On-site Workshop/Cluster Meeting: Engaging the public in social-economic change; Dublin, 9th-10th December 2015

Sandra Oliveira
Harm-Jan Fricke
Caroline Vilos
DEAR Support Team
January 2015

This paper ...

... provides a summary overview of the results of work done at the European Commission sponsored workshop meeting held in Dublin, Ireland.

Contents

Purpose, participants and outline programme of the workshop

The workshop brought together 17 staff members and 8 participants from three EC co-funded DEAR projects, together with a European Commission DEAR sector Task Manager. The meeting, which was run as a workshop, considered:

- project experiences of engaging citizens - diverse participants and audiences – in complex economic, social and political change.

On the basis of that consideration the workshop then drew out conclusions of valuable questions, useful for DEAR projects dealing with these issues and in general.

Projects represented at the workshop were invited because their work closely related to the intentions of the workshop, i.e. projects dealing with issues of economic, social and political changes and how the resulting outcomes for engaged audiences can be assessed:

- *'Challenging the Crisis'*: involving IDEA - Irish Development Education Association (IE), and partners Fair Trade Hellas (EL), Solidarity and Cooperation CIPSI (IT), Fondazione Culturale Responsabilita (IT), IMVF (PT), SLOGA – Slovenian NGDO Platform (SI) and Economistas sin Fronteras (ES)
- 'SSEDAS or 'S*ocial & Solidarity Economy as Development Approach for Sustainability*': involving COSPE (IT), and their partners Studies Centre of the University of Bologna (IT), Think Global (UK) and Waterford One World Centre (IE)
- '*Mobilising European citizens to place inequality and tax justice at the heart of the European development agenda*': Action Aid UK (UK), ActionAid Ireland (IE), Oxfam Intermón (ES) and Oxfam Deutschland (DE)

OUTLINE PROGRAMME
1. Introduction to the represented projects, their representatives/staff, and outlining the *intended audiences/participants and* the *change* worked towards by each project;
2. Considerations by participants of what they mean by *'results' of DEAR projects*
3. *Developing questions* that can be asked of DEAR projects:
    a. to find out about the (*change*) *processes* created,
    b. to find out about the *outcome* of work done with audiences/participants;
4. *Application of selected questions* to the three projects represented at the On-site Cluster Meeting;
5. Drawing conclusions from investigations to establish *'what works'* and what might be recommended as *general principles* to bear in mind by DEAR projects aiming to engage citizens in economic, political, social change and DEAR projects in general.

1.   What is meant by 'Results of DEAR Projects'?

Given the key issue to be explored at the workshop (i.e. the projects' experiences of creating change in dealing with complex issues and the resulting outcomes for participants) participants were asked to suggest what they saw as 'results': what do we mean when we say 'Engaging citizens in complex economic/political/social change?'   The following suggestions were noted:

