

# Developmental Evaluation in Practice

Developing an **Impact Model and Reflection Instruments** to assess **participatory research methods** using a DE approach

# Round 1: Who are we and how did we use DE?



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**Research organization** based in Vienna, Austria

Support researchers in **applying participatory research methods**

*My role: support orientation towards societal impact (plan, steer, assess)*

## Motivation

- **How can we tell** that participatory research leads to societal changes?
- **To what changes** does participatory research lead to?
- How can we **better compare** the societal impact of participatory research projects across all fields/disciplines?

## Goals

- **Develop a comprehensive Impact Model** detailing how participatory research lead to different changes and, ultimately, societal impact
- **Develop Reflection Instruments** to **evaluate** the societal changes participatory research lead to

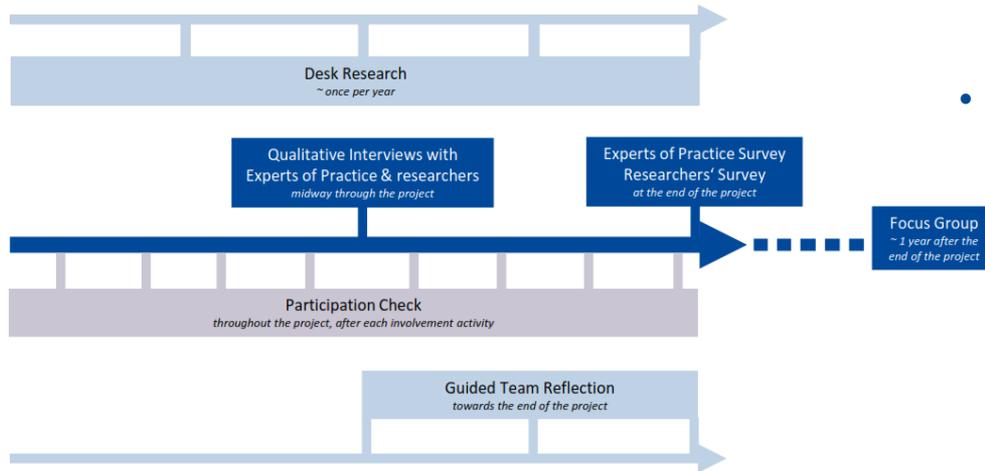


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# Round 1: What did we develop?

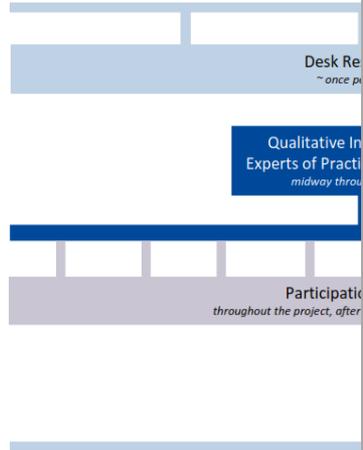
## OIS Reflection Instruments



- **Collecting feedback** on different steps towards societal impact of participatory research methods
- Instruments:
  - Participation check (after every involvement activity)
  - Desk Research (continuous)
  - Qualitative Interviews (Midway through the project)
  - Guided Team Reflection (towards the end of the project)
  - Quantitative Survey (End of the project)
  - Focus groups (1 year after the end of the project)

# Round 1: W

## OIS Reflection Instru



## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH RESEARCHERS

<b>DESCRIPTION:</b>	This is a template for qualitative interviews with Experts of Practice that are meant to be carried out in the first half of the project. Qualitative interviews will give valuable insights in the experience of the involvement process. Besides using the interviews for impact analysis, the results can be used for adapting/improving the project. You can also use the results of the qualitative interviews to identify additional impact areas (to be measured in the survey at the end of the project). Qualitative interviews need to be carried out by a neutral person (no member of the research team or research organization).
<b>TIMELINE:</b>	Mid-way through the project
<b>TARGET GROUP:</b>	Researchers

### [INTERVIEW QUESTIONS]

Question	Goal dimension
1. At first, we'd like to start with a general question: can you briefly explain the topic and goal of the research project in your own words?	
a) What is your role in the project?	
2. OIS Methods aim to involve Experts of Practice in the research process.	
a) In how far is this principle applied to your research in practice? (What formats are used? Who is involved? ...)	
b) What is your role or responsibility in the involvement process?	
c) What were your expectations towards involvement at the beginning? What are your expectations today?	
3. Let's talk about the process of involvement. In how far were Experts of Practice involved in....	
a) ...the development of the vision of the research project (meaning what changes in society or on a higher level the project aims for?	5.3 Shared vision
b) ...the definition of project goals of the research project?	5.4 Shared goals
c) ...the decision on outcome measures of the research project?	5.4 Shared goals

on different steps towards  
participatory research

(after every involvement

continuous)

steps (Midway through the

involvement (towards the end of the

project) (End of the project)

steps after the end of the

Developmental Evaluation in Practice

Magdalena Wailzer | 17.09.2021

# Round 1: Why use DE to develop evaluation tools?

To develop the Impact Model, we used the structure of the **Theory of Change (ToC)**, because...

