



# Reflection on Impact Pathways

## Experiences with the use of ToC with transdisciplinary projects

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Foto: Lena Wilken, Grafenschaft Bentheim Tourismus e.V.



## For what purposes can ToC be used?

- supporting project teams in impact orientation
- making implicit assumptions about possible impact pathways transparent
- contributing to mutual understanding about intended impacts & prioritisation
- reflecting a) risks of generating non-intended impacts
  - b) the influence the project team has on achieving intended impacts (sphere of control, influence, interest)
  - c) context conditions that must be fulfilled to be able to achieve certain impacts
- creating a) a boundary object as a basis for continuous reflection throughout the project
  - b) a basis für iterative adaptation and monitoring

## At what stages of TDR can ToCs be developed with which functions?

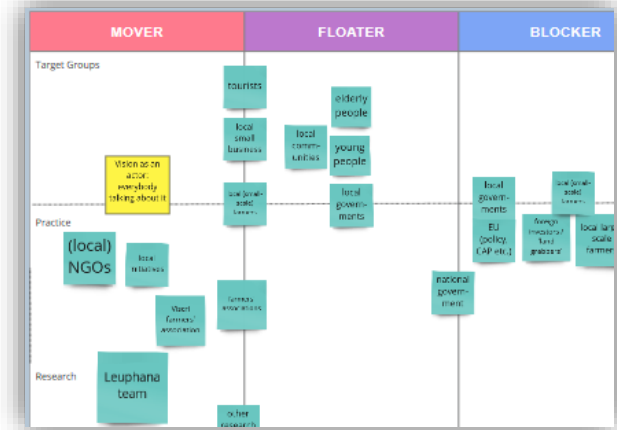
	Ex-ante	In itinere	Ex-post
Mutual understanding about intended and achieved impacts	x	x	x
Reflection about influence of achieving impacts	x	x	x
Reflection about influence of context factors	x	x	x
Reflection about the risk of non-intended impacts	x	x	
Adaptation of research strategy		x	
Monitoring as basis for communication of achieved impacts		x	x

# What is the experience with combining ToC with other methodological elements?

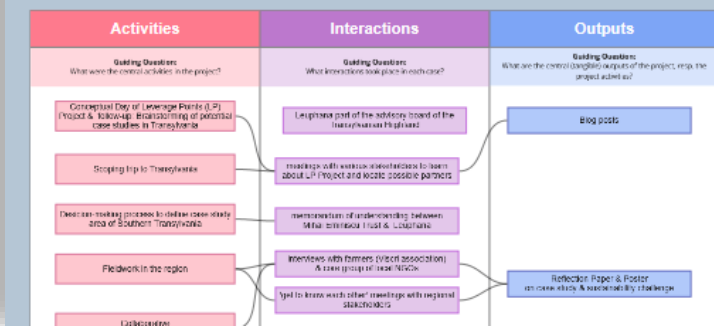
## Actor Analysis

Collecting actors & differentiating in movers, floaters & blockers (based on Eguren Rezolata 2011):

→ helps research team to recall the broad range of actors they are dealing with and their different positions towards the research topic



Collecting building materials: What happened? Activities, interactions and outputs



## Overview about activities, interactions & output

(based on Spaapen & van Drooge 2011)

→ supports the research teams in drawing links between activities, interactions and outputs as basis for impact reflection

- most participants appreciate that the external facilitator prepares drafts to discuss & complement

# What challenges did participants face in developing ToCs & how did they cope with them?

## Format

- appropriate workshop format which allows time for reflection but is not too long  
→ half-day workshop format + consecutive steps developed
- (tentative:) difficult to find suitable level for ToC dev. in projects with several sub-projects

## Wording & visualisation

- ToC figures may be complex & confusing → decompose into several steps & figures
- term „theory of change“ is difficult to understand → not used explicitly
- different ‚languages‘/terminologies → break down/simplify wording

## Strategy & communication

- involvement of practitioners: difficult to communicate use; lack of resources  
→ test involvement via interviews
- (tentative:) communicating use of ex-post impact reflection to projects seems more difficult (added value is seen more clearly by projects that are still at the beginning)

## How can the approach be further developed?

### ...to outline & explain mechanisms & conditions for societal change

- deepen understanding of (project) goals, results & effects as a basis to systematically think about social change processes & make complexity visible
  - continuous work with ToC allows reviewing assumptions & finding explanations

### ...to understand the role of td research projects in transformation processes better

- ToC allows systematical reflections about: To which extent do intended and achieved effects result from the td project's own activities (process & results) or from external factors?
  - more realistic assessment of td research project's effectiveness
  - ,soft' effects (e.g. learning, network formation) can be grasped as essential preconditions for further more tangible effects



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