- Democratic participation – empowerment & autonomy of participants
- People taking action and being part of a bigger movement
- Mainstreaming a particular perspective / issue (e.g. one can see the impact on public perceptions through the use of language)
- Continued involvement in other DEAR projects or citizens actions
- Allowing/providing new perspective on the world – making links: ability or disposition of participants to make links
- Within a project: to build a stepping stone for the next projects
- Making connections (between people, ideas etc.)
- Results on policy change – political engagement
- Providing a structure for different interests to come together (e.g. participants, CSOs speaking, policy makers)
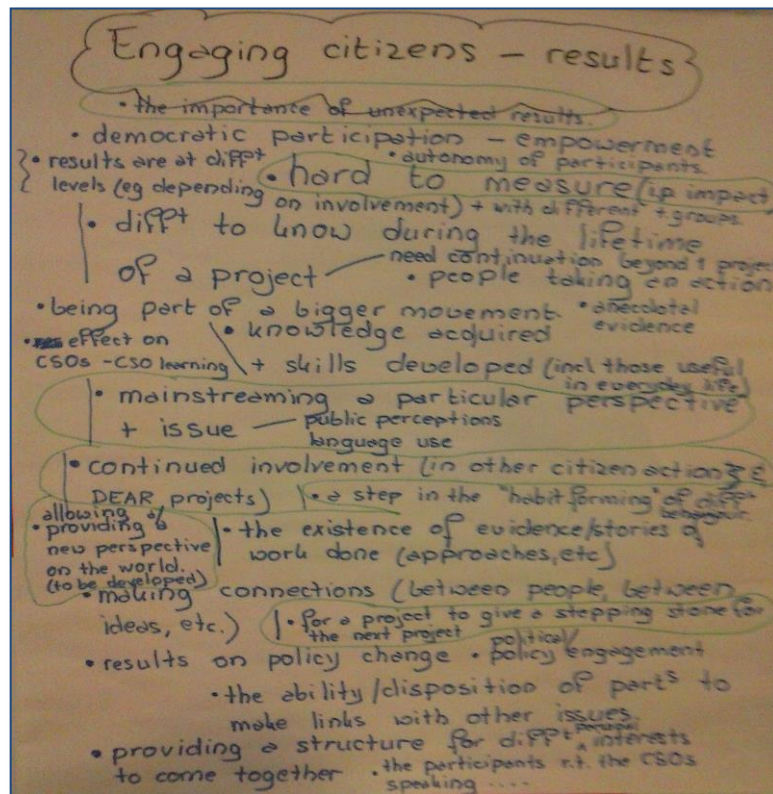
The discussion highlighted some stress points & a few success indicators for DEAR projects:
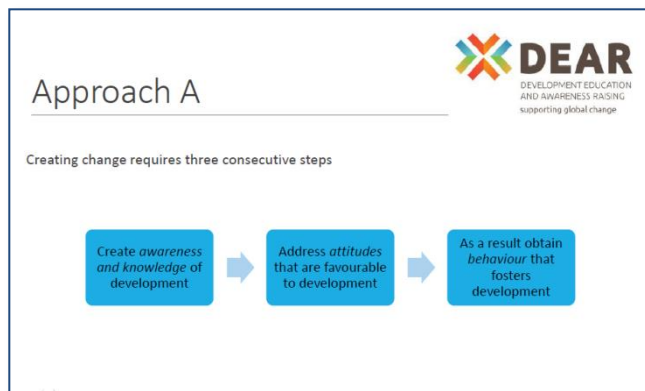
- Results ('impact') are hard to measure – and exist at different levels (e.g. depending on involvement; different groups) and are difficult to acknowledge during the lifetime of project
- Unexpected results are very important – registering anecdotal evidence and stories is therefore important
- Most significant results of DEAR when engaging citizens in complex issues:
  - Impact on public perception and language use
  - Each project being a step for citizen engagement and changing behaviour
  - Ability of participants to make links to global structures and frameworks: opening of new perspectives on the world
  - Each project containing the stepping stone for the next projects

2. Questions to ask

Before investigating the three projects, participants were divided into four groups with two groups each designing questions that could be asked:
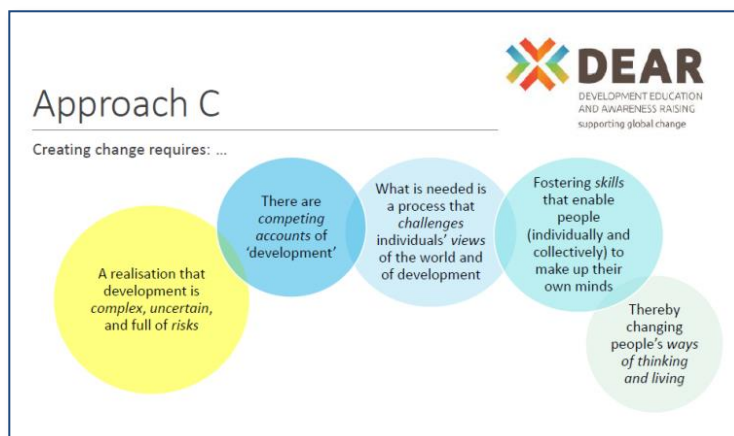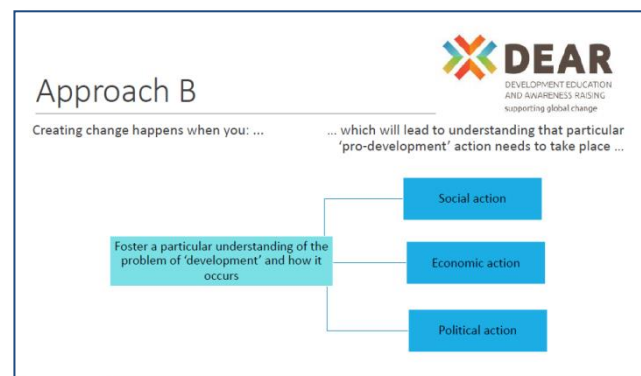
- about the *process of creating change* amongst participants/audiences? (- to find out if a process of creating engagement has been successful: which questions can we ask?)
- about ways of *identifying the change* amongst participants/audiences? (- to find out what the effect of a project has been for its participants/audiences: which questions can we ask?)