- ✓ It enables a **co-creative** development to **represent diverse views**:  
Perceptions on the (desired) impact of participatory research may differ across stakeholder groups (e.g. researchers may wish for different societal changes than are relevant for involved public); the ToC allows for all voices to be heard and considered, which makes for a more innovative and comprehensive model.
- ✓ It allows for a **non-biased, bottom-up** approach:  
Rather than top-down suggesting how participatory research leads to societal change and the subsequent risk of bias, the ToC approach allowed us to develop expected pathways to impact from scratch and without one viewpoint dominating over another in the process.
- ✓ It provides a **lose structure** for orientation, yet **flexibility** in developing the contents:  
The input-output-outcome-impact structure enabled stakeholders with very different backgrounds (some had more, some less contact with the topic) to think about the pathways to impact in a structured way, but gave us maximum flexibility on determining the content, i.e. what these changes may be.

# Round 2: How did we use DE?

## Developing the OIS Impact Model

### Workshop I

<i>Stakeholders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Researchers</li><li>• Patients &amp; Public</li><li>• Practitioners</li></ul>	<h3>Workshop II</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decision-makers</li><li>• Funding repr.</li><li>• NGOs/Media</li></ul>
<i>Basis</i>	Several concrete research projects (→personal change)	Meta-, long-term-perspective (→change in political landscape)

„What effect should participatory research methods have?“

- **Brainstorm desired changes** in small groups
- **Structure** and develop **pathways**

Consolidation | Revision | Feedback collection

## Developing the Reflection Instruments

### Workshop III

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Researchers</li><li>• Patients &amp; Public</li><li>• Practitioners</li></ul>
Ongoing participatory research project

„How can we assess the Impact Model?“

- Consider **each change element individually**:
  - (a) How did you see this change unfolding in your research project? Collect examples.
  - (b) How (else) could you assess this? Brainstorm ways/methods.
- Select a change element, build & pre-test evaluation prototype.

# Round 2: DE benefits and challenges in the process

What went well:

- ✓ **The different viewpoints** enabled a **more comprehensive picture and brought up more impact elements to consider in evaluation** than we would have found on our own.
- ✓ **Stakeholder differentiation** when developing a ToC works: though the two workshops to develop the Impact Model were structured differently due to different target groups, their results **complemented each other**, thus providing confirmation to our approach.
- ✓ An **external facilitator to guide the ToC process** from a slightly different field (i.e. no affiliation to any of the stakeholder groups) allowed a less biased approach (outsider view).
- ✓ **Involving non-experts of evaluation in developing evaluation methods** can work with the right translation strategies (see challenges).

# Round 2: DE benefits and challenges in the process

Challenges we encountered:



How to enable a **various stakeholders** with different ties to the topic to speak the same language:  
Solution: Two workshops separated by micro- and macro-stakeholders – the first by using the concrete example of existing participatory research projects they were familiar with, the second a more strategic and political perception. Change elements complemented each other, showing the two different approaches can be combined (though language adaptation is needed).



How can **non-evaluation experts** contribute to **developing evaluation methods** (3<sup>rd</sup> workshop):  
Solution: By asking participants of a research projects for personal examples for each change level, we could deduce ways and methods of assessing these experienced changes without them needing expertise in the field of evaluation. In addition, since assessment methods are deduced from real-life practice examples, they are practical to implement and will likely yield results.



Will evaluation methods developed in such close cooperation with a specific practice example be **transferable/applicable** to other research groups?  
Solution: Though initial reaction is positive, this has yet to be tested...

# Round 3: Reflections on using DE

Contribution to our goal:

- ✓ We received a more **comprehensive** view due to the participation of diverse stakeholders, the enriching discussions and feedback loops, especially refining wording and definitions, led to **in-depth reflections and ultimately deeper understanding** of the topic
- ✓ The DE approach allowed for a highly individualized development while still relying on a well-known, tried and tested structural framework
- ✓ The developed Reflection Instruments and evaluation tools they comprise are thus **based on real-life practice examples**, which will likely make them easier to implement.

# Round 3: Reflections on using DE

Preconditions:



**Mindset:** Consciously letting go of power and control, otherwise you may still dominate the agenda and not benefit from the different mindsets involved in a DE approach. This requires a true understanding and buy-in from all team members and challenges traditional leadership roles.



**Good facilitation:** careful set-up, structure and explanations make or break the process. Excellent facilitation skills are required, an external (expert) facilitator can avoid bias and enable different stakeholders speaking at eye-level.



**Resources and dedication:** it will take time, it will take money, it will take nerves.

# Round 3: Reflections on using DE

## Limitations:



**Resources** (time and money): DE provides many advantages for dynamic processes and projects where several stakeholders need to be considered. However, the implementation costs should be considered carefully. I believe, however, that you may not always need a “100%-or-nothing” strategy: it may make sense to **follow a more practical approach** and **apply certain DE approaches** where your project benefits from them, rather than fully embrace all DE principles in all stages of each project.



The tailored approach in DE makes sense within an impact-oriented project, but makes a **direct comparison of evaluation results across different projects** difficult, meaning comparability and transferability can be impaired.

# Thank you



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