or provide evidence of-, its legitimacy. Reporting questions are, for example, "how much have we produced?" or "how much have we contributed to the mission?" (Liket et al., 2014). Learning questions, however, enable organizations to gain knowledge based on lessons learned. These lessons can be used for strategic decision making purposes and enable the strategic management of the intended impact. Examples of learning questions are: "can we strategically improve our results by changing our approach?", "can we strategically

improve our contribution to the intended beneficiaries by changing our approach?" and "can we contribute more cost-effectively to the mission?" (Vermeulen and Maas (2021); Liket et al., 2014). In the course, "Assessing the Impact of Culture and Creativity in Society," the learning process associated with impact measurement is, from an organization's perspective, the most important reason for engaging with impact measurement.

Impact studies contributing to strategic management in the arts and to research on the role of arts in society

Impact studies seek to provide empirical evidence on the benefits of the arts. Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be applied, but frequently, a qualitative approach (which could be based on quantitative data) has advantages. A qualitative approach that does not rely on the monetary measure may provide context and allows for greater variation of indicators (Snowball, 2007). Challenges of this approach are that there are no agreed-upon indicators and studies do not result in easily comparable numbers or outcomes. Compared with economic impact studies, social impact studies may be more contested and possibly considered to be subjective. What they do allow is a strong engagement of impact researchers with an organization, its activities, and its stakeholders. One way of realizing this mutual engagement is by developing the organization's Theory of Change. Being case-based and grounded in relevant literature, impact studies have the potential to contribute to both the strategic, and purposeful, management of arts organizations, and the research of various relevant themes— specifically in the role of arts and culture in outcomes (including wellbeing, community development, inclusivity, creativity, sustainability, innovation, and decent work).

Knowing and understanding its social impact can be the wish of each single organization that develops arts, contributes to culture, or engages with creative activities.

On the importance of social impact studies for cultural and creative organizations

Eva Langerak



Cultural institutions have long struggled with how to measure their social impact, which is often referred to as the effects that go beyond the performance, or the object, and “have a continuing influence upon, and directly through, people’s lives” (Landry et al., 1993, p. 50). The assumption that the cultural and creative sector adds substantial value to society is extensively debated, and the discussion on how that value takes shape is quite controversial. This is evident — at least in the Netherlands — from the large-scale government budget cuts on cultural subsidies initiated by minister Halbe Zijlstra in 2011-2013 and more recent derogatory statements like that of minister Hugo de Jonge, who justified the government’s decision to not open cultural institutions when further relaxing COVID-19 policies, by stating that people “could probably do without culture for a day”.

Naturally, the cultural sector creates economic value which can quantitatively be understood in terms of employment opportunities: in the Netherlands, for example, the cultural sector accounts for 4.5 percent of employment opportunities (Raad voor Cultuur, 2020). In addition, on a policy level, it is believed that culture has an influence “on social cohesion, mental health, and livability of cities” (Raad voor Cultuur, 2020). Moreover, on a social level, it is assumed that cultural education and cultural participation are important for personal development, computational thinking, communicating, and creativity (Rijksoverheid, n.d.; Bell, 2010; Bussemaker, 2013).

Although various academic scholars have long debated with argumentative publications about the impact of arts and culture on individuals and society, cultural organizations struggle to scientifically and academically prove their impact. This is of great importance for the continuation of cultural institutions like museums, theatres, or concert halls, as they are frequently asked to prove their substantial impact on society at large in order to apply or maintain biannual or quadrennial governmental support (MAPSI, 2016). Since there is no “common currency of impact measurement”, how can they prove that their activities and inputs bring about substantial social change and impact? (Ebrahim, 2019, p.12). Applying the recently formulated

theory of 'social impact studies' might be an effective and substantive solution. Within this paradigm, "impact," which is understood as the additional effect of [an] organization on society within the economic, environmental, and social dimensions, is assessed. In this essay, I aim to set out a brief explanation of the current state of research on social impact thinking and measurement, thereby taking into account its benefits, its challenges, and its advantages for the cultural sector.

Societal developments and the relation with impact studies

The need for impact is not a trend that solely belongs to the realm of non-profit organizations. One can detect the absorption of impact in terms of social, environmental, and governmental issues in more profit-oriented organizations. "Stimulating the transition to a sustainable world," (Rabobank, n.d.) "mak[ing] a positive contribution to society," (Royal Dutch Shell, 2019), and "advancing sustainable economic growth," (Goldman Sachs, 2019), are just a few examples of the many corporate businesses engaging in social impact practices in addition to their goal of making a profit. Alnoor Ebrahim (2019) associates this with a greater degree of "accountability" with which businesses are confronted in today's society. He explains this as "an expectation that organizations must be held to account for their performance in solving difficult social problems" (Ebrahim, 2019, p. 14). This increasing degree of accountability also fits with what Edward Freeman (2007) calls "stakeholder capitalism," value creation for all stakeholders. Within this model or economic paradigm, "individuals voluntarily work together to create sustainable relationships in the pursuit of value creation," and organizations and businesses are expected to weigh up a variety of interests, a role that is normally reserved for the government (Freeman et al., 2007, p.311). Although it is evident that the model of stakeholder capitalism is not fully implemented in society, one can distinctively detect the emergence of ESG (environmental, social, and governmental) issues in the mission statements of profit-based organizations. In other words, there is a societal trend occurring in which businesses and organizations are increasingly dealing with multiple stakeholders and are therefore having "multiple accountabilities" (Ebrahim, 2019, p.8).

It is necessary that companies that claim to have a social impact also demonstrate this to their stakeholders. To measure the impact of their performance, Ebrahim (2019) suggests three components within the methodology: "a value proposition" (what organizations aim to achieve); "a social change model" (how they will bring about the change); and "accountability" (how they will hold their feet to the fire) (pp. 36-40). Thus, organizations need to specify the value they aim to contribute to society, which can then be critically assessed by a social change model that will articulate how an organization's activities address the problems in relation to its value proposition; thereby taking into account the broader social or institutional context (Ebrahim, 2019). In other words, social impact measurement assesses the extent to which the outcomes of an organization's activities are aligned with the ultimate impact goal and how this relates to the position of the organization within a broader context.

Benefits for the cultural and creative sector

As I briefly mentioned before, social impact thinking is emerging specifically in the realm of NPO's and profit-based businesses that additionally pursue ESG (environmental, societal, and governmental) goals. However, as art and cultural institutions are also claiming and expecting to deliver (social) value and contribute to sustainable development, it is more than convenient to apply the theory of social impact thinking to these sectors as well — instead of solely looking at the sector's economic performance (Azmat et al, 2018; Belfiore and Bennett, 2007). This derives from the fact that the creative industry is defined as extremely wide-ranging, based on the exploitation of intellectual property, and hard to pinpoint in terms of product characteristics (Hadida, 2018). Products that are created within the creative sector are hard to objectively validate as they are either abstract, unique, or collective. Participating in an art-based initiative or project may have the potential to change an individual's course of action or thinking, yet this impact may only be visible in the long-term (MAPSI, 2016).

Social impact thinking, as introduced by Ebrahim (2019), in which the alignment of outcomes and impact goals are critically assessed, certainly has

advantages for the cultural sector. Firstly, applying such a framework can contribute to planning a systematic way of evaluating the social impact of art projects. An alignment in the methodology of impact measurement in the cultural sector could increase the chances of having an even greater impact on society. It should be noted, however, that there is no ambiguity about a social impact methodology specific to the cultural sector (Hadida, 2018). Secondly, impact evaluation increases public accountability and visualizes the ways in which activities of cultural institutions can be impactful in the long-term. This is very valuable, especially towards powerful stakeholders such as subsidy providers, as it may increase the chances of safeguarding financing of future projects (MAPSI, 2016). Thirdly, impact assessment activities have a transparent character and provide an open dialogue between different stakeholders such as funders, the public, policymakers, and members who have not participated in projects on the value of the assessed institution. In this way, cultural institutions can act transparently towards their stakeholders and take full responsibility towards these different parties for their organized activities, outputs, outcomes, and (intended) impact (MAPSI, 2016). This is mainly in line with an earlier mentioned social trend in society that is raised by Ebrahim (2019), namely that organizations are increasingly saddled with multiple responsibilities towards multiple stakeholders.

Advantages and disadvantages of social impact thinking for cultural and/or creative organizations

Perhaps one of the most striking and effective advantages of performance measurement is that it allows organizations to improve their organizational decision making. It is crucial to understand that the framework of performance measurement is a very “rational-technical”, practical, and hands-on framework for detecting whether an organization is achieving its goals (Ebrahim, 2019, p. 18). Moreover, because the model splits up the various steps in achieving impact, it enables mid-course evaluation and consequently the adaption of the strategy if the outputs and/or outcomes are diverging from the intended impact goals (Ebrahim, 2019). In addition, applying the framework of social impact measurement allows cultural organizations to get a clearer understanding of how exactly the ultimate value of their organization is determined and whether this is connected to the intrinsic value

of art, or more closely related to the instrumentalization of art (MAPSI, 2016).

Although social impact thinking seems to be an angel in disguise, its framework faces some challenges when applied to the cultural sector. First, it can be challenging to draw a hard line between the impact performed by Institution A to that of Institution B. Organizations that address social problems hardly operate fully by themselves, since it is barely possible to fully control the external social factors that cause or maintain the problem. Hence, it may be very difficult to completely isolate and measure the activities performed by a single institution (Ebrahim, 2019). Within this there is another problem — because the cultural and creative sectors are so immensely diverse — it is difficult to measure with one framework. Given the fact that there is a variety in form and content of goods, services, and values produced in the cultural sector, a single framework of impact factors makes it hard to compare between disciplines. One value may be more apparent in one discipline than in the other. It is therefore important that, when assessing the impact of the creative and cultural sector, one should critically look at the disciplinary context (Hadida, 2018).

Conclusion

Applying [social] impact theory to the arts and cultural sector may prove to be extremely beneficial. Not only will it allow cultural organizations to hand over transparent data and conclusions about their impact to various stakeholders like donors and audience, but it will also allow them to gain a better understanding of their organizational strategy and whether or not they reach their formulated goals (Craik, 2005; Ebrahim, 2019). However, some of the pitfalls of the current state of social impact studies for cultural and creative organizations should be taken into closer examination. Nevertheless, the limitations of the current state of impact research within the cultural sector create room and opportunities for refinement and further research.

Eva Langerak graduated from Erasmus University Rotterdam (MA-ACS, Arts, Culture, and Society) and VU Amsterdam (Curating Arts and Cultures). She is interested in (potential) social and political engagement in art. In addition, she conducts research on the Forum festival, collective memory, and the role of the archive.



Informational text label on the wall.



☺☺ Applying [social] impact theory to the arts and cultural sector may prove to be extremely beneficial. ☺☺

Arjo Klamer and Erwin Dekker

about the quality, value, and impact of arts and culture



An interview by Ellen Loots

Arjo Klamer and Erwin Dekker are cultural economists with a longstanding interest in the value of culture, each with their own perspectives. These are being explored in a vivid conversation.

Arjo: The standard notion is an indirect notion of the value of culture: it is what culture contributes to other things. Many studies try to measure the economic or social impact of culture with economic or social indicators — even with health indicators. Culture is then valued for what it contributes to other domains. I am convinced that we should also try to develop measures and indicators for notions that grasp the contribution of particular activities or goods to culture itself. Culture has a cultural impact. That is the main challenge and what I mean when talking about the value of culture.

In the model that I have worked with there is a separate cultural domain, which can be understood as the domain of sense-making. In their daily lives, people go to the market, buy things, work in organizations, deal with their families, in short; they are active in social environments. In the cultural domain, we, and numerous scholars, are trying to make sense of certain phenomena, including these activities. That is also what artists do, and what people do when they read newspapers, go to performances, listen to music, or when they go to a church or a mosque; they are involved in sense-making. In my opinion, that is the most significant impact

that we should focus on. However, there is no clear indicator for this, also not in the policy domain. At Erasmus University, we have been developing ways of evaluating the qualities of sense-making activities, or “impact”, as people call it nowadays.

The great challenge for cultural economists is to do justice to this cultural dimension. It requires a shift in the work and methodologies of academic researchers, because it requires that they get a hold on these qualities. Furthermore, I think that academics have the responsibility of giving individuals ways to approach these issues in a more systematic manner — to make them know whether they do the right things. That is the hard work ahead of us.

Erwin: Economics is the science of setting priorities or making the right, or most efficient, choices. To be able to do so, we need a sense of how much something matters or how important things are. Such assessments happen at the policy level — but are also at stake at the level of individual artists who have to decide what genre to contribute to, what medium to use in their work, or what style of expression to use. For outsiders, it is difficult to fully understand what

quality is in certain domains, while insiders have a very good sense of that. There are rival notions of 'goodness' in the arts which are very heterogeneous and within every art form. Multiple genres co-exist, and within each genre, multiple styles co-exist; each of those represent different notions of quality. The tricky problem that we face in arts and culture, is that we do not only have to determine that, for example, opera is an art form, but also, we need determine what quality notions operate within opera. Rival notions of what a significant contribution is co-exist in several domains of society. The challenge for cultural economists is to do justice to just that.

Arjo: Erwin brings up two notions that relate to social impact studies — practice and contribution. More valuable than just evaluating impact in terms of results or numbers, for example, of participants, is to think in terms of practices: what do people do in a specific geographical context? This holds for makers as well as participants. An important part of the notion 'practice' is that it requires people to contribute in order to benefit from the practice. People can go to the opera, which is nice. They can have a great evening or tell you that they were moved or cried. Fair enough. But then what? What do they do, and what do they do differently? Does the opera affect their lives in one way or the other? That is the quality we are interested in.

People can only be affected by the impact of arts and culture in how they make sense of their lives

if they contribute to a practice. That contribution can take place in many ways: talking to friends about it, inviting people to go with them, or listen to more opera. Various interesting methods can be applied to assess the qualities of those shared practices: big data studies about practices in specific places, questionnaires, and focus group conversations.

Erwin: When an art scene is lively or thriving, people are not merely attending, but they are seeking to contribute in some way. That could be as actual creators aspiring to also be an artist. Various other ways could enrich the practice.

An active audience is already quite different from a passive audience.

In my work, I use the notion, "contribution good," and I have made connections to the commons to emphasize that these things are created jointly. They are created together, but not in the traditional sense of a producer making a good and then a consumer consuming the good. It is more a process of co-creation. In their ideas of the commons, Elinor and Vincent Ostrom gave the example of education: education is not just a teacher sending to a student — it is an interactive process in which something happens. The process of producing and consuming art can be compared to that.

For makers, an artistic contribution occurs when someone added something, perhaps a new type of rhythm or a new instrument that wasn't previously utilized in a music genre, or perhaps they have thought of a new arrangement that then gets imitated by others. Someone can be excellent in the arts, and within



Erwin Dekker



Arjo Klamer

☞ When an art scene is lively or thriving, people are not merely attending, but they are seeking to contribute in some way. - Erwin Dekker ☞



“ Importantly, assessing whether or not there is any impact also depends on what the maker’s purpose is. - Arjo Klamer ”

existing conventions, do something to the best of their ability or better than it has been done before. A contribution is when someone puts the art form on a different path or adds something to it that wasn’t there before. A contribution is the engine of change and evolution.

You seem to allude to two different meanings of the word “value”. The cultural value, which is a synonym for artistic quality. That value can affect a change of people’s personal values which could then lead to specific behavioral practices. Is that correct?

Arjo: Our interpretation of the word “value” certainly differs from how classical economists use it when they imply the price of a good. In my view, a person’s values are what she or he considers to be important, and that is connected to the qualities of arts and culture. I like to be challenged when I go to the theatre; I value a narrative and plot that make me think. Even if

people’s values differ, they have everything to do with the qualities of those practices.

Impact then is when values change in a desired direction. For an impact study — in my opinion — it is critical to understand what people’s values are when they enter a cultural venue and what their values are when they leave. In the research my colleagues and I do, we take on a stakeholder perspective and try to understand what their values are and what happens when they are being exposed to performances, exhibitions, or other cultural formats. Our studies investigate where change in people’s values occur; not merely whether they consumed or received what they desired, or, as the economist would put it, whether they satisfied their preferences.

Whether or not an artist would make an artistic contribution would be assessed by someone with expertise, right? But if a practice has an impact on someone — specifically someone's values — that contribution would not be assessed by similar experts, would it?