As a stimulus participants were reminded of the key results identified the day before (see above) and then introduced to three (summarised/simplified/stereotyped) approaches to how the creation of change can be -and often has been- seen. Each of these approaches may give ideas about different questions that can be asked in respect of the two issues mentioned.

Approach A

Creating change requires three consecutive steps

Create *awareness and knowledge* of development → Address *attitudes* that are favourable to development → As a result obtain *behaviour* that fosters development

The first approach assumes that by educating the public about development issues (by means of creating understanding and 'pro-development' attitudes) behaviour will automatically be changed.

The second approach explains and understands problems of 'development' from a particular (political, social, economic, environmental, educational, communication) perspective. As long as an understanding is developed based on this perspective the assumption is that the public can and will support appropriate actions to overcome the problems.

Approach B

Creating change happens when you: ... ... which will lead to understanding that particular 'pro-development' action needs to take place ...

Foster a particular understanding of the problem of 'development' and how it occurs → Social action / Economic action / Political action

Approach C

Creating change requires: ...

A realisation that development is *complex, uncertain, and full of risks* — There are *competing accounts* of 'development' — What is needed is a process that *challenges* individuals' *views* of the world and of development — Fostering *skills* that enable people (individually and collectively) to make up their own minds — Thereby changing people's *ways of thinking and living*

The third approach starts from the point of view that our understanding of the problem of development (and what prevents and promotes it) is limited and that explanations of this are contested. For the public's contribution to development to succeed it needs individual and collective re-thinking and discussion of existing and new perspectives, enabling people to make up their own minds about what is needed to promote (global and local) development.

Depending on the approach used different questions are likely to be asked when considering the processes of DEAR or its results amongst participants or audiences.

3.   Asking questions …. about process

The two groups that designed questions about process came up with a range of questions which can be grouped into the following categories:

Questions about the PROCESS

BASELINE
- What change is wanted? Based on which analyses?
- Balance between policy change objectives and outreach objectives?

MANAGING AND M&E
- How does the project engage the external evaluator?
- How are the anecdotal and unintended consequences captured?
- How does the project communicate with the funder, for instance about the need for changes in the original proposal?

REFLEXION AND ADAPTATION
- How do project staff reflect on their own role in the project, e.g. regarding power relations vis-à-vis participants?
- Is the NGO the right agent to take ideas forward? How is the NGO and the consortium perceived by different stakeholders and targets? How is the project's funder perceived?
- Have initial plans been reviewed at the start of implementation? (Because projects often start long after the proposals were submitted the context in which the project operates may have changed.)
- What is balance of flexibility and structure?
  - As an NGO/organisation: are they facilitating or directing the project?
  - Partners: does quantity or quality counts?
- How do organisational cultures (of the lead organisation, of partners, of other stakeholders) influence project processes?
- What thought is given to the complementarity of different partner organisations and their different cultures?
- How do the different contexts/countries in which the project works affect the implementation and management of the project?
- How is success seen in different contexts/countries?