Erwin: For me this is crucial, and here is where Arjo and I may each place a different emphasis. Whereas Arjo emphasizes the social aspects of arts participation, I strongly emphasize the cognitive aspect because a big part of learning to consume and produce art lies in the cognitive domain. It is about being able to make distinctions and learning different labels and names but, of course, also understanding and feeling those categories. All this relates to a sort of embodied way of knowing. What is very important, and also what facilitates the process that Arjo emphasizes, is the conversation that happens around the arts, which relies on making relevant distinctions. The appreciation of art is a learning process; of what the relevant distinctions are, what the relevant quality notions are, and recognizing them when being exposed to them.

Arjo: I completely agree with what you just said, Ellen. Once, we made an assessment of a music performance. A large part of the audience shared responses that are emotional: "I was moved," "I was bored," "I was fascinated," "I found it very powerful." The reason why many people are not aware of the artistic qualities of a performance, is because they do not have a frame of reference. Asking experts their opinions, the answers are different: they discuss the interpretation the director gave to the piece and how it is different from all other interpretations. With the notion of stakeholders, those distinctions between social, cultural or cognitive aspects of practices can be better grasped.

Importantly, assessing whether or not there is any impact also depends on what the maker's purpose is. Is the purpose to make an artistic contribution? Then the opinion of the expert counts. Is the purpose to make more people participate in the practice — including people without any background knowledge — and make them appreciate a genre? If a practice is an attempt to provoke change in people, in which some events are more successful than other,

different assessments are needed.

In my opinion we, as scholars, are tasked with providing practitioners the tools and methodology they need to do such an evaluation; to help them assess whether or not they are realizing the impact that they are seeking.

How do you approach research into the changes in behavior caused by practices?

Arjo: In different ways. For example, in a recent study of two large broadcasting companies, we started by talking to the directors in order to figure out what their purpose was. After that, we asked them to identify the stakeholders: who is important for them and who can evaluate and judge the effects of their programming. We then surveyed those stakeholders from external and internal groups to reveal what was important to them — their values. In a second round, after a program or a project took place, various methods could be used to examine how stakeholders experienced the event and how their values changed.

Erwin: I'm intrigued by the intersection of objective and subjective notions of quality, and have tried to develop the idea of "exemplars" in order to operationalize this notion of quality. Exemplars are particular organizations or cultural goods that serve as reference points to both producers and consumers in their evaluation of new goods. Really good exemplars serve as a comparison point for many other creators, who will seek to create something nearly as good as that.

What I demonstrate in empirical research is that, even in narrowly defined genres, there are many of these reference points. For example, film is a broad category but, within film, there is the science fiction genre. And then within science fiction, there are different types of exemplars, perhaps a science fiction movie that is mostly uses a dystopia theme. We would think of *Blade Runner* as one exemplar. We could think about *Star Wars* as an exemplar for epic stories about space travel, or perhaps consider *2001: A Space Odyssey* as a reference point of a more philosophically-oriented science fiction movie. Exemplars reflect the immanent notion of what is good within the genre that produces it.

These exemplars, with those qualities, are what other producers strive for when they start out in the genre; this is also how a genre evolves. Notions of quality evolve through exemplars, and that is how a genre evolves. This lends itself relatively well for quantification, because we can observe how often a particular film is used as a reference point in the creation of another. While quantification runs the risk of making things more unified than they actually are, I think there are some ways in which we can at least create an awareness of different quality notions and also measure them to some degree.

I sense that in the evaluation, Erwin, you are mostly focusing on the production or productive side and Arjo more on the reception or receptive side?

Arjo: Our ideas are not too deviant. What I discovered during our research is that when thinking about their impact, organizations have a strong focus on programming and its effect, which is indeed important. However, they tend to overlook the craftsmanship, or the productive environment, they have installed to cultivate talent. For example, the Dutch Broadcasting Choir imagined to contribute to the symphonic tradition, to local communities, and even to the national identity. I suggested to them that they overlooked an important purpose of the choir: to give people the chance to sing and to allow professional singers to develop themselves. The impact of that insight was unbelievable in terms of the pride and self-confidence of choir members. That is true for any group: a dance company enables people to dance and a theater group enables people to perform, to act, and direct. Those aspects are rarely appreciated, while I think they should be an important part of what these groups and organizations are about.

Erwin: I think this is really a key point. A lot of the literature on co-production articulates that consumers are important in generating the product, but then the product is still understood as something that is being consumed. We should really move away from that and articulate that the value is in the production process itself.

This is made clear in amateur sports and amateur arts, people engage in a practice because they enjoy it. A performance for an audience could structure a practice, but it is the practices that matter, right? This is how we can see where culture is happening: by not looking at where culture is sold, but rather where culture is practiced in the context of production — sometimes not even for other people — but merely within communities and circles.

Arjo: Adding to that, I think we should get rid of the notions of production, distribution, and consumption; step away from a transactional approach with transactions requiring outputs. The term “consumption” is especially problematic because it is being understood as buying tickets. That is silly, as the ticket only gives someone the right of access. Rather, when someone visits a museum, the production starts from the moment someone generates her own experience, and the cognitive part is work. That is the difference between entertainment and culture: entertainment requires little effort, while culture requires efforts and time. The greater someone’s contribution in this practice is, the greater the impact.

Erwin: I agree, and think part of the challenge lies in moving away from the instrumental thinking that has been dominant across society. Instead, we should shift to, for lack of a better word, some sort of “intrinsic thinking,” in which people do not think of culture as being valuable because it is instrumental to something else, but because it is intrinsically appreciated. That is difficult, even for the people who practice it. We have lost that vocabulary somewhat — and perhaps the courage — to adopt such a way of thinking because it seems to require a qualification of the importance of what one person is doing over what another is doing. Implicitly, there are lots of apparent value judgments about what is counted as culture and what is not. Starting the discussion means that we have to regain this vocabulary and that we should dare to talk about quality and values, what is important to us.

Arjo Klamer is a Professor Emeritus of Cultural Economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam and visiting professor at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam with an interest in the values of culture and a 'humane economy'.

Erwin Dekker worked for seven years as an Assistant Professor of cultural economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam, and is currently Senior Research Fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. He has written two books in the history of economics, taught extensively in cultural economics, and is particularly interested in the intersection between qualitative and quantitative notions of the value of culture.



“ The impact of that insight was unbelievable in terms of the pride and self-confidence of choir members. - Arjo Klamer ”

Societal impact studies in the cultural and creative sector

Eva Hofman



In 2015 and 2016, a total of 122 art projects received financial support via The Art of Impact, a collaborative subsidiary project between the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science and six cultural funding providers. The project encouraged professionals from the cultural and creative sector to take the initiative in starting projects exploring the relationship between art and other domains of society, by emphasizing how arts and culture could contribute to the alleviation of societal challenges. (Stimuleringsfonds, n.d.; The Art of Impact, n.d.a). Examples include *The Prison Project*, in which (ex-)convicts broke the taboos surrounding them via theatre and written word, and *Designathon Works*, in which children are challenged to design a better future via new technology (The Art of Impact, n.d.b).

A few years later, in 2018, the societal impact of the theatre production *Metropolis* and film documentary *Ik Laat Je Niet Alleen* were measured as part of *'Impact Langs de Lat*, a collaborative project between several subsidy providers in the Dutch cultural field. The goal was to develop tools that creators in the cultural field could use to measure their qualitative impact on society (Fonds Podiumkunsten, 2018). These projects are in line with the ideas of Ebrahim (2019), a Professor of Management specializing in impact studies, who advocates for a way of approaching accountability and performance of organizations in society by *focusing on strategy rather than compliance*. Using a method of measurement that takes the goals and strategy of an organization into account allows for more effective measurements of societal impact. Ebrahim explains that focusing on compliance may lead to

organizations overestimating their impact, claiming responsibility for impacts beyond their scope.

As for the cultural and creative sector, according to Hadida (2015), the impact of organizations and their initiatives is often challenging to define and assess, as their results are rather versatile, unique, and/or abstract. Nonetheless, Anttonen et al. (2016) argue that the cultural and creative sector undoubtedly have an impact on society, which they define as 'any positive change in the society involved that has been created by purposeful activity for certain goals' (p. 17). They continue that, activities by cultural organizations are rather social in nature and consist of participative activities in which members of society can easily be involved. The strength of this, as opposed to other industries, is that it allows participating members of society to critically reflect upon their

experiences within a societal context. In this sense, when members of society partake in creative activities together, their shared experience could lead to an increased understanding of each other, the construction of new, or improvement of, existing communities, allowing the members to take pride in their community. Depending on the creative activity, it can connect individuals who might have not otherwise met one another, leading to more diversity and inclusivity.

To illustrate how cultural organizations and societal developments relate to each other take, for example, a guest lecture from a course at Erasmus University about the activities of the Gouda Museum, which has a hybrid collection consisting of both art and historical objects that aim to reflect the important values of Gouda and its inhabitants (de Beyer, M., personal communication, January 12th, 2021). One of the ambitions of the Museum is to be inclusive towards all Gouda residents, meaning, they aim to be relevant for all age groups, genders, and ethnicities represented in Gouda. This can be challenging as approximately 26.3% of Gouda's residents come from an immigrant background (AlleCijfers, 2020). As of 2020, Gouda's museum, library, theatre, and culture house have an urban curator, who seeks to determine how arts and culture can contribute to social and societal developments in the city. This is done by continuously searching for connections between what happens in the city and what its inhabitants find important, and how this can be translated into the museum. In other words, they want to include developments that take place outside the museum walls inside the museum. They aim to be a museum for everyone by initiating projects that include Gouda's culturally diverse population and include culturally diverse artists (van Pomeran,

E., personal communication, January 12th, 2021). In other words, the Gouda Museum aims to be more than just a museum. It aims to play a role in societal issues such as inclusivity and diversity across all ages, genders, and ethnicities.

The case of Gouda Museum is particularly interesting in the light of academic studies on impact (Ebrahim, 2019; Hadida, 2015), as it provides a tangible case showing that societal developments and the ambitions of cultural organizations can be related – or even complementary. Moreover, in line with the proposed literature, it indicates that that societal and financial ambitions can be complementary as well, as aiming to be relevant to a broader audience does not only have societal benefits, but could lead to financial gains via ticket sales too.

In my opinion, the biggest advantage of social impact thinking in the cultural and creative sector lies within making professionals in the sectors aware of the possible effect they could have on society. Societal issues could be perceived as intimidating to tackle, as they cannot simply be alleviated by one, or a few, organizations. However, by making societal impacts measurable, cultural organizations can actually see their contribution work towards the alleviation of societal issues. As such, social impact thinking could lead to a domino-effect, inspiring other cultural organizations to take similar actions, leading to a broader development of social impact thinking in the sector. However, the disadvantages of social impact thinking and measurement lie within the methodology. As discussed by Hadida (2015), there are some implications surrounding the lack of consensus on what variables are fitting to measure the impact of activities in the cultural and creative sector. There are no clearly-defined variables

As such, social impact thinking could lead to a domino-effect, inspiring other cultural organizations to take similar actions.

that can be used in every single study, which makes it difficult to compare different impact studies and draw conclusions about impact in general. There is a large variety of organizations and activities in the cultural and creative field, each of which require a different approach in impact management. Using to the example of the Gouda Museum, a simple analysis of the visitor numbers and their cultural backgrounds demonstrates some direct outputs, but the societal impact is more challenging to determine. A clear answer on how this should be measured requires a tailor-made approach based on a thorough analysis of the Gouda Museum, its ambitions, and actions. Other cultural or creative organizations require similar tailor-made approaches based on their ambitions.

In conclusion, the use of social impact measurement could benefit the cultural and creative sector to some extent. Although activities by organizations in the sector are quite versatile, social impact thinking provides some ideas on how to measure their impact nonetheless. This could inspire organizations to undertake activities with societal impact, because impact measurement allows them to prove their accountability in societal issues. Nonetheless, there are some complications surrounding impact measurement, namely the ambiguity surrounding what methods to apply (Hadida, 2015). This is problematic because this makes it difficult for organizations to measure their impact themselves. Because of the ambiguity, they might resort to hiring impact professionals to conduct the measurement process for them. In my opinion — in an ideal future — organizations should be able to conduct basic impact measurements by

themselves, based on general guidelines and advice by impact professionals. Although the developments are not there yet, projects such as *Impact Langs de Lat* show that professionals are already working on tools that organizations can use to measure impact themselves (Fonds Podiumkunsten, 2018). Hopefully, such projects will eventually lead to impact measurement becoming more feasible for organizations to conduct themselves, improving its benefits for the cultural and creative sector.

Eva Hofman graduated from Erasmus University Rotterdam (MA-ACS, Tourism, Culture and Society) and has an interest in societal challenges, tourism studies, and sociological studies on creativity, including music, gaming, and other creative outlets.

There is a large variety of organizations and activities in the cultural and creative field, each of which require a different approach in impact management.



What is the impact of Women Connected on the women participants, and on Rotterdam?

Women Connected is a women's performance group based in Rotterdam that offers women from all corners of society a stage to share their personal stories. These stories are at the forefront and act as the raw materials. Through these purposeful and beautiful theatre performances, Women Connected's activities aim to open opportunities to marginalised women to strengthen their connections with each other, themselves, and their surrounding environment. Women Connected aims to marry their artistic goals with a social approach.

The organisers of Women Connected, Kaat Zoontjes, Inez Schatz, and Wing Tang, worked with master's students from the Erasmus University School of History, Culture and Communication to perform an impact assessment. Consultation sessions and research performed by the students resulted in a report that looks into the impact that the organisation has on its women participants and the broader extent of Rotterdam as a city.



Credits Liane Kuijper
Performance: Stille Heldinnen XL, March 2020

Co-creation and Inclusivity: Women Connected's Impact on the Women and City of Rotterdam

Shambhavi Bhat, Eva Hofman, Philip Jantsch, Kathryn Moy, Moéna Verdier

The call for assessing impact

On the surface, assessing the effectiveness of arts organisations such as Women Connected is no simple feat. Formalities within existing assessment tools and government subsidy applications may cause organisations to adapt their practices in order to retrofit themselves within the given parameters in an over-simplified fashion. Rather than support the arts, such structures may stifle and limit artistic and social practices.

Yet, despite the ambiguous nature of pinpointing impact, literature expresses a call for such measurement tools to be able to communicate and legitimise these efforts to establish new connections and forge new opportunities. In response to these difficulties, our impact assessment, utilising Connell & Kubisch's (1998) theory of change, enables a more flexible approach by articulating intended outcomes in

conjunction with the activities and expectations laid out to achieve such outcomes.

Women Connected

As stressed by the Divercities Report by Tersteeg, Bolt & van Kempen (2017), ethnic diversity is a highly sensitive topic in public and political debates in Rotterdam, as in 2002, Rotterdam was the first Dutch city where an anti-immigrant populist party won in the local elections, adding to the diversity discourse. The report indicates that one of the major challenges for Rotterdam is not to lose sight of low-income groups when attracting new high-income entrepreneurs to the city.

Adding to the diversity discourse in Rotterdam are non-Western and non-Dutch entrepreneurs who are likely to start out in poorer neighborhoods and the accessibility to opportunities offered to new talent versus local

Diversity and inclusion appear to focus on top-down initiatives yet do not seek out these beneficiaries during the creation of such initiatives

talent. As a result, economic disparities have led to a neglect of local inclusion. This neglect perpetuates high levels of unemployment, poorer households and low property prices that benefit external influences (Tersteeg et al., 2017).

As demonstrated by the Divercities Report, and our work with this impact assessment for Women Connected, ethnic diversity should be embraced as an asset and not looked down upon as a problem for a city and its inhabitants.

Women Connected's impact

Our assessment employed semi-structured qualitative interviews with focus groups of participating women and individual interviews from external stakeholders. Content analysis of Women Connected's documentary, *1000 Silent Heroines* provided additional rich insights into the organisation's activities. Particular challenges for our impact assessment came about during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing a change in the organisation's format of theatre making and limitations towards accessibility and digital literacy. Due to Women Connected's ability to attract a diverse and supportive network, results reflect mainly positive standpoints of the participants and stakeholders.

Impact on women

Based on our findings from two focus groups of mother-daughter pairs from the performance, three key themes emerged from the data. The first theme to emerge highlights that theatre can function as a platform for personal growth, allowing the woman participants to feel their

voices emboldened. Second, the theatre performances were also found to act as a unifying power, strengthening personal bonds by creating open dialogues amongst performers. Through each woman's stories, they found more commonalities than differences, reinforcing a sense of mutual understanding and strengthening their efforts collectively amidst social adversity.

Impact on Rotterdam

A city, after all, is made up and defined by its inhabitants. This impact assessment would not be complete without looking at Women Connected's impact on the city of Rotterdam. Our research with various stakeholders, ranging from funding organisations to the head of programming at Theatre Rotterdam, brought to light three additional themes of Women Connected's impact on the City. Identity, strengthening the ties that hold Rotterdam together as a city. Diversity and inclusion appear to focus on top-down initiatives yet do not seek out these beneficiaries during the creation of such initiatives. The most prominent theme is Women Connected's ability to address social and cultural issues by going to the roots, seeking out voices inextricably linked to the city's identity, yet remain untouched. Women Connected uses these raw materials from the ground up and adapts their practices to support their needs and desires.

These themes position Women Connected to act as the forerunner in setting the precedent of tackling societal change. This notion adds to the theme of Women Connected acting as a



Credits Liane Kuijpe
Performance: Stille Heldinnen XL, March 2020

paragon for future collaborations, further increasing economic activity in Rotterdam. Defining a city through what is visible from the top is only the tip of the iceberg. Rather than focusing on a single story, Women Connected positions itself as a platform for citizens to come together and create a shared identity, strengthening the ties that hold Rotterdam together as a city.

The future of Women Connected

The hope for our impact assessment is to foster Women Connected's growth and expansion to establish new partnerships in Rotterdam, further forging a truly diverse and inclusive city full of innovative opportunities for all. The impact Women Connected holds is not cleanly split between the two pillars of women and the city of Rotterdam. Sustainable impact is found at the intersection of the two, where similar grassroots organisations are on the ground uncovering parts of a city untouched and, in response, the city of Rotterdam provides public and government support.

It is time to bring together these entities that stitch together the cultural fabric of Rotterdam. Organisations such as Women Connected are critical nowadays as we all try to reconnect — not just with each other and our environment — but further into what these connections teach us about ourselves.

Our findings show that the participating women articulate a clear sense of increased connectivity and improved relationships, not only in regards to the other participants as well as their respective mother/daughter, but also in regards to the city of Rotterdam. This corroborates previous research on the unifying power of theatre, as theatre strengthens the bonds between the individuals involved (Torrissen & Stickley, 2018), and creates dialogue between them (Fox, 2007).

Contact

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What are the effects of the Allez, Chantez! community building tools on the participants in the short and long term?

Four students from Erasmus University Rotterdam conducted an impact assessment for the Belgian organisation, **Allez, Chantez!**. Allez, Chantez! organises singing events on a monthly basis, which prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, took place in three cities in Belgium. Currently, the events are streamed live online.

The organisation's mission is to make people sing together in order to connect to themselves and to other singers, with the intended impact that one day the organisation itself becomes redundant within society.

The research question for which this study was conducted is formulated as follows: What are the effects of the Allez, Chantez! community building tools on the participants in the short and long term?



Credits Els Van Bosbeke

Singing Together, Happy Together

Rachel Kelly, Demi van Kesteren, Pauline Nedelec, Marie Ruhe

The theory of change developed for Allez, Chantez! is based on a simple logic model which presents a single theory of change rather than a broad range of stakeholder's outcomes. This acts as a framework in the research for establishing causal links between the resources and inputs of an organization, the activities it carries out, the outputs of these activities and the eventual outcomes. As an underlying motivation of the research question, the founders of Allez, Chantez! wish to understand whether they are making use of the right activities for their desired outcomes, and what the effects of these are on participants. It is understood that they intend not only to get people to sing together, but also to enjoy themselves, connect, cooperate, and integrate.

The theory of change for our study, therefore, looks at specific effects of singing on individuals

who participate and how these effects, once accumulated among many individuals, have broader societal implications such as social integration, social cohesion, and fostering well-being. In order to investigate this theory among participants, a survey was designed and distributed online. The survey was comprised of both quantitative and qualitative questions.

The primary line of inquiry in the analysis is based on the "communities of practice" framework (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) in which levels of participation are defined among individuals. In doing so, the relationships between how much they participate and the impacts they experience, are analysed. This allows for an interpretation based on the depth of involvement in the community of practice as opposed to the duration of the involvement, which is not necessarily a qualifier of impact.

Understanding participation is key to the theory of change for Allez, Chantez!, as their self-described “redundancy” cannot happen until communities become involved in the practice and make it happen for themselves. Based on a survey of over 300 respondents, the recommendations for the organisation include: considering an increase in the tools used by the organisation with the aim to foster community building amongst participants, and rethinking organizational structures and marketing strategies based on profiles of different users. Furthermore, it is clear that the community-building tools have a positive effect on people and encourage participation, therefore, the recommendation is to strengthen and develop these tools in new and innovative ways. Lastly, subsequent research with a qualitative approach can build upon the data from this study and deepen the understanding of how community-building tools act in the eyes of various types of participants.

The ultimate and ideal impact for Allez, Chantez!, in becoming redundant as an organization, may be ambitious to realize. Instead, the outcomes of our study show that it is the active use of community-building tools, and thus the practice, the organisation and its participants are pursuing together which creates positive outcomes for individuals and, in some instances, society at large.

www.allezchantez.be/english/

In the case of an interest in the report, contact the organization.

It is clear that the community-building tools have a positive effect on people and encourage participation





Assessing the
impact of **Culture
and Creativity**
in Society



Impact education: an approach

Key aspects

On the following pages, insight is provided in the key aspects of social impact research, and the set-up of a course.

Finding and engaging organizations

Developing an impact question

It all starts with engaging organizations that are enthusiastic about impact measurement, and defining a clear and feasible impact question.

p. **24** A student's perspective. On the importance of social impact studies for cultural and creative organizations

p. **34** A student's perspective. Societal impact studies in the cultural and creative sector

p. **52** Engaging organizations

p. **54** Introduction to the organisations

A Theory of Change is an important tool and the starting point for social impact research.

Theory of Change p. **62**

A student's perspective. Theory of Change as a tool for measuring impact p. **66**

A student's perspective. Understanding the Theory of Change and its five components p. **68**

Theory of Change



Measurement plan

Impact reporting entails an explanation of the data actually collected, how they were analyzed, as well as findings, recommendations and conclusions.

p. **70** Measurement plan

Data collection and analysis strategies are developed in a measurement plan.

Data collection, p. **72**
measurement and reporting



Data collection, analysis and impact report

Outline of a course

Introduction to impact assessment

Week 1

In week 1, an introduction to impact assessment is given. Students learn what social impact measurement is and understand why impact is being measured. The students critically reflect on impact measurement in relation to the arts, culture, and creative sectors.

Hadida, A. (2015). Performance in the creative industries. **The Oxford Handbook of Creative Industries**. Oxford: Oxford University. p. 219-248.

Ebrahim, A., & Rangan, V. K. (2014). What impact? A framework for measuring the scale and scope of social performance. **California Management Review**, 56(3): 118-141.

Belfiore, E., & Bennett, O. (2010). Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making. **Journal for Cultural Research**, 14(2): 121-142.

Theory of Change

Week 2

In week 2, students learn what an Impact Value Chain is, and what a Theory of Change (ToC) is. Students learn about the role of a ToC in impact measurement, and acquire skills for developing a ToC for a concrete case.

Connell, J. P., & Kubisch, A. C. (1998). Applying a theory of change approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives: progress, prospects, and problems. **New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives**, 2(15-44): 1-16.

Week 3

In week 3, the students are linked to the organization of their choice. Students learn that all organizations can have other strategies which will influence their performance measurement.

Ebrahim, A. (2019). **Measuring Social Change. Performance and Accountability in a Complex World**. California: Stanford University Press.

Week 4

In week 4, students have developed a ToC for a real-life case. They are able to interpret what type of strategy their organization possesses, and how this can be related to their ToC.

Anttonen, R., et al. (2016). **Managing Art Projects with Societal Impact: Study Book for Students, Stakeholders and Researchers**. Helsinki, Finland: Sibelius Academy Research Report Publications. p. 17-33

Measurement design

Week 5

In this week, students learn how to develop a measurement design, in which they take into account the differences between outputs, outcomes (at the individual and societal levels) and impact, and between an organization's contribution and attribution. After this week, students understand how academic literature can offer valuable directions and tools for developing a measurement instrument.

Maas K. and Liket K. (2011). Social Impact Measurement: Classification of Methods. In: Burritt R., Schaltegger S., Bennett M., Pohjola T., Csutora M. (eds) Environmental Management Accounting and Supply Chain Management. **Eco-Efficiency in Industry and Science, vol 27**. Springer, Dordrecht.

Vermeulen, M., & Maas, K. (2021). Building legitimacy and learning lessons: a framework for cultural organizations to manage and measure the social impact of their activities. **Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society**, 52(2), 98-112.

Data collection and analysis

Week 6

In this week, students continue working on the measurement design and instruments. Students understand the adequacy and feasibility of a measurement design and data collection methods, and are ready to develop a data collection instrument and collect data.

Bamberger, M., V. Rao., & M. Woolcock (2010). Using mixed methods in monitoring and evaluation: experiences from international development. **World Bank Policy Research Working Paper** no. 5245.

Reporting

Week 7

Week 7 is focused on reporting. After this week, students know how they can analyze the data they have collected for their specific study, and know how their impact study can be reported and what the constituting parts of a report are.

Vermeulen, M., Loots, E., & Berkers, P. (2021). "Museum Visits on a Doctor's Prescription. A Path to Positive Health?" **Arts Management Quarterly**, 137, 25-31

Presentations

Week 8

Students will present their findings to fellow students, the organizations, and some external commentators. After this session, students have experienced how to present the results of an impact study and what feedback could be.

Azmat, F., Ferdous, A., Rentschler, R., & Winston, E. (2018). Arts-based initiatives in museums: Creating value for sustainable development. **Journal of Business Research**, 85: 386-395.

Practical information about the course:

- It is a 5 ECTS course. This equates to 17,5 hours spent by the students on the subject per week, for eight weeks.
- There is no exam at the end of the course. The final grade was established by six assignments:
 - Individual essay on the relevance of impact assessments for the cultural and creative industries
 - Individual essay on measurement methods
 - Group assignment on the development of a Theory of Change
 - Group assignment on the development of a measurement design
 - Group assignment on the final report and presentation
 - Individual participation and professionalism

Engaging organizations

How and why were organizations recruited?

Teaching a newly developed course for the first time is exciting. However, as it was the first time, the teachers could not predict the quality of the students, nor they could predict the students' ability to apply impact knowledge in practice. The actual result was therefore also unclear to the lecturers and developers of the course. Due to these first-time uncertainties, it was decided to collaborate with organizations the lecturers knew were committed to impact measurement, especially the learning perspective of it.

Starting in November 2020, six cultural organizations were actively approached by the lecturers asking if they wanted to take part in the course, as a case for which students would develop an impact study. Those organizations were all organizations with which one of the lecturers had a close contact based on previous activities and that all have an interest in the societal aspect of their cultural and/or artistic missions. Consequently, due to the close relationships with these organizations, the organizations were willing to cooperatively pioneer in the field of impact measurement. Another reason why we initially selected participating organizations from our own network was that we knew it was going to be a demanding process: not only for the students, but for the organizations as well, as we expected the organizations to facilitate the impact process for the students, and to be involved in the weekly lectures. We also expected the organizations to be available for regular questions from the students. During selection, we paid a lot of attention to the

organization's motivation for participating. We only selected those organizations who were intrinsically motivated to learn from the impact process. One organization argued that the main purpose to participate was to create transparency for the Dutch Government. In other words, this organization only wanted to "prove" they have an impact. We highly believe that "to prove," is not the only reason to be involved in a measurement process. In fact, impact processes should be about *learning*. The lecturers were therefore convinced that organizations who themselves did not have a willingness to learn, could not facilitate the students' learning process.

In the selection of organizations, we also looked at a variety of organizations in the cultural and creative industry. This is how the lecturers eventually came to collaborate with six institutions. Among the selected were the departments of Education from two large museums, the Van Gogh Museum and the EYE Filmmuseum, both in Amsterdam, as well as Cultuur+Ondernemen, a national knowledge platform in the Netherlands for entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative industries. Moreover, it was decided to involve two smaller organizations with a social entrepreneurial component, Women Connected in Rotterdam, Allez, Chantez! in Belgium, and one micro-business of a self-employed person that organizes a recurring event: Amsterdam Fashion College.

Preparation

In preparation for the master's course, the lecturers started discussions with the organizations months in advance. This has led to clear mutual expectations, and showed the

serious intention of the organizations. In those months, the lecturers also extensively considered the research need. What is going on in the organization? What effects does the organization strive for? What does the organization want to know in order to be able to adjust or improve their performance? This dialogue led to the definition of an "impact question". A good impact question is feasible, highly relevant for the organization, clearly defined, and answering the question must provide insight into the effects of an organization on specific stakeholders or beneficiaries.

After defining a feasible "impact question," each organization prepared an online, five-minute pitch, in which they introduced themselves and their impact questions. In week three of the course, these pitches were made available on Erasmus University's intranet. Students could watch the pitches and write a motivation letter to explain their preference for a specific organization. They could also indicate their second or third choice. Based on the motivation letters, the lecturers connected the students in

this week to the organizations of their preference. A total of six research teams were set up: one for each organization consisting of four or five students. One or two people were the selected from the organizations to be points of contact for the students and the lecturers. These contact persons also had to ensure, internally, that the impact process could be facilitated.

The reason why it was decided to wait until week three to connect students with the organizations was to focus on the theoretical foundation of impact measurements in week one and week two. The lecturers wanted to give the students a solid theoretical framework which the students could apply in a variety of settings. If the students knew from the start to which organization they were connected, there was a risk that they would have taken the theoretical framework with a less open mind, because they would have immediately applied the theoretical knowledge to a very specific case.

The lecturers wanted to give the students a solid theoretical framework which the students could apply in a variety of settings.



Introduction to the organizations

Women Connected

Women Connected is an on-going project that involves women from all over Rotterdam. Together with a wide variety of women in Rotterdam, Women Connected creates performances based on their lives, their yearnings, and their experiences. Women Connected works with women from different generations, and cultures, regardless of their training and talent. They share a common desire in inspiring other women to become stronger. Women Connected knows what make women tick and what societal issues they face. These become guiding themes in easily accessible theatrical processes. Many of the participants Women Connected seeks to reach do not immediately have the courage to climb on stage to perform for the public. The project offers them a very slow familiarization with theatre in safe spaces– until they are ready to make the next step and become role models by performing for other women. www.womenconnected.nl.

The impact question Women Connected has defined relates to both the women they aim to reach, as well as to the wider city of Rotterdam. Moreover, their research question includes both the transparency aspect (what?), as well as a learning aspect (how?): *What is the difference we make to the lives of women and to the city of Rotterdam, and how can we create that value?*

Case on page 38

Allez, Chantez!

The aim of Allez, Chantez! is to create places where people can have fun, meet new people, and forget about their worries by making them sing together. Allez, Chantez! builds local communities, not only because they communicate and act on it, but also because they believe singing is one of those things that gets people to connect to themselves, and very easily to other singers. Allez, Chantez! believes that when people sing together, they all become equal and forget about their differences. At their singing sessions, people of all ages, and with very different social-economic backgrounds, blend into one voice, creating feelings of empathy between different groups. www.allezchantez.be.

Allez, Chantez! aims to gain insights into the short-term and long-term effects of their activities, in order to be able to better manage their intended impact. Consequently, the impact question they defined is as follows: *What is the effect of Allez, Chantez's tools on the participants' short-term and long-term social connections?*

Case on page 42

Van Gogh Museum

The Van Gogh Museum, in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, inspires a diverse audience with the life and work of Vincent van Gogh and his time. The Van Gogh Museum is authentic, connected, and original. These core values function as an ethical compass for the museum and staff. Together, the core values are the yardstick by which the museum will measure all its activities– existing and new. An example of this is Van Gogh Connects, the museum's four-year learning program that aims to become and stay relevant for bicultural young adults in Amsterdam. During this program, the museum closely collaborates with the target group. By means of impact measurements, they gain insights into what works and how things work in order to create an inclusive environment. From this work the 'ReFramers' were developed; a group of bicultural young adults who act as a bridge between the Van Gogh Museum and a new generation of museum visitors. www.vangoghmuseum.nl.