PARTICIPATION
- Why have these particular participants become engaged? What are the assumptions that these participants are the right ones?
- What is the motivation of participants to engage with the project?
- What are the barriers to engagement?
- Do participants know they are engaged in the project?
- How are participants involved/engaged in the project? How is engagement/involvement defined? Are there different levels of engagement?
- Is involvement/engagement a one-off or a process for participants?

4.   Asking questions …. about identifying change for participants

Two further groups focussed on developing questions that would help to identify change created by a project. Their suggestions are shown below [grouped under three headings]:
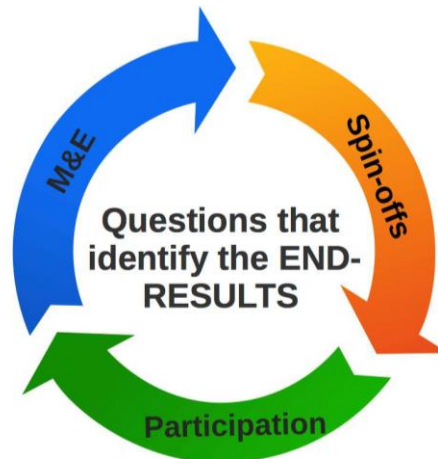
M&E
- How do we get evidence about the results of the project from participants?
- Where is the effect seen?
- How do you know the project work gave result X?

PARTICIPATION
- How and why did participants become involved?
- Are there different groups of participants?
- Was participation seen as primarily quantitative (e.g. the number of people involved) or qualitative (e.g. the level of understanding, skills, action by participants)?
- How have the participants engaged and how did they want to engage (before, during the 'journey', after)?
- How has the work of the project changed because of participant feedback and input?
- Are participants involved after the project ends?
- What has changed for the participants? E.g. Level of awareness (before and after the project)? Critical thinking? Knowledge? Skills? Their role in their society?
- How do participants connect their learning to global contexts?

SPIN-OFFS
- Have participants spread engagement beyond the project?
- Have there been actions after exposure to the project?
- Have new partnerships been created, or new structures or networks?
- What approaches do participants use in their own context/outside the project?

5.   Obtaining answers from the 'Challenging the Crisis' project

From the lists of questions identified above participants were asked to each select those which they would like to ask of the three projects represented at the workshop. Three groups interviewed different staff members and participants of the Challenging the Crisis project.

'Challenging the Crisis' main aim was to contribute to a more just and sustainable world by raising awareness of and support for international sustainable development policies, and empowering EU citizens as advocates for global justice and international development, despite austerity measures at home.

Questions asked	Answers given:
Baseline - What change is wanted? Based on which analyses? - Balance between policy and outreach objectives?	To advocate for a European Year of Social and Solidarity Economy – to start a movement for this – to raise public awareness of social and solidarity economy and start building a movement in support of such a Year
Management and M&E -How the evaluator was involved? - How did implementation differ in different contexts/countries and how was that evaluated?	Evaluator involved at beginning; M&E planning at all stages; meetings and Skypes Assuming this difference and capitalising on partners experience and information
Reflexion & Adaptation - Adaptation at start? - How the project implemented differently in different contexts/countries?	Shortly after signing the contract the EC discovered that a key feature of the project's planned actions (1 million petition to take the Year issue to the European Parliament) was incompatible with EC rules. For 6 months nothing happened on this issue and the project had to change its mobilisation approach, advocacy officer was hired, and a revised objective (and process) was agreed

Participation
What makes the chosen participants the right people?
	Different target groups (stakeholders: media + governments + Universities & journalism students) but main focus on 1 target: young adults 18-30, reached through DE & critical thinking. Three axes:
	- Recruitment
	   • Each country had its own approach and
	   • Portugal: an open application process followed by 18 Young Global Ambassadors (YGA) trained and involved ; Italy: engaged participants through 3 seminars; Greece: engaged participants through seminars & advocacy/campaigning events; Slovakia: engaged participants through contacts with universities & youth groups
	   • Also recruitment through networks of DE/Youth
	- Empowerment, for example through a joint (cross-country) Global Youth Forum where external facilitation enabled young people to work out ideas
	- Autonomy –partners/staff enabled YGAs, giving structure and leadership, but allowing young people their own voice & responsibility - 'youth led'

How engagement is defined?	Engagement changed through the process
	   • YGAs were first a target group but evolved into active agents
	Approaches:
	   • Research – strategy for SSE campaign
	   • Raising awareness – spreading the word
	   • Influence – policy makers & MEPs

How are participants engaged post-project (what do YGAs think?)	The campaign continues after the project: can Youth make 2018 EU Year of Social and Solidarity Economy? In IE discussion; in SI – may look for more funding to continue support.