The ReFramers are very important to the museum as they broaden the museum's outlook. With the impact question, the VGM wanted to assess the impact of the ReFramers programme, as well as check out whether the programme is reaching the targeted group in an effective way: *What is the impact of the ReFramers in their immediate environment?*

Case on page 74



EYE Film Museum

Eye Film Museum is a treasurer, guide, and pioneer in the world of film and the art of the moving image. Eye wants to be a global leader in the way in which film is preserved and shown within a museum context. They seek to present and preserve film as art, entertainment, cultural heritage, and social document. Eye has an eye for great classics and established names, but also welcome new perspectives on film and (film) history, and the art of the moving image.

MovieZone is a program of the EYE Film Museum's educational department in Amsterdam. With MovieZone, the museum aims to connect young people from varying backgrounds and inspire them to dive into the world of audiovisual content. With this, the museum aims to contribute to an enriched, more diverse, and inclusive media sector in the long term. www.eyefilm.nl

Because the activities of MovieZone in 2020 and 2021 were different from the activities of MovieZone in the previous years due to the consequences of the Covid-crisis, Eye was interested in the following question: *How does MovieZone contribute to personal and professional skills development and the feeling of inclusion for the active youth participating in the project and what is the effect of COVID-19 on MovieZone's intended impact?*

Case on page 78

Cultuur+Ondernemen

Cultuur+Ondernemen is the knowledge center for entrepreneurship in the cultural sector in The Netherlands. Cultuur+Ondernemen supports cultural organizations, independently working artists, and creatives who want to get more out of their work. To this end, Cultuur+Ondernemen works together with governments and funds. With their programs and activities, Cultuur+Ondernemen aims to strengthen the cultural sector and to make the sector more independent. Cultuur+Ondernemen works on a solid foundation for a vital and future-proof cultural sector, which consists of effective governance, sustainable financing, and continuous professionalization of artists, creatives, and cultural organizations. www.cultuur-ondernemen.nl.

The question of Cultuur+Ondernemen was linked to their mission of creating a solid, vital, and future-proof cultural sector to optimally benefit society by helping artists and creatives towards realizing their ambitions and mission: *To what extent does Cultuur+Ondernemen help increasing the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of artists and creative professionals?*

Case on page 96

The question of Cultuur+Ondernemen was linked to their mission of creating a solid, vital, and future-proof cultural sector to optimally benefit society by helping artists and creatives towards realizing their ambitions and mission

Bureau Yan, Amsterdam Fashion College

BUREAU YAN is known as an intermediary agency between companies, organizations, and (young) adults in Amsterdam. BUREAU YAN uses art and fashion as a mean to broach social themes. To illustrate, BUREAU YAN is committed to diversity policy, identity formation, and integration. Amsterdam Fashion College is a program of BUREAU YAN. In Amsterdam Fashion College, art and fashion is also seen as means to contribute to social development. It is an alternative education program that not only offers perspectives and the right tools to start a business, but the program also gives space and guidance to participants to work on self-development and self-love. The main aim of Amsterdam Fashion College is to make the fashion industry more accessible and inclusive.

www.bureauyan.nl

In The Netherlands, several fashion institutes provide full-time education to individuals willing to become professionals in the fashion industry. BUREAU YAN provides an alternative, or a stepping stone, for groups that are not always included in the more standard education formats. With the Amsterdam Fashion College, BUREAU YAN seeks to motivate participants to become more entrepreneurial, or to take the step to attend a fashion institute. Its impact question is as follows: *How does the Amsterdam Fashion College programme influence its participants' desire and confidence to attend education provided by a fashion institute or to pursue their entrepreneurial intentions?*

Case on page 100

Credits Liane Kuijper

Performance: Stille Heldinnen XL, March 2020



Motives to take part

There were several reasons why organizations took part in this course. The main reason was the **opportunity to receive a social impact study according to academic standards**. Some of the organizations have had the habit of measuring their impact, either internally or by external partners. Some experience their funders needing evidence of the impact of their funded projects. Other organizations sensed that they have an impact, while **they lacked the vocabulary and tools of making that impact more tangible**. This was expressed by one member of an organization, after reading the final report:

"The first time I read the report, I was touched, because it actually expresses what we are aiming for in terms of impact. It shows that we partly realize the impact that we intend to make. We are on the way. By means of the report, currently, we have concrete tools in hand for creating more impact on people's wellbeing, individual lives, and leisure time, by means of our communication tools and singing sessions. I found it moving."

Additional reasons for taking part in the course were the opportunity for collaborating with a younger generation and learning more of their perspectives, for assessing the qualities and effectiveness of a specific project, and/or of new activities that were set up to counterbalance the COVID-19- related restrictions on activities, and for personal learning. One organization with its activities currently only deployed in Belgium was curious to learn how similar organizations in the Netherlands fared.

The reasons for taking part in the impact measurement process are mostly in line with the improving/proving motivations distinguished by Ebrahim (2019). Yet, the distinction between proving and improving is not as clear-cut in practice as it seems to be in theory. Some of the participating organizations seek evidence that they can show to a funder or to the management, or they seek evidence that brings into words what their activities effectuate as well as the mechanisms that lead to intended outputs and outcomes, and the differentiated effects of their activities onto different groups (+/- to

prove). However, frequently, the evidence is meant to create a dialogue among colleagues in order to prioritize and change activities in order to make them more effective or in line with the mission of the organization (+/- to improve). An unexpected outcome in one case, has been that the internal processes of communication and collaboration started to be questioned and discussed.

"You have your own ideas about it, but are those ideas correct? We think that is actually the most interesting thing about this whole research. Is it also consistent with what we think, what we are doing, and reality? Or do we make it a little nicer ourselves?"

The theoretical foundations of the impact studies were greatly appreciated, with students in one organization receiving the nickname of the "Team McKinsey". A member of one of the organizations expressed her appreciation of how – based on theory and recent literature – a measurement instrument can be developed and lead to validated results that confirm the intuition of how the activities and outputs of the organization can lead to outcomes, differentiated between groups of participants.

In addition to the theoretical foundation, the impact studies have practical qualities and led to useful outcomes for the participating organizations. As one member of an organization testified:

"On the one hand, the results have been very practical, leading us to realize that the social media channels are not effective for the target group under scope. On the other hand, the results have more fundamentally revealed how the spillover effects of our program work: people that take part in it positively influence the perceptions of their peers, and being positive of the museum, leads to positive sentiments towards other museums and cultural institutions."

On the basis of the experience of taking part in the course, two members of two organizations expressed their intentions of how they would seek to leverage the outcomes of the impact studies. One of them felt inclined to encourage organizations in her network to engage with

The first time I read the report, I was touched, because it actually expresses what we are aiming for in terms of impact.

impact studies. She would assure them of the benefits of making their impact measurable and measured, not just for advocacy reasons, but also of using the insights to make better choices. *“Collaborating with four students during eight weeks,”* she explained, *“has provided the handles and guidelines for being able to make better choices leading us toward the directions we wanted to go. We will not just go promoting the results of the study, but also the fact that such a study can really help.”*

The other member of an organization has the intention to elaborate on the findings of the impact study jointly with institutions with similar operations and ambitions. He explained that the insights he gained in how a co-creation process with young people with immigrant backgrounds can influence their peers’ perception of the institution as a welcoming, leads to his wish to address such processes at a more general level. Together with similar institutions with the same goal of optimizing the participation of younger people that do not have easy access to a museum or any other cultural organization, he wishes to further explore the effects of co-creation groups on their peers and other people in their close surroundings.

Impressions/feedback

Organizations experience various learning outcomes.

Self-reflection is one. Being subject to an impact study during a demarcated time period causes the organizations reflect on themselves.

“What I found interesting is that students make you reflect on yourself. Of course, we are self-reflexive; but swayed by the issues of the day, we are also not. Because someone externally starts looking at you, you begin looking at yourself.”

Appreciation by stakeholders is another outcome. The fact that organizations take part in an impact study, for example one at university, may lead to a positive recognition of some key stakeholders.

“I observe more appreciation of the municipality. I see it in the attitude of the people, for example when I talk about new projects. Just by saying that the project has been subjected to an impact assessment in a course at university. It already has an impact.”

After the course and after receiving the impact report, organizations were considering how they could share such findings with the world. Some made the report publicly accessible on their websites, other shared it with key stakeholders,

others use fragments of it in various ways. In a few cases, the students were invited to present the research to internal and external stakeholders.

"The research led to positive results. Yet, I was thinking: how will we communicate such results? How can they be presented to the outside world, and various stakeholders? Which vocabulary and language can be used?"

As impact researchers along with organizations, we could think of how impact findings can be communicated and shared with stakeholders. This has been suggested by an organization:

"An impact course or impact as science can become more meaningful if it is being made accessible to the work fields that create the impact, or the individuals that do so. I am not even talking of ourselves, but also of our participants. Because they participate, they have an impact onto the city. But they have no clue. There is an enormous opportunity to make clear to them that, scientifically even, they contribute to the amelioration of the city. How great would it be if that impact could reach them."

Improve society.

☺☺ You have your own ideas about it, but are those ideas correct? We think that is actually the most interesting thing about this whole research. ☹☹

A Theory of Change

Social impact thinking, measurement and, management have become increasingly important in cultural and creative sectors. Stakeholders, such as governments, financiers, foundations, and customers, increasingly require that an organization is transparent about its mission and use of funding. They expect that organizations can demonstrate, or even *prove*, their legitimacy. Impact studies have the ability to serve that goal. At the same time, and possibly more importantly, impact studies can help organizations *improve* their performance. Insights from impact research can serve organizations to clearly articulate what they do, why they do it, and who they do it for. Insights from impact research can guide organizations in their strategic choices.

How can organizations start the process of impact research? A helpful tool is a Theory of Change (ToC) (Ebrahim, 2019; Jackson, 2013). It may sound more dramatic than it actually is. A ToC is a logic model that breaks down an organization's activities, intended outcomes, and impact in bits and pieces. It shows the underlying logic of the organization's operations, which can be helpful to understand how and why specific initiatives work (Vermeulen & Maas, 2021). A ToC sets out the linkages between the intended outcomes of activities, and the steps that are assumed to be necessary to achieve these intended outcomes. It includes the inputs (human, financial, and other resources) that are needed to develop activities, the expected outputs of the activities, the outcomes (one step further) of activities, and, eventually, the intended impact. In short, on a vertical axis, from bottom to top, a ToC breaks down what is needed to achieve a certain impact. On a horizontal axis, a

ToC allows organizations to thematically cluster types of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, and to relate those clusters to expected impact domains. Ideally, the departmental activities of organizations as well as contextual elements that may influence the process, are made visible in the ToC.

As an instrument that helps organizations to think of, visualize and start a change, a ToC has four major functions:

- First, by displaying the logic underlying activities and assumed outcomes, it helps organizations reflect on whether their assumptions and argumentations are plausible and realistic.
- Second, a ToC helps visualize the complexity in which organizations operate: it shows the different factors that may foster or hinder the achievement of various goals, the interactions between those various factors, and the place



of various stakeholders and target groups in this complex network of activities and achievements.

- Third, a comprehensive and precise ToC can serve internal evaluation purposes and feed the discussion on what is essential, desirable and plausible to achieve.
- Fourth, and as a result of the previous functions, a ToC can contribute to an open dialogue with the internal and external stakeholders and, as a result, help make strategic decisions.

Example Theory of Change

Figure 1 shows the example of the Theory of Change (ToC) that students developed for Bureau Yan. As an Amsterdam-based intermediary agency between companies, organizations, and (young) adults, it uses art and fashion as a means to tackle societal challenges

such as diversity, identity formation and integration. One of its main activities, is Amsterdam Fashion College (AFC).

The initial impact question of Bureau Yan and AFC was: *How does AFC influence its participants' desire and confidence to attend education provided by a fashion institute or to pursue their entrepreneurial intentions?*

First, the students identified the mission of Bureau Yan. Then, they funneled further towards the mission of the specific programme of AFC: AFC is an alternative educational programme for young people that are aspiring to become entrepreneurs in fashion, which focuses on talent development, entrepreneurship, and personal branding.

AFC's mission made the students identify a twofold mission impact: an influx into fashion

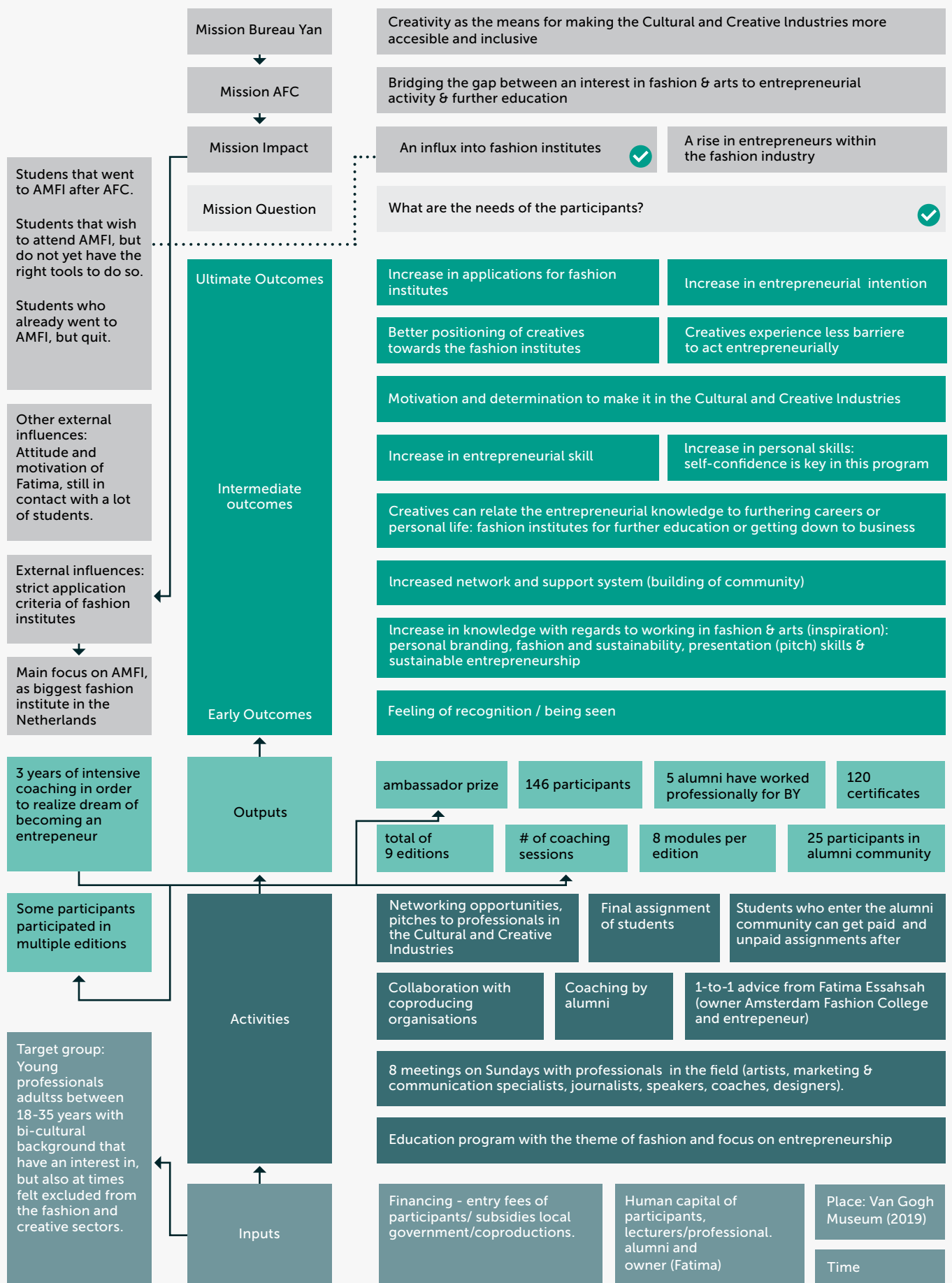
institutes, and a rise in entrepreneurs in the fashion industry. For the course, the focus was on the first aspect, and, specifically, it was decided to measure the needs of AFC participants which could then provide insights in the causal relationship between participating in AFC and enrolling for the Amsterdam Fashion Institute (AMFI). This line of reasoning starts with the impact (top) and runs down.

A second approach starts from the activities and inputs of AFC. There are several inputs needed to organize AFC: time and finance, but also human capital and a physical place. The students identified human capital and the community of Bureau Yan crucial to the programme. The activities related to AFC include the educational program, regular meetings and networking opportunities. The outputs, then, are the measurable components, such as the number of editions and total numbers of participants. Outputs lead to outcomes, which students structured into early, intermediate and ultimate outcomes.

The essence of the AFC is to empower its participants by building a safe and strong community. The students decided to investigate the needs of the participants, and, how by addressing those needs, AFC adds to this cause.

AFC's mission made the students identify a twofold mission impact: an influx into fashion institutes, and a rise in entrepreneurs in the fashion industry.

Figure 1: a Theory of Change of Amsterdam Fashion College by Bureau Yan, developed by students



Theory of Change

as a tool for measuring impact

Denisa Boca



Social responsibility has been gaining momentum as a major global concern in recent years. For the global economy, the social responsibility phenomenon resulted in the hybridization of markets, where both for-profit and nonprofit organizations are equally interested in generating positive impacts on the wider society (Ebrahim et al, 2014). As a result, there is an increasing demand for social impact measurement on a wide variety of sectors as a means for legitimizing social initiatives, accounting for the various effects on different stakeholders and enabling transparency (Ebrahim, 2019). Developing a theory of change can be particularly useful in this sense — as an initial step in asserting an organization’s mission and intended impact and developing appropriate measures for assessing performance (Connell & Kubisch, 1998).

Theory of Change

A theory of change articulates the cause-and-effect relationship and pathways through which an organization’s actions are expected to determine specific outcomes in a series of “if-then” hypotheses (Ebrahim, 2019). The first step towards developing a theory of change is to define the key inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and intended impact of a social initiative (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). Inputs are represented by investments organizations make for carrying out specific activities that lead to social impact (Mayne, 2015). These can be either financial, material or human resources, such as monetary investments, employees, volunteers, or knowledge. Activities refer to an organization’s actual interventions, namely policies, programs, or projects (Mayne, 2015). Outputs and outcomes can be seen as results emerging from the activities, where outputs

are more direct and quantifiable effects, whereas outcomes can be defined as further implications of the outputs (Organizational Research Services, 2004). Lastly, the impact is the ultimate goal of the organization, which can only be measured in the long-term (Better Evaluation, 2021).

Theories of change can bring added value to standard impact pathways through highlighting the causal assumptions of steps leading from activities to impact (Mayne, 2015). Therefore, in addition to being helpful in identifying whether steps taken in social initiative lead to desired subsequent outcomes, theories of change provide a suitable framework for formulating assumptions that explain how the causal links between elements in the impact process occur and why they are valid (Mayne, 2015). For a theory of change to be plausible, doable and testable, these assumptions should be based on solid arguments emerging

from either prior academic evidence — theories and research — or personal experiences; proving relevance within empirical settings (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). Theories of change are also particularly useful in enabling an appropriate framework to consider the external factors potentially having an influence on the intended impacts of a social initiative (Mayne, 2015).

Formulating a theory of change can be useful in measuring and accounting for the social impact of an organization in multiple ways. Firstly, theories of change can be used for designing interventions; understanding and agreeing on these with the involved stakeholders, as well as simulating an ex-ante evaluation of the proposed interventions, based on assumptions from the very first planning and implementation steps of a social initiative (Mayne, 2015). Secondly, the graphic representations of a theory of change can enhance clarity and understanding of the various elements and their logical lines of reasoning (Mayne, 2015). A third function is illustrated in a theory of change's significant contribution to measuring change through designing monitoring systems, evaluation methods, and making causal claims about impact (Mayne, 2015). Lastly, theories of change can be beneficial in generating useful learning over the lifespan of a social project, reinforcing its goals and mission impact and informing strategic choices (Connell & Kubisch, 1998).

Developing a theory of change highly depends on the peculiarities of each project it is designed for. Hence, the activities, strategies, and stakeholders of a social initiative shape the logical pathways, outcomes, intended impacts and the causal links between each logical line of reasoning outlined in the theory of change. As such, the project's activities influence outputs which, in turn, determine outcomes that lead to specific impacts. In this sense, activities should reflect the project's value proposition and mission impact. Similarly, stakeholders contribute to the activities, mission impact, and the wider pathway directions of a theory of change. For instance, having multiple impact target audiences may result in different pillars for activities, outputs and outcomes. Moreover, different stakeholders' views may result in the prioritization of specific outcomes over others (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). Building a theory of change is also highly influenced by an initiative's level of control over its desired outcomes and the assumptions concerning causal links between

steps taken in the impact process. For this reason, asserting the attribution of outcomes and impacts to inputs and activities is only possible for projects where control over outcomes is high and the uncertainty over causal relations between outputs, outcomes, and impact is low (Ebrahim, 2019). On the other hand, high uncertainty over causality and low control over outcomes determine rather complex pathways in a theory of change, and the assessment of contribution to instead of attribution of outcomes and impacts for the social initiative (Ebrahim, 2019). Here, more careful consideration of external factors and the risks associated with each step in the theory of change is essential and valuable for an organization (Ebrahim, 2019).

To illustrate, when the theory of change, ToC, of an organization acknowledges that most outcomes, the mission, and intended impacts are heavily influenced by external factors, this insight can be particularly useful for informing challenges to be considered in selecting appropriate measures for each outcome. Such challenges can be linked to various social, economic, cultural, environmental or natural causes. For example, global phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a risk through its inevitable negative effects on global society, translating into further implications for particular endeavours of an organization. A certain risk is expected to negatively affect outcomes and reduce impacts of a project during the assessed period.

In conclusion, a theory of change should meet the plausibility, testability and doability conditions by being grounded in well-informed assumptions, carefully considering external impact factors, allowing for a clear assessment of uncertainty over causality and control over outcomes and generating learning for future action.

Denisa graduated from Erasmus University Rotterdam (MA-ACS Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship), and has a genuine interest in the societal impact of arts and culture, and the significance of arts for shaping local socio-economic trajectories in particular. Denisa believes that research capturing the wider impact dimensions for arts and culture is highly valuable in current socio-economic context as she sees great potential for arts and culture to influence sustainable development.

Understanding the Theory of Change and its five components



Carmen Garcia Audi

The components and usefulness of the Theory of Change

The dictionary helps us little in understanding what the *Theory of Change* (TOC) is. Starting with *theory*: It is not something that exists only in the mind but it aims to be as close to reality as possible. It is not abstract, but practicable and practiced. It is not mere speculation, but highlights existing links between cause and effect. It is a science and an art. For *change*, the dictionary proposes 23 definitions, 15 synonyms as a verb, and 16 synonyms as a noun. None of them refer to *impact*, which in turn, applies to momentary (i.e., collusion) or continuing (i.e., powerful influence) situations. The latter is the one we pursue.

Weiss (1995) defines TOC as "a theory of how and why an initiative works"

Connell & Kubisch (2013) define it as a "systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes, and contexts (of the evaluated initiative)"

Ebrahim (2019) states that a TOC "specifies the cause-effect relationships or pathway through which actions are expected to generate results" To me, TOC is a model, a process, a reflection, a tool, a method, an approach... a diagram, a scheme, a chart, an illustration, a path, a map, a cartography, a guide... that links together very concrete practices with very concrete products.

Starting with very concrete practices...

What do we do?... *Activities*.

What do we need? What is there at our disposal? What do we have? Where do we have it and where do we need it? Which infrastructure? Which resources and how many? Who is participating? Which skills, when and how often? Which talents and what for? ... *Inputs*.

Connecting practices to products...

What do we produce, deliver or supply? Where from and where to? How many? How often? In how many forms? For how many people?... *Outputs*.

More precisely, what do we achieve? Which are the consequences of our products and productions? Which are the results that are realised? What are the changes?... *Outcomes*.

More precisely, what do we really want to achieve? What powerful influence we are pursuing? In the long-run and for it be sustainable? ... *Impact*.

Ideally, we should think about a TOC before we start our action. In this way, the TOC would offer guidance as it would make us think or make us think of things to think about. Further, a TOC is dynamic. It evolves because, while creating it and executing it, the producers and creators notice, detect, realise, experience, learn, innovate, improve... Ultimately, any moment is good to take stock of the actions — to pause, think, reflect, redefine, reframe, mature, correct, adapt, resume, envisage... That is precisely what the six organisations participating in the program are

doing; requesting we examine their ongoing projects so that we can contribute to their thinking so they can learn and improve.

Ideally, the TOC should be a participatory process whereby the stakeholders, those with agency and those with an interest in the product and the production, jointly sketch out a plan. Stakeholders are mainly decision-makers, partners, funders, personnel, participants, and beneficiaries. The diversity of stakeholders helps to enlarge the scope of views, positions, and needs thus, identifying all the elements, even those that are conflicting, or those that determine external receptivity (Scott, 1992). Furthermore, a participative or collaborative process facilitates stakeholders' alignment to the action and belief in it (Connell & Kubisch, 2013). In turn, this increases the action's social legitimacy (Ebrahim, 2019). Clearly, organisations need to find the right balance between the stakeholders' alignment and legitimacy on one hand and, on the other, the relevance of the agents and the feasibility of such a process.

When is a TOC adequate?

According to Connell & Kubisch (1998) plausibility, feasibility, and testability are essential attributes of a good TOC. First, a literary review phase can be useful during the development of the TOC to find evidence that the activities — if implemented — will indeed lead to the presented outcomes. It is however, yet to be confirmed precisely which activities have taken place and which have been altered, postponed, or cancelled (note the impact of COVID measures on organisational performance). Secondly, financial, technical, institutional, and human resources must be sufficiently available to implement these activities. Research has to confirm to which extent the announced resources, notably the intangible ones, have effectively been mobilised for action.

Alternatively, research may recommend modifying the weight of certain resources. Thirdly, a TOC must be comprehensive and specific as it sets the overall framework within which an action takes place. Last but not least, the TOC will be the framework against which the impact will be measured (Center for Theory of Change, n.d.). Impact measurement will highlight successes, obstacles, and lessons and will provide recommendations on how to improve the action. We thus trust that an impact measurement study will positively impact an organization and its mission.

Carmen Garcia Audi has professional experience in development cooperation and governance. One day she took a pause to rethink and start anew. She invested time and efforts (inputs), she realised activities (a MA-ACS, Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship), got good and better grades (outputs). She has learned from the courses and her fellow students (outcomes). The impact is in the making...

It is not something that exists only in the mind
but it aims to be as close to reality as possible.

A measurement plan

Some would argue that impact research is more important than impact measurement. Measurement, indeed, makes the suggestion that all organizations' activities, outputs and outcomes are measurable, and that a statistical test can serve as a quick way of confirming or refuting that what an organization is doing is the right thing. Even if more quantitatively-oriented ways of collecting impact data can contribute to impact studies, we are in favor of a qualitative interpretation of data. That is, impact research benefits from profound reflection, discussion, and all collected data, be it from participation records, questionnaires, focus group conversations, or interviews, can serve such reflections and discussions.

Nonetheless, a clear and effective measurement plan includes the various data collection methods and ideas of how and why to analyze these data. The ToC forms the basis of such practices, because it visualizes the logical connections between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Before even determining which cause-effects relationships should be examined or "measured," the purposes of this exercise should be clarified. For example, if an organization wants to measure its impact for marketing or communication purposes, it probably wants to collect data that can be shared— in the form of participants' experiences or output data. If the purpose relates to accountability issues, then an organization takes into consideration the information that external stakeholders want to become aware of. It could be that organizations focus on outputs, if the main purpose is to report to external

stakeholders. However, if an organization measures for learning and improvement purposes, then it may not only want to know if it obtains its intended outputs, but also wants to understand why, how, and under which circumstances it achieves its intended impact.

Especially when an organization aims to learn and improve, no "one-size-fits-all" measurement method will serve. Each social impact study will be unique and depend on the context, available time, money, logistics, and data that can be accessed (Vermeulen & Maas, 2021). So, let's develop a plan!



Data collection, analysis and reporting

A measurement plan based on a Theory of Change is a crucial step in impact research. The actual measurement converges with many of the approaches common in social sciences research. Those can be of a more qualitative (interviews, focus group conversations, observation) or more quantitative nature (questionnaires, analyses of available ticket data).

A good starting point is to determine key concepts and key indicators of those concepts. The logic model of the ToC indicates the effects (outputs and outcomes) that an organization seeks to achieve by means of its activities. These effects should be translated into measurable units, and this happens by means of indicators. Indicators are the operationalization of the causes and effects to be measured, and frequently taken from the existing scientific literature on a specific theme. Wellbeing, inclusion, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and self-esteem are all concepts that have been examined to a great degree in the literature. It can be expected that those constructs, as well as its determinants, have been operationalized into indicators in previous research. Relying on these efforts will contribute to the validity of future impact research.

In a realistic scenario in education, the double measurement moments and control groups are not an option. By explaining this, the students become aware that an impact is a change that they want to be able to reveal.

Some points to consider.

1. Impact measurement follows the habits and methods in much social sciences research. Quantitatively-conceived studies can attest if and to what extent something is having an effect on something else. Qualitatively-conceived studies also lead to insights into questions of how, when, why, and under which circumstances things occur. Much impact research, however, benefits most from a qualitative approach, even if the data collection and analysis strategies are quantitative. Explain the impact story, rather than wave with a statistic.
2. Participatory research is not uncommon. It is recommended to know the case, place, and individuals that are being studied, so create the opportunity to attend or visit a few occasions.
3. Intermediaries can help in various stages of impact research: defining the question and methods, collecting the data, etc.
4. Every impact study is different in many aspects. Sometimes, sending questionnaires to a large number of people is desirable and feasible, while on other occasions, group or individual conversations are preferred. This depends on the impact question, but also, for

The question “*what would have happened anyway?*” cannot be answered by just measuring twice.

example, on the characteristics of the target group (language spoken, vulnerability, time available, etc.), and on the way an organization regularly communicates with this target group (availability of contact information, language and tone of voice, etc.).

5. Consider the multi facets of impact: in the short and longer run, on the direct and more remote environment, etc. Diversify the impact population, for example, by dividing groups into a core and an outer peel.
6. Representativeness of participants in the responses on impact research is a challenge, because frequently the nature and size of the population on which an organization may have an impact are unknown. Convenience samples derived from a ‘snowballing’ technique (mouth to mouth) is acceptable, yet needs to be reported.

In the ideal world, impact measurement benefits from different measurement moments and a control group.

Different measurement moments

If an organization wants to know if they created positive impact on beneficiaries, it is important to have insight into the situation *before* an intervention, and the situation *after* an intervention. By using a pre-test and a post-test, organizations can observe changes over time. In practice, it is not always possible to implement multiple measurement moments, due to time, financial constraints, or practical restrictions.

A Control group

The question “what would have happened anyway?” cannot be answered by just measuring twice. By including a control group with similar characteristics as the ‘treatment’ group, it is possible to see if the change over time occurred in both groups, or just in the treatment group. Looking at good examples of impact studies, access to academic literature on the theme and being able to rely on someone with insight in social sciences methods, are key!

What is the impact of Reframers in their immediate environment of young adults with bicultural backgrounds?

In the framework of a partnership between the **Van Gogh Museum (VGM)** and the Erasmus University of Rotterdam (EUR), a team of five students conducted an impact study. It responds to the VGM's motivation to assess the social impact of one of its initiatives, so as to understand the causal relationships between what the museum does and what the museum seeks to be achieving. Impact studies can reveal more about the effectiveness and efficiency of activities and can lead to adaptations of an organizational strategy, when desired.



Image breaker Sara gives a tour during Museumn8, by ART photo

Reaching out to the diverse youth in Amsterdam

Carmen Garcia Audi, Eva Langerak, Chih-Yi Meng, Fernando do Valle Nogueira Monteiro, Huipeng Xu

The VGM attracts abundant visitors. In 2018, the VGM was the most visited museum of the Netherlands with more than 2 million visitors from 110 countries (Van Gogh Museum, 2018). Despite its success in attracting large groups of visitors, the museum seeks to reach all societal groups. In 2017, in partnership with Fonds21, and taking the country and city demographics into consideration, the VGM established a four-year program named Van Gogh Connects (VGC) with a two-folded mission: to increase the cultural participation of young adults (18-30 years old) with a bicultural background and to make the VGM more relevant for them.