THE CHANGE IDENTIFIED:

Spin-offs - Have participants spread engagement beyond the project?	• Training of journalism students: no results yet (early stage) – sowing seeds with issues like FT • Problem: retention of young people

6.   Obtaining answers from the SSEDAS project

Three groups interviewed different staff members and participants of the SSEDAS project.

'Social & Solidarity Economy as Development Approach for Sustainability' project fosters '...public awareness of European citizens on linkage between Social and Solidarity Economy and fight against poverty will be raised'

THE PROCESS:

Questions asked	Answers given:
Baseline What change was envisaged/wanted?	An awareness raising campaign, to show that it is possible to change the economic paradigm by showcasing different case studies of SSE – 'real life stories', testimonies etc. > show that another economic model exists, in Europe and globally (e.g. from MZ, Brazil etc.) - sharing skills (e.g. Local action groups) and mapping the 26 countries/46 territories SSE Building bridges, promoting joint work and synergies between SSE orgs and DEAR orgs by showing both types of orgs are waking up for overarching goals > 'create a more just and sustainable world'
Management and M&E What have been/are the main challenges?	Three year project – now end of year 1, there are delays, problems working with too many partners, and no new networks, just the SSE actors – need to meet more often and consider ways to deal with size
How to evaluate different contexts?	Assume and integrate this change, to capitalise that diverse experience and information
Reflexion and adaptation Role: directing or facilitating?	Depends on context: in some countries where there are already organisations working the topic and leading the way, SSEDAS partners only facilitate and support – making bridges between partners in Europe and global 'south' / as well as SSE networks and NGOs
Participation Who is your target?	3 main groups (depending on territory): Direct SSE actors; Universities, researchers working on SSE; external targets as LA, National Parliaments and EP + citizens in general
What engagement is expected?	- SSE actors: mutual learning and empowerment (by training) + engagement in advocacy process - Universities&researchers: create partnerships involving SSE & NGO players + disseminate SSE ideas + build capacities in SSE - Citizens: involve in SSE + buying SSE products&services + critical thinking on economic system
How is engagement created?	Through interviews / questionnaires – raises difficulties: cultural differences and concepts are not known > explaining economy Through video – AR, showing/endorsing best practices Overarching – MEPs to take best practices forward

THE CHANGE IDENTIFIED

M&E Where is the effect (success) seen?	Different culturally in different countries: can be local policy to develop SSE; can be in media how we can reach the public Barrier: different understandings of SSE > new staff, new challenges

7.   Obtaining answers from the 'Mobilising European citizens to place tax justice…' project

The remaining three groups interviewed different staff members and participants of the 'Mobilising European citizens to place tax justice…' project.

> The project 'Mobilising European citizens to place inequality and tax justice at the heart of the European development agenda', fosters '... EU citizens' critical understanding and active engagement, in pan-European efforts towards progressive and equitable reform of global tax policies'.

THE PROCESS:

Questions asked	Answers given:
Reflexion and adaptation How was advocacy at national levels implemented differently in different contexts/countries?	Campaign need to agree on some consistent/ coherent messaging – but asks/focus can change at national level; is difficult to get agreement, because of national context, NGOs priorities, policy staff understanding. Primary focus: national advocacy & autonomy but: common messages, because are stronger
Role: directing or facilitating?	Depends on context: in Hungary we are directing; in Denmark it is more facilitating : frameworks + choice But: certainly difficult to communicate within logframe!
Participation Who do you want to engage with?	Primary audience: 18-30 years old – young people: on social media, attending festivals, engaged in CSOs – why: Bottom up through young people can make a difference. They can make pressure in numbers to decision makers. They are 15 million to reach. Further: journalists; political parties & MEPs; opinion makers eg. bloggers, leading economists
How is engagement defined?	- 3 levels of action: Low - Festival etc. handing out leaflets and information; Medium - Attending an event and getting people to sign a petition; High: Training of trainers > Use the training as a building point. Young people gain lots of skills during this project and is often not measured or considered as part of the success of the project.
How does the project's work link with target groups?	Inform policy makers about work with other targets; have lots of petitions (online/e-mail) > not clear how powerful those are > what else can we do?; have small activist groups (in UK) to meet politicians; do publicity stunts by NGO staff and activists
What are the approaches?	Depends on countries, but: • mostly face-to-face and events • 3 political goals (eg. in run-up to general elections) • FFD conference: specifically ask for UN to have aglobal tax body • Transparency: country reports • Volunteers in Denmark: publicity stunts eg. cleaning windows of banks
Barriers to engagement?	- Young people studying/working: volunteering can be difficult to foster, for eg. in Latvia; there can be expectations of pay; geography factors influence (mostly capitals, rural areas are hard to target); commitments/friendships/communities
Needs for engagement?	- See results; foster friendships/communities that make the over 30's people engage every weekend; face-to-face

	actions, festivals etc.; support previously made networks?; Communicate (Newsletter, social networks); Try to reach different audiences and get creative at engaging, even politicians (eg. Oxfam Bus tours) Foster actions: some coordinated, some independent; Make Training of Trainers (1 week long; school for activists/multipliers; define commitment; establish networks – and have overarching policy goals
How to work with orgs dealing with the same issue?	- Via Eurodad: European Tax Justice Network who try to coordinate some work; Tax justice is very new issue in Eastern & Central Europe, so they created a group of 6 CEE countries to exchange practices
How do participants make global link/to global dev?	• 'Activista': helps sometime make the link; Action Aid produces case studies • Eurodad made Training of trainers on exploring global links • Denmark is difficult: people tend to focus on 'West - But people do get angry about unfair tax systems & impact on 'Global South' • In Hungary theres is no strong story of development – there's the need to make the link for people • Entry point for people tends to be inequality – and an unfair tax system which affects all. Solutions: common and global • Different projects make, for eg. Workshops at schools to raise awareness on consumerism • But: need baseline to start; a 'laboratory approach' to check our campaign strategies; eg. Take micro-samples of people we engage with throughout the project
How work of orgs change due to project change/results?	Too early to know (end of year 1 for this project) but Civil Society dealing with tax justice really changed, and partially was because of previous Eurodad project (before, only DEMNT*ET was active). Good interagency coop Oxfam<>Action Aid – not common

THE CHANGE IDENTIFIED

M&E How is success seen in different countries/contexts?	Different in each country. For example in Latvia to be an active citizen for youth is very new, youth in Latvia are not respected and for them it is very hard to be heard.
Spin-offs - Have participants spread engagement beyond the project/New structures exist/broader networks?	Volunteer groups 'Activista' (of Action Aid) can continue beyond the project/other campaigns

8. Conclusions

From the discussions and investigations participants to the workshop drew a number of conclusions in the form of recommendations which are suggested as useful not only when designing a DEAR project, but for reflexion at the start, during implementation and when monitoring and evaluating project results.

Intentions

- Re-evaluate your plans at the start of the project
- Assessment of the problem that the project tries to adress – what's the evidence/need and realismthat plans will succeed?

Participants and others

- Is the project directing or facilitating? And how does this affect sustainability of ideas/results?
- Role of CSOs/orgs; role of participants; support of the organisation culture etc.
- Engage the partners before engaging the public – assess, develop, share, stimulate their motivation, commitment, responsibility

Implementation

- Ways of working that fit with what (exemplify) what the project wants to achieve
- Meet people where they 'are at '- not where you/the project organisations 'are at'
- How the project implemented differently in different countries/contexts
- How this diversity/complexity was incorporated in the project

Follow up

- How do the ideas and experiences of the project lead to further work by the partner organisations?
- How will project participants be supported post-project?