The "Reframers" (Dutch: *Beeldbrekers*) is one of the pilot projects created to further reach this goal, and the subject of our impact study. The group consists of eighteen young-adults from bicultural backgrounds who, by bringing in their own perspectives, organize events and actions more likely to appeal to the target group of

young adults with similar backgrounds. The aim is to advise the museum on more inclusive activities and collaborations. The impact question of our study is the following: What is the impact of Reframers in their immediate environment of young adults with bicultural backgrounds?

The study articulated a Theory of Change that has guided the process and has been largely validated by the findings, thus confirming the causal relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and, eventually, impact. The collection of data required qualitative and quantitative methods that allowed for cross-analysis and comparing the real impact on the immediate environment to the expected impact by Reframers.

First, the qualitative method investigated Reframers' perceptions about the impact of their activities and actions on the immediate

Findings reveal a higher-expected impact of activities such as the collaboration with Daily Paper

environment. It was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews with several Reframers. Second, the quantitative section consisted of a questionnaire disseminated amongst the Reframers' immediate environment. It aimed to obtain insights into cultural participation habits, respondents' opinions on museums in general and the VGM in particular, and tried to disentangle the true meaning of "being relevant," as stated in the VGC program's mission. Two innovative controlling variables were established: the degree of proximity between a respondent and the Reframers, and a respondent's awareness of the Reframers' project. The socio-demographic questions served to confirm the extent to which Reframers' immediate environment corresponds to the program's target group (62%).

Findings reveal a higher-expected impact of activities such as the collaboration with Daily Paper (a clothing collection inspired by works of Vincent van Gogh); the "Vincent on Friday Evenings," guided tours whereby Reframers connect the narrative of the painter to their own narratives; the much-mediatised Reframers campaign, and; the *Erratic Growth* exhibition co-curated by the Reframers. These activities not only generated interest by themselves, but also facilitated communicative actions both online and offline. The latter, indirectly, may lead towards external media coverage and encourage people to think differently about the museum. This, in turn, may create a spill-over effect — inspiring people to take action and visit the museum or enquire about it. This is corroborated by both the qualitative and the quantitative data.

Moreover, compared with youngsters with more distant bicultural backgrounds than the

Reframers, the immediate environment of the Reframers shows a higher level of cultural participation (as indicated by their scores on the Cultural Participation Index) and more engagement when it comes to sharing cultural information; they are more likely to share information or use the internet for cultural purposes, and they are more likely to share information about the Reframers' activities via their own social media accounts and spread the information within their own networks. This group of youngsters close to the Reframers appears capable of creating a snowball effect when it comes to information and participation. Remarkably, the social media postings of the VGM are amongst the activities that seem to generate less impact amongst the target group — plausibly because they are internationally oriented.

In order to assess the 'relevance' of VGM to the target group, the notion was operationalized into four aspects, namely hospitality, inclusion, identification, and novelty. Based on our analysis, we argue that the Reframers positively affect their immediate environment's perceptions and, therefore, said proximity leads to a better perception of the VGM in terms of hospitality and inclusion. Proximity to a Reframer also positively correlates the extent to which someone identifies with the work and life of Vincent van Gogh. However, the results concerning the novelty aspect show that proximity to the Reframers did not contribute to a better impression of novelty on the VGM than museums in general and point towards the findings that the VGM could innovate further, both in terms of content and format of the exhibitions.



Visitors view works by Gauguin in *Wrongly Connected, Les Adu*



Image breakers Amina and Nigel during the launch of the Daily Paper event, by JD Photography

Recommendations

Based on our study, we can make a number of recommendations to the VGM, meant to provoke reflection, inform future decision making, and encourage action to further increase social impact:

- 1** experiment with the content of exhibitions and promote new ways of storytelling attractive to the target group. It can be helpful to create more physical outreach projects that are likely to improve communication with the target group in a more contemporary manner
- 2** highlight further the painter's personal life, health, and career as a way to better convey Van Gogh's narrative to the target group, which feels more connected to the person than to his art
- 3** review some of the terminology used, and avoid terms which cause unintended feelings of exclusion. For example, the notion 'inclusion,' appeared to be not so appreciated

- 4** adopt a price policy directly designed for the target group
- 5** find ways of complementing Reframers' intrinsic motivation with enhanced external motivators
- 6** boost knowledge sharing with the VGM cultural ecosystem; of particular relevance are museums which have similar programs as the Reframers
- 7** disseminate our impact study within the Museum so as to facilitate the understanding of Reframers' role and impact. It will contribute to the appreciation for, and legitimacy of, the project.

More information

Van Gogh Museum: verbindt@vangoghmuseum.nl

Is MovieZone successful in fostering a feeling of inclusion and belonging for the active youth participating in the project?

As part of the **EYE Film Museum's** educational department in Amsterdam, MovieZone aims to connect young people from varying backgrounds and inspire them to dive into the world of audiovisual content, hopefully contributing to an enriched, more diverse, and inclusive media sector in the long term. MovieZone is aware of the great importance for museums and cinematheques — as pillars of cultural education — to be more inclusive and appealing to a broader population beyond the cultural elite, and strives to make a real impact on the younger generations and their development. MovieZone does not wish to be perceived as a formal educational institution but rather, a relaxed and safe space for youngsters to learn from each other, develop skills, grow personally and professionally, and feel that they belong to a cohesive MovieZone community.



Credits Eye Film Museum

MovieZone: seeking to improve young participants' personal and professional skills, and for inclusivity

Denisa Boca, Yvonne van Wanrooij, Rachel Coady, and Sophie Teunissen

Our social impact study represents an empirical inquiry into how MovieZone's activities lead to desired outcomes that ultimately lead to the intended impacts on the youth community it serves. We used a mixed-methods approach and conducted a survey and two focus group analyses on 16 young participants belonging to MovieZone's three active core teams of youngsters – The Events Team, the Social Club, and Think Tank – in order to assess their experiences as part of MovieZone. Considering which outcomes MovieZone deems as valuable and relevant to their mission and the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study aimed to answer the following evaluation questions to assess MovieZone's impact and areas for further development:

- What are the overall experiences of youngsters as part of MovieZone?
- Does MovieZone contribute to youngsters' interpersonal, media literacy skills development, and their ability to set personal goals?
- Is MovieZone successful in fostering a feeling of inclusion and belonging for the active youth participating in the project?
- What is the effect of COVID-19 on MovieZone's intended impact?

The findings provide an accurate reflection of MovieZone's positive effects on both the skills and social cohesion dimensions as youngsters expressed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of their experiences, development, and growth within MovieZone. Hence, the results showed that MovieZone is on the right path towards achieving its ultimate and long-term intended

"I think it is really nice to be amongst other young people that are doing creative stuff."

impacts, successfully contributing to youngsters' growth, feelings of inclusion, and belonging to the MovieZone community, as well as successfully managing to stay relevant in front of changing media trends and youngsters' values and needs.

The following quotes can illustrate the youngsters' opinions, feelings and perceptions of MovieZone.

"MovieZone opened a lot of great doors for me."
(Focus group participant 7)

"It has been super nice. It is so fun and also really helpful."
(Focus group participant 8)

"I think it is really nice to be amongst other young people that are doing creative stuff."
(Focus group participant 4)

"Everybody is very chill, and I immediately felt at home, which was great."
(Focus group participant 2)

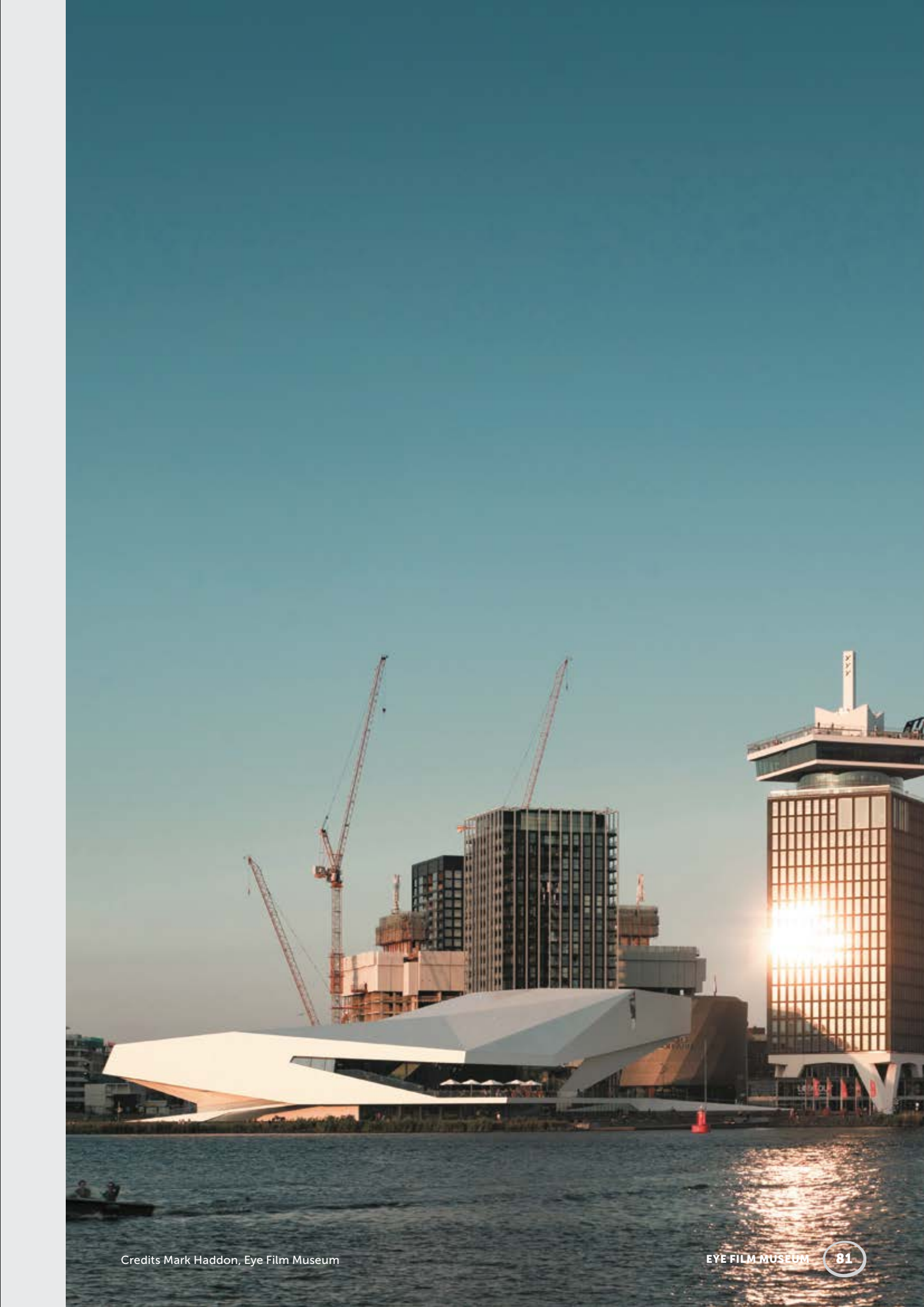
"I have really learned a lot on a professional level in addition to the education I am doing. It is a good complement to it. And yes, I think it is a very nice stepping stone to a, well, possible career within the creative film world." (Focus group participant 5)

The study outline and the results can be useful for a better understanding of MovieZone's impact and form a basis for future research in this sense. We are particularly pleased with the methodological tools developed as part of this study as they proved particularly efficient and appropriate for the purpose at hand. We highly recommend a similar approach for more extensive studies in this direction. We are hopeful that our study will be a starting point for ongoing impact evaluation and learning processes within MovieZone.

All questions about skills posed in the survey were answered overwhelmingly positive, yet some were rated higher than others. Skills such as listening, feedback, collaborating with others, and networking were rated highest. While skills such as problem-solving and effectively communicating ideas to others were rated significantly lower, still, the role of participating in MovieZone became apparent. A division can be made between skills that are a primary focus within the program and those skills that develop secondarily, perhaps unintentionally, albeit at a slower pace.

moviezone.nl/

In the case of an interest in the report, contact the organization.





Assessing the
impact of **Culture
and Creativity
in Society**

3

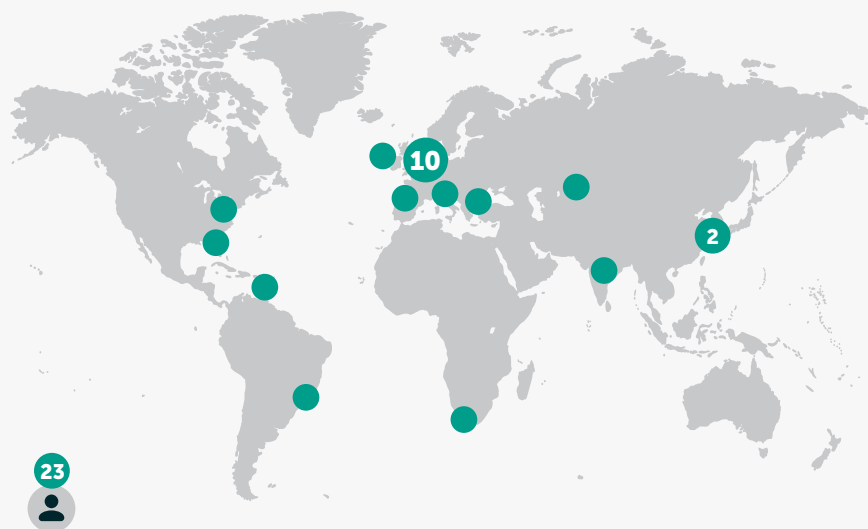
Feedback and feedforward

Reflections of students

The course had a diverse group of participating students with whom the teachers talked extensively during the course and after the course, in focus group conversations. Figure 2 shows that students come from all over the world. This diversity led to refreshing discussions about impact studies, in which each student could form an opinion based on their own context.

Figure 2: Country of origin (week 1)

Where are you from?



In a dense impact course, students go through a rollercoaster of emotions. Since we knew it would be a demanding course that requires a great deal of commitment from the students, we wanted to keep a grip on the emotions of the students. Not only because it was the first time this course was taught, but also because the course took place in the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic, and all activities took place online. Since many students are struggling with stress and (mental health) problems as a result of the covid crisis, we really wanted insight into the personal experiences of the students. Moreover, knowledge about the students' reflection on the course enables us to improve our education. While we cannot generalize for all participants, we observed 5 main feelings.

1. Curiosity and excitement

In the first weeks, positive feelings like curiosity and excitement predominated among students. Although these positive feelings were supplemented with some healthy tension, students were interested, and positive, about the hands-on approach of the course. Students expected a "hand on course with a lot of practical insights from the field," in which they acquire "practical and hands-on knowledge". Moreover, students expected "a highly dynamic,

high-paced course, with some stressful moments but also gaining practical knowledge". The curiosity and enthusiasm about the subject of the course was also evident during the application process; the course reached capacity a few hours after the opening of registration for students, thus the lecturers scaled up the capacity, so that more students could participate.

2. Overwhelming

At the start of the course, as lecturers, we explained the timetable of the course, emphasizing that the first two weeks were fully theoretical, and that from week 3 onwards the focus would be on the practical side of the course. At the same time, we emphasized that the research process is one that cannot be predicted, and therefore, can sometimes be uncertain. To prepare the students, we stated that the biggest workload of the impact study would be around weeks 5, 6, and 7. Despite these warnings, in the first week of the course, the students seemed unconcerned about this.

"First class was like 'Okay, well, I think this is going to be doable'. You were warning us, like 'these weeks are going to be very stressful and you could have sleepless nights' and we were like 'sure, we will see!'"

Figure 3: **Feelings about the course (week 1)**

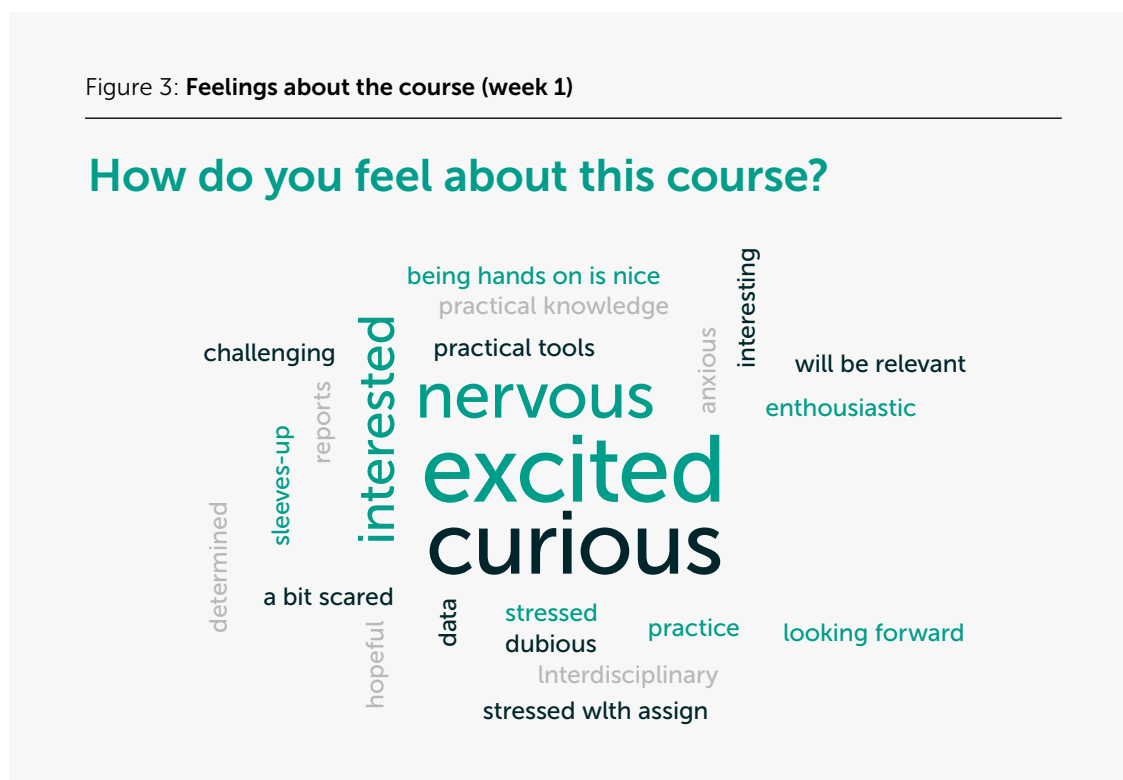


Figure 4: Expectations of the course (week 1)

What do you expect from this course?

Hand on course with a lot of practical insights from the field	Practical guidance to applied knowledge	That I can create new insights in practical measurement possibilities
New skills, knowledge, hands-on approach	Learn practical methods of assessment and unpack impact of creativity	A highly dynamic, high-paced course, some stressful moments but also gaining practical knowledge
Applicable and sensible tools	Have open-mindedness, and know more about this unknown topic	To gain more practical experience
Practical and hands-on knowledge		Hands-on practice

However, between the second and third week, the students began to realize that this is not a typical course and, consequently, they became worried, especially when they met their organization for the first time and began to feel pressure as they wanted to deliver good work. To translate the theoretical knowledge of week 1 and 2 into practical tools for the organizations, was considered to be overwhelming; the idea that you have not yet fully understood the material, combined with the task to apply it in a real-life situation, led to feelings of insecurity.

"I think it's what makes this course so much interesting, that it's reality. It's a real institution with real activities with concrete questions and as students, we are brought to a real problem. And I think that the little critiques that arose at the very beginning, had to do with this new approach, actually, which is not maybe that common at university, and so I think there was a bit of destabilization because of the novelty or because of the different approach."

"At the beginning, it scares a little bit."

To have a better grip on the process that the students went through, and to guide them better, we presented the observation of insecure

feelings among the students to various education experts of the Erasmus University. These education experts explained that they also observe similar feelings in other practice-oriented courses of the university. Students are generally not used to immediately applying theory to practice in real-life situations, and feelings of uncertainty are common in this type of education.

It is important that students gain confidence and understand that they learn by doing. Therefore, as teachers we decided to intervene. In addition to the weekly lecture, several individual coaching sessions were held with the student teams. Additional "walk-in" sessions were organized, where students could ask for help or discuss ideas with the teachers. In the same period, there was an increasing attention to the influence of the Covid crisis on the mental health of students. As such, we decided to organize informal chitchats with students, in which students could get to know each other, and maybe share their feelings of uncertainty.

In week 7, we asked the students how they felt about their impact study. At that time, they were in the final phase of their impact study. It was here that we saw a change in attitude. Despite

students still being busy and feeling overwhelmed at times, they were more confident about the process.

"It is not a bad thing that it was very fast and a little bit overwhelming. I mean, not everything needs to go slow. Sometimes you just have to go, and it will turn out fine. This was a great example of how things turned out well in the end."

3. Commitment

From the moment the students met their organization, the students were committed to doing a good impact study for the organization, within the limits set by the course. This commitment is mutual. On the one hand, students must be committed to the organization to provide them with results that the organization can use in daily life. On the other hand, the organizations themselves must be committed in order to facilitate the research.

The students enjoyed working with external stakeholders. Figure 6 shows the feelings of the students with regard to the collaboration with the organization. Generally, students are positive, excited, inspired, and talk about an open and supportive collaboration. These kinds of feelings of course can influence the students' commitment.

Sometimes, students experienced varying degrees of engagement of the organizations.

"We had really one person we communicated with, and she was always very quick to respond. She gave us all we asked for rapidly, so that really helped our process, because if we had a question and we send her an email, we could expect something like an answer back within the same day unless she wasn't working, but we knew, what day she was in. She was enthusiastic and happy about the things we were doing."

"It is really thanks to their involvement and willingness to cooperate that our project went that smoothly. We always got what we needed, they proposed us to join rehearsals..."

In some cases, the organization and the students had to explore each other's role and function a little bit more. To illustrate, a student argued: *"There was just a slow response from them, it took them a while to be on the road and also to know exactly what we were doing. There was a little bit of delayed feedback."* However, despite the fact that some parts of collaboration with the organizations could have been a bit unclear in the beginning, the students remained committed to the organizations.

Figure 5: Feelings about the impact study (week 7)

How do you feel about your impact study?



Figure 6: Feelings about the collaboration with the organizations (week 4)

How do you feel about the collaboration with your organization impact study?



4. Satisfaction

Despite the rollercoaster that students may have experienced during the eight-week process, many students look back with satisfaction on their participation in the course:

"The impression I have a little bit personally and from hearing from the other fellow students it was that it's a course which is very much appreciated because of this applied approach."

Students are proud of what they have achieved, despite the challenges they have experienced and unexpected development they have faced. Moreover, the focus group expressed that they appreciated the efforts of the lecturers to give some extra support and guidance.

"I feel it was sometimes hard in this process, but in the end it is so valuable, indeed, to struggle and to let the frustration be there in a way, in order to learn from it. And maybe it's even more valuable because it fits so much with my own vision or what I find important, that it becomes inspiring now. I think impact assessment is a lot of inspiration possibilities. In a positive or a negative way, it just depends how you look at it, I guess. It can be super inspiring to work with this method."

"I think it's a very demanding course: for us and for you, and that is obvious. I think that is also the reason why we also take it, because we see how much workload you have. I mean, all these individual sessions per six groups with institutions, with us, feedback on every essay when it's still relevant. So I think this balance of heavy workload is perceived- it is seen, and it is appreciated also, and it makes our workload bearable, also more bearable, if you see what I mean."

The students can also look back with satisfaction because their work seems to actually have an influence on the organizations. For example, students were invited to present their findings internally in the organizations, several organizations have announced that they will publish their research report on their website, or discuss the reports with policy advisors. One student, to illustrate, described her role for the organization as follows:

"I think if you get a very big sum of money, you will have to answer: "why did you spend the money?" or "how was it spent and what did you achieve with it?" I think my organization was already interested in it, or even active with it. And they saw an opportunity to grow in that or to learn more about it."

5. Reflection

After the course, many students indicated that the course made them reflect a lot, among other things, about the experiences with the organization. For example, students reflected together on the degree of commitment of the organizations. In the focus groups, together they discussed the reasons for that, and the reality of how organizations are structured and operate.

In addition to reflection on the participating organizations during the focus groups, it was argued that participation in the course led to self-reflection of the students. As one student puts it: *"I think this is a very personal experience in terms of becoming aware of your own skills and acquiring new ones."*

At the end of the course, students could reflect on the learning process. Although students experienced uncertainty in the beginning of the course, a student said afterwards that everything comes together at the end of the course. Still, despite this reflection on their own development during the eight weeks, the need to reflect on the learning process and on working in a team was bigger than we could offer as lecturers during the course. For example, there was a need to reflect more on this alternative type of education, the group work processes, and the struggles that are associated with working in a team. As result of this feedback, the lecturers are considering the possibility to embed mentorship within the course process, in order to better support the students in the learning process and in learning to collaborate actively in a team.

"But I do feel like we worked already together quite well, but maybe – also because it was such a new experience for everybody to do this – some more tools can be implemented that can be used to reflect on the things that we learn and how to improve our own doings week to week. That would be nice as well, because we kind of figured it out by ourselves, but there are some really easy tools to implement that teams can use in order to keep improving themselves also weekly, especially because the course is quite short."

Challenges of impact education

Conducting an impact study of an organization requires knowledge, skills, and, ideally, some experience. The more someone is experienced with impact studies, the more accurate the impact studies will be. In a course, students learn how to conduct an impact study and all its aspects: the development of a Theory of Change, developing a measurement plan, collecting data and measuring, reporting data, drawing conclusions, and, most importantly, doing all this in collaboration with the partner organization. Ideally, a course allows students to experiment and possibly even to make wrong decisions and reflect on what would work better in the future. At the same time, the involvement of actual organizations makes it all very real, and students feel challenged to give the best they can.

After piloting this course and receiving the feedback of both organizations and students, a number of challenges and dilemmas that are prevalent in impact education arose.

The course objectives of the impact course are defined as follows:

Upon completion of the course students are able to:

1. explain the complex nature of artistic, economic, and social challenges of the cultural sector;
2. explain how societal developments relate to the ambitions of cultural organisations to create social value;

3. apply the concepts, frameworks and methods of impact thinking, impact measurement, and impact management in order to develop a 'Theory of Change' and a measurement design;
4. conduct an impact measurement for a cultural or creative organisation;
5. analyse the quantitative and/or qualitative data, critically interpret the results, and translate them to practical advices and tools for the cultural organisation, and, by extension, for the arts and cultural and creative sectors.

Eight challenges for impact educators

The main aim of this course is to prepare students for the cultural labor market by giving them a deep understanding of the roles that

organizations can play in society and equip them with the tools to effectively assess these roles, in a close dialogue with people working in the field.

However, compared with the impact studies that are executed by professional organizations, the educational context leads to some restrictions that are less stringent in professional impact measurement.

1. Time is always too short

The **time window** of the impact study converged with the established time of a course at the Erasmus School for History, Culture and Communication, which is eight weeks. Within those eight weeks, students needed to learn, from scratch, what impact is, how impact studies are set up and conducted, how they communicate with organizations at all stages of the process, and many more things. In professional settings, generally, impact researchers are apt in the principles and measurement methods common to the job. In a course setting, this is all new to most of the participants.

While professional impact researchers would have time to get acquainted with the organization and have several conversations with its representatives before starting the data collection process, in an education setting, there is frequently not much time for that. In professional contexts, it can be expected that the impact researchers develop the impact question in close collaboration with the members of the organization, while in a course context, this opportunity may be lacking.

For reasons of efficiency, and to avoid that students would need to spend time on a new course during a previous term, **the lecturers and the members of organizations jointly came up with a feasible impact question** which students needed to address. The benefits are that impact questions are accurate and feasible to address. The drawbacks are that students are not involved in the discussion and are not aware of how and why the particular question came into being.

Additionally, the development of a Theory of Change and data collection have to take place under time pressure. Ideally, several members of an organization are heavily involved when a ToC of its activities is being developed, because it allows for profound discussion of the activities and goals of an organization. In an education context, **a pragmatic ToC may be at stake**, in which students give their own interpretation of the relation between an organization's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and intended impact. It is important that the organization member recognizes the logic underlying the ToC.

Finally, the period for **data collection** can be short in the education context. In an ideal scenario, different data collection strategies are laid out, and the organization has the time to prepare for supporting data collection, for example, by means of a questionnaire that is sent to its stakeholders. In an education context, students can be requested to reflect on the preferred data collection strategy, while developing the most accurate, feasible scenario. Those reflections can become part of the final reports and possibly lead to follow-up studies.

2. Merging theory and practice

Impact education, on the one hand, is a theoretical exercise that, on the other, leads to very practical and useful outcomes. This course is a master's-level university course; the theoretical angle is assured by means of a **mandatory reading**³ as well as recommendations of various academic papers on different themes⁴, and reports of soundly developed impact studies.

At the same time, being a hands-on course that **requires professional attitudes and numerous skills**, it offers the ideal space for students to develop practical and employability skills. At Erasmus University, the course takes place in February and March, which is just a few months before students graduate and enter the labor market. 21st Century skills such as collaboration, creativity, complex problem solving, and communication are strongly addressed by impact education.

3 Ebrahim, A. (2019). *Measuring Social Change. Performance and Accountability in a Complex World*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

4 A few examples are included on p. 51-52 (table)

Students wrote two essays individually, and developed a final report and presentation in group. The report was submitted in chunks, which received in-between feedback so that students would be able to take the next step in their journey. Of the final mark, 10% was assigned to the participative and professional behavior of students.

3. Purpose, autonomy and competence: key to motivation and group performance

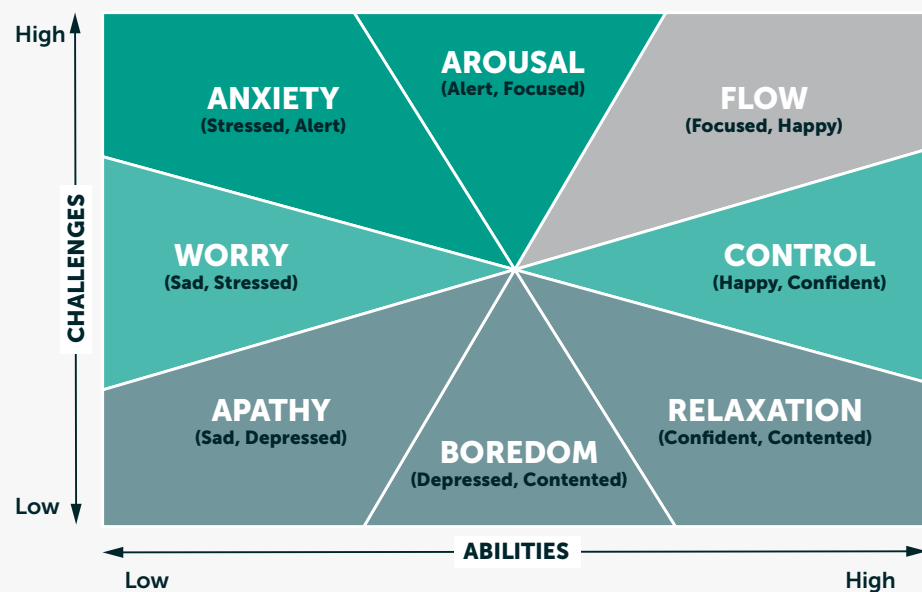
Impact education has the opportunity to embrace three elements that may lead to very intrinsically-motivated individuals and high-performing teams. First, purpose is inherent in impact education, owing to the impact themes that organizations wish to address. Students choose the organization they want to work with, so they are expected to be passionate about the “good cause” of that organization. Second, students are encouraged to autonomously develop the various parts of the impact research. While teachers are around, students are trusted to rely on self-management and initiative to communicate with the organization, plan data collection, collect and analyze data, and report. Third, students are given the knowledge to start

developing impact research. Additionally, the skills that they need to develop, and are developing, are being explicitly put into practice, all to make students feel competent. *Purpose, autonomy, and competencies (mastery)* have repeatedly been identified as precursors to motivation and group performance, for example in self-determination theory and by Pink (2011).

4. An Experiential Learning approach

Teachers can prepare every component of a course in detail, formulate all the expected outcomes, and take students by the hand in every step that needs to be taken. However, impact education benefits more from an experiential learning approach, in which teachers take up the role of having students experience various aspects of the learning process. In contrast to more traditional teaching and learning methods, in Experiential Learning, participants are encouraged to direct their own learning. It is less teacher-centered and more learner-centered as learners are encouraged to actively participate in their own learning process. Experiential Learning typically provides with (1) a designed learning experience that provides participants with chances to learn from natural

Figure 7: Model of flow as related to challenge and ability (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013).



Mihály Csikszentmihályi's model of flow as related to challenge and ability.

consequences, mistakes, and successes, (2) the opportunities for participants for reflection, critical analysis and synthesis, (3) the possibility for participants to take initiative, make their own decisions and be accountable for their results, and (4) the ability for participants to engage intellectually, creatively, emotionally, socially, or physically (UCD, 2018).

Based on our experience of working with professional organizations, we could foresee that organizations like to be in control of the communication issued on behalf of the organization, and that sending out a message or a call for contributions can take some time and intermediate staging-posts. This had been pointed out to students. However, only by experiencing some communication challenges, they became aware of how many organizations function in this respect.

5. The role of the teacher

In impact education, teachers have to give up control. It is not only impossible to control every aspect of each group's impact research; likewise, it is not desirable that the teacher is too much in control. Rather, teachers need to create a reflective and safe space, in which students sense that they can experiment and belong to a group that is learning.

The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi defined the concept of "flow" as a mental state conducive to productivity that can be reached when someone experiences a task to be challenging and has the feeling that (s)he is sufficiently competent in the task. Impact education is challenging for a number of reasons: it is new to students, it may touch upon something they are passionate about, and it involves professional organizations who may have high expectations. Impact education equally challenges students' abilities; they gain new knowledge and develop competences that are not always required in education: collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and complex problem solving are some of the 21st Century skills that are aroused in impact research. It is the task of the teacher to avoid panic and anxiety by ensuring students are aware of their increasing abilities to do impact research. The level of the impact challenge is high enough to avoid that students become bored or apathic.

As teachers, we had an 'open window' policy, as an alternative to the 'open door' policy and office hours, which were not feasible because of online education. We also took part in informal chit-chats with small groups during the lockdown, where we shared feelings and thoughts, and gave education a human face. In courses as challenging as impact education, it is important that students feel supported.

At the start of almost each session, we sounded out the emotional state of the students. By means of a Mentimeter, we developed a word cloud that depicted how students felt: curious, excited, anxious, nervous, were some of the responses that appeared. We showed openness to discuss all feelings, talked about the origins of those feelings, and provided comfort when this was needed.

6. Team efforts

A great deal of learning occurs in interaction with peers (Topping et al., 2017). The team work in impact education represents a situation in which *mutual peer learning* happens. All members have a responsibility, and the relationships are reciprocal. The team work has features of *peer collaboration*, established between a group of students who, with relatively similar abilities and skills, together acquire and apply knowledge. At the same time, *cooperative learning* takes place. This happens because students learn from each other. For example, the data collection and analysis part of impact research requires specific skills that not all students possess to the same extent.

In impact education, team members take up various roles. Different tasks need to be performed during a short time window: communication with the organization, coordination and time management, writing and reporting, data collection and analyses, et cetera. Ideally, students contribute each in their own way, while they can learn from the other members' contributions. Teachers can ask students to play out their strengths, but also encourage the joint team's effort.

For example, rather than teaching all of them quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis competences (which simply is not feasible during one course), students were asked

to identify each one's methods-related competences. In a few cases, data collection was adjusted to the abilities present within the team.

In a previous course that some of the students had attended, participants were asked to reflect on their potential professional roles in the execution of an entrepreneurial project. They had been encouraged to discuss the roles, and possibly take a test to assess their personalities, preferred roles, or values. This resulted in self-reflection on their managerial, marketing, creative development, teambuilding, relational, and other roles, which could have benefitted an openness toward effectively dividing the tasks ahead.

The glue between the team members consisted of their shared choice for a specific impact project (cf. purpose). Organizations had been asked to make a video in which they would pitch the organization and its impact question. In order to divide the groups, students were asked to write a motivation letter in which they would defend their preferences for working with two organizations. Fortunately, all students could be assigned to their preferred organizations!

7. The roles of the organization

Impact education stands or falls with the active engagement of organizations that are willing to be involved. The fact that organizations are involved means the interests of three 'stakeholders' need to be addressed (aside the groups still that are the subject of the intended impact): students, teachers, and organizations. Somewhat reductive, students want to learn and teachers want to facilitate the learning experience. The organizations that take part in impact education want to learn about their impact and hope to receive recommendations. At the same time, they like to take up a role in the education process and help students to become acquainted with professional challenges.

All three roles (students conducting an impact study and experientially learning, teachers facilitating the process, and organizations serving as a case study while providing inputs to students) take into account each other's needs.

Given the short time window of the course, the teachers and organizations jointly developed the impact question. The organizations informed the Theories of Change created by the students, but



did not “approve” of them. The final presentation in the last week was turned into a “feedback session,” in which students had the opportunity to ask for feedback and suggestions, rather than to present and send their findings. Impact education should avoid to direct “final products”.

The organizations that take part are willing to learn. Teachers can try to find ways of facilitating the organizations’ learnings without taking up too much of their time, or inviting them to lectures they are not able to attend.

8. Success factors of impact education?

The success of impact education can be defined in many ways. Students attaining the intended learning objectives (knowledge, insights, skills) is a first one, assessed by means of their assignments and behaviors during and shortly after the course. Ideally, these outcomes last longer, which is not easily judged in the current higher education system. Hopefully, students take up an impact attitude in their professional lives. The satisfaction of everyone involved could be another indicator of an effective course. Students, organizations, the organizations’ stakeholders, and teachers can be, to a greater or lesser extent, satisfied with the experience. If there is any dissatisfaction, one would want to understand the origin of it. For example, during the end presentations, the learning experience of students took center stage, leaving to some disappointment among some of the professional attendees, because the session was just a bit hard to follow. Teachers need to decide on whether to change the format of this session, communicate its purpose more clearly, or take for granted that not everyone’s needs can be served. The evaluation of an impact course typically entails objective (quality of the research) and subjective (feelings and experiences) elements.

In conclusion, impact education is full of trade-offs: limited time, a multi-faceted learning experience, and the involvement of stakeholders require making choices. It is a clear challenge to identify the learning outputs of a course and to harness these during and after a course. Conducting valid and thought-provoking impact research is a competence. The impact reports developed during impact education are a first exercise, even more than an end product.

However, they have many qualities of a genuine impact study, and the potential to lead organizations to introspect and improve their operations.

To what extent and how is the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of individuals being affected after they take part in a Cultuur+Ondernemen activity?

Cultuur+Ondernemen (C+O) is an Amsterdam-based and government-funded organization that aims to support creative and cultural entrepreneurs in their professional development. For this, it provides educational support, expertise, and financial instruments such as loans. C+O is attempting to be increasingly more effective in fulfilling its mission – to create a solid, vital and future-proof cultural sector to optimally benefit society – and to improve the interaction with its customers.



The creative ambition to improve the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of the cultural sector

Marco Aperti, Elske Artz, Nicoletta Ada De Pace, Irene Tsitse, Lisanne van den Broek

A Theory of Change (ToC) provides an analysis of an organisation to understand its structure: it highlights which activities it does to pursue its mission, what the short-term, quantifiable objectives, and longer-term effects of their actions are. Impact measurements are pivotal in order to increase the transparency, as well as the internal and strategic knowledge and accountability of an organization.

The impact question at the core of this analysis by five students of Erasmus University was: To what extent and how is the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of individuals being affected after they take part in a Cultuur+Ondernemen activity?

To understand the range of aspects that can influence an entrepreneur's self-efficacy, existing documentation of the organization's activities and the entrepreneurship literature have been thoroughly investigated. Three dimensions that participants should or could have developed

after their interaction with C+O, have been withdrawn: the development of entrepreneurial skills and competencies, a sense of financial security, and the expansion of personal growth.

The literature pointed us to the fact that gaining entrepreneurial skills is not equivalent to, nor sufficient for, practicing entrepreneurship (McGee et al., 2009). Instead, it is suggested that the link between undertaking entrepreneurial activity and growing entrepreneurial skills, is "an individual's self-assessment on the ability to use these skills to achieve a goal" (Liu et al., 2019, p. 3). Therefore, we considered entrepreneurial self-efficacy as the ultimate intended outcome of C+O's activities. A challenge was still linking the outcomes at an individual participant's level and the ultimate outcome at the organizational level, namely C+O's ambition. As such, in our ToC, we established the link between personal growth, the development of participants' entrepreneurial competences, their sense of financial security,

The cultural and creative sector has — for a long time — been challenged in its autonomy

and the overall ambition of C+O in achieving their goal of supporting artists and creatives to attain their ambitions. Consequently, the operational research question of our consultancy is formulated as follows: “to what extent does C+O help artists and creatives grow their entrepreneurial self-efficacy?” In order to be able to test our ideas, a questionnaire was sent to participants of C+O’s activities.

According to the data analysis, several relationships between the variables were found. For example, there appear to be positive causal relationships between the flexibility to adapt to changes, the capability to convince others, the ability to develop financial plans, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. In other words, C+O can enhance participants’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy by training them in financial planning, flexibility, and persuasion skills. Developing attractive funding applications appears to be something that many cultural entrepreneurs struggle with, which, according to our analysis, is negatively correlated with individuals’ confidence to undertake entrepreneurial tasks. Not only teaching their participants to write financial plans, but also improving their confidence in the quality of such a plan, can be helpful to the community, especially in a time when the entire cultural sector is impacted by Covid-19.

Our impact assessment testifies to the pivotal opportunity of C+O as a two-sided platform towards its clients, as well as the institutions that are present in the broader cultural landscape. The cultural and creative sector has — for a long time — been challenged in its autonomy, which makes it even more important to effectively

identify future opportunities. Therefore, the importance and the potential of impact assessment is vast. It not only reflects the current zeitgeist with an increasing focus of mission impact and social value creation in society, but it also highlights organizations’ potential to make greater connections beyond their own functioning and activities.

From our study, it appears that having to rely on multiple sources of funding staggers an individual’s confidence to be entrepreneurial. Cultural entrepreneurs may experience fear or reluctance when it comes to making themselves appeal to multiple stakeholders and potential financiers. Financial skills and self-confidence could reinforce each other. Informed by our impact study, Cultuur+Ondernemen should consider integrating the following topics into their training activities: how to develop a financial plan; how to become, and stay flexible, as a cultural worker; how to adapt to change; how to persuade various stakeholders.

Cultuur+Ondernemen:
www.cultuur-ondernemen.nl/



How does the AFC program influence its participants' desire and confidence to attend a fashion institute or to pursue their entrepreneurial intentions?

Bureau Yan is an Amsterdam-based social enterprise with a strong emphasis on sustainability, accessibility, and inclusion, founded by Fatima Essahsah. **Amsterdam Fashion College (AFC)** is a flagship program developed by Bureau Yan, with the main aim to make the fashion industry more accessible and inclusive. The program is designed to provide its participants with the courage, confidence, tools, network, and knowledge to pursue their fashion, creative, or cultural entrepreneurial desires. The program's tenth edition will take place in 2022. The typical profile of an AFC participant somewhat different from that of students at fashion academies.



Credits Jasmijn Lina Visuals. Bureau Yan, Amsterdam Fashion College

Amsterdam Fashion College: self-confidence in an inclusive fashion field

Celia Kalis, Romée Langenhuijzen, Sarah Reynolds, Rijenne Tromp

At the beginning of 2021, Bureau Yan set out to measure the program's impact on the Amsterdam community. A specific interest was if participation to AFC would positively affect the influx into the Amsterdam Fashion Institute (AMFI). In order to achieve this, the collaboration with Impact Centre Erasmus and a group of master's students was set up in the form of an impact study.

In recent years, impact measurements have garnered importance as a necessity for organizations in discussions surrounding funding, performance, and their overall non-financial value to the communities in which they operate. For this, social impact is defined as any organization's planned or unplanned interventions that have an effect on its natural and social environment. For cultural organizations such as Bureau Yan, this includes those effects that exceed the creation and execution of an event or a performance and

those effects that have ongoing influence upon, and directly through, people's lives.

To guide the investigation, the following impact question was developed: How does the AFC program influence its participants' desire and confidence to attend a fashion institute or to pursue their entrepreneurial intentions?

The following sub questions were also created for the sake of thorough impact examination:

What are the barriers to entry into and attendance at fashion institutes like AMFI? What are the perceived barriers to entrepreneurial work for AFC participants? What are the psychological and social effects of AFC's program on participants? Does AFC support and/or increase the entrepreneurial intention in participants?

A mixed methods approach, including interviews, a questionnaire and a focus group, was used in order to collect the necessary data to answer

It also demonstrates that AFC has four types of participants, all of whom indicate a desire to pursue some sort of entrepreneurial endeavor

these questions and cultivate meaningful recommendations for the organization. The measurement instruments were developed based on a Theory of Change for AFC and literature on successful entrepreneurial education. The literature emphasized the possession of entrepreneurial intention, a need for achievement, locus of control, and work group inclusion as important and relevant precursors to entrepreneurial behaviors and positive feelings of oneself (including self-confidence) thus, these became the constructs we decided to measure.

Exploratory interviews with a number of key stakeholders of the AFC program indicated that although the development of entrepreneurial intention is and should be an important goal for AFC, great — albeit underlying — value is placed on personal skills. Interviewees address the development of self-confidence, the feeling of inclusion, and the sense of community that they all experienced by attending the program.

The results of a quantitative, questionnaire-based part of our research highlight that AFC is highly effective in its entrepreneurial education. It also demonstrates that AFC has four types of participants, all of whom indicate a desire to pursue some sort of entrepreneurial endeavor — however — not all these groups of participants show an interest in attending a regular fashion institute in order to do so.

Our findings suggest that the program has a great potential to grow from focusing primarily on fashion and impact in fashion institutes to

becoming a pioneer program for participants with interests within many other branches of the creative and cultural sector. A very concrete recommendation for the AFC program was to start collaborations with other organizations in the creative industries such as museums, the Municipality, or art institutes with focuses other than fashion, suggesting that there is a need of entrepreneurial training into various cultural and creative sectors.

Amsterdam Fashion College contributes to participants' psychological empowerment in supporting and boosting their self-confidence, or self-love. In addition, 70% of its participants became entrepreneurs afterwards.

www.bureauyan.nl

In the case of an interest in the report, contact the organization.



Final words

Setting up this course has been a journey, and this magazine meant to share some of the incremental insights we gained during one year of impact education. At the same time, it is an invitation: to organizations that may look for some handles to start doing impact research, and, who knows, become partners in our education; to colleagues preoccupied with impact education that have an interest in exchanging ideas and experiences; and to current students that feel for engaging with impact research, in either their education or their upcoming professional activities. We look forward to hearing from you!

Jason Pridmore



The faculty of the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication (ESHCC) has always been focused on making clear connections between our courses and societal practices and practices in different contexts. A course such as 'Assessing the impact of arts and creativity in society' embodies these connections directly.

At ESHCC we recognise that a university's position in the world is at the intersection of a multiplicity of contexts. Universities are traditional institutions that are increasingly engaged in more innovative approaches to research and education. They bring together past, present, and future as objects of study and research in ways not replicated elsewhere. And while often very specifically connected to particular locations and cultures, universities increasingly serve a global audience. ESHCC's focus is on connecting personal ambitions with societal challenges, making use of our interdisciplinary approaches, and blending

traditional models of education with innovative learning and engagement.

We start from this because we see this as fundamental to how we can effectively understand, engage and affect our social world at a personal, social and structural level. We believe this best exemplifies what a university education should be about and what a university and faculty should be in relation to the social world. We see this basis as best capturing the tensions, experiences, challenges, and opportunities we face in an increasingly complex world. In shaping our curriculum, courses like this one embody our ambitions and hopes for our students and our societal connections.

Jason Pridmore, Vice Dean of Education for the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

“ I think it is really nice to be amongst other young people that are doing creative stuff. ”





Assessing the
impact of **Culture
and Creativity**
in Society



References

Introduction

Assessing the impact of Culture and Creativity in Society: a course, a magazine

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A Theory of Change

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Measurement plan

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