Change-scape Theory: Applications in participatory practice

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Introduction

This chapter first introduces a Change-scape framework that was developed through re-visiting participatory processes with children and young people in the UK and Nepal (Johnson 2010, 2010b, 2011). This Change-scape represents the connections between cultural, political and physical context and children and young people's participation, and highlights the importance of their interaction with different stakeholders including their peers, adults in local communities and local decision-makers. Ideas from this theoretical framework have been transferred into practice in training and application of children and young people's participation in Peru, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone (*Johnson et al.* 2013) and learning from these processes is shared in this paper.

The three main mechanisms that are discussed in this chapter in the context of the application of the Change-scape in practice are as follows:
1. Communication and collaboration between adults and children involved in participatory processes is key to long lasting change. In different cultural and political contexts, there may be different mechanisms to encourage communication that in turn shifts adult attitudes towards children's roles and power dynamics.
2. In order to include different children who may have different perceptions of their identity and have varying interest in participating, spaces for their participation will need to be considered.
3. Continuity and sustainability may be achieved through capacity building of staff and adults in the community as well as children who want to be involved. 'Champions for children' can help to energize and sustain more meaningful participation and action.
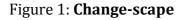
Background: Change-scape theory

The Change-scape is based on linking children to their context and raising issues of power and spaces for participation as important in processes of children and young people's participation. The mechanisms that help to link children to their context are: improved communication and collaboration between children and adults involved in the processes, including those in positions of power making decision; recognizing the power dynamics and spaces that exist and can be created for children's participation; ensuring there is adequate capacity building, and that champions for children's participation are identified. Mechanisms that lead to children and young people's participation becoming more meaningful in participatory processes can achieve more sustainable change and transformation for children and organisations working to improve their lives.
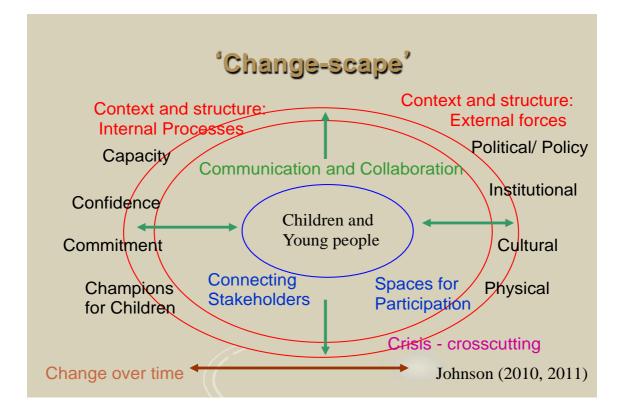
This Change-scape was developed through case study research, revisiting participatory processes in Nepal and the UK to understand where, when and how children and young people's perceptions and evidence had been taken seriously and whether this had led to transformational change on an individual, organizational or societal level. In different contexts, change for children and young people and for organisations was examined, and conditions for change understood more fully. Even at a societal level, with adequate support and continued commitment from different stakeholders, there was found to be significant shifts in attitudes and behaviour of adults and decision-makers towards children under specific circumstances. Lessons were drawn from the case studies visited in non-governmental and government organisations in Nepal and the UK and the Change-scape was formulated using the following theoretical perspectives. The Change-scape has continued to develop with application in different field situations.

Vygotsky placed child development in the context of broader social and cultural interactions taking into account their social relations and sense of self, and how these are shaped by complex belief systems, attitudes towards children and their development: the child's relationship with others able to 'guide and scaffold their learning' (Woodhead and Montgomery 2003, p113). It is this acknowledgement of context and more specifically social relationships, sense of self and complexity of belief systems that govern how children learn that have been integrated into the Change-scape. Consideration of the context, for example the political and structural dimensions of change, needs to be considered in participatory processes with children and ultimately improving children's wellbeing.

The 'change-scape' was constructed using cultural- and socio-ecological theories following Vygotsky that connect children to their context over time (specifically Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2005, Tudge 2008). Children are connected to different significant other players in a particular context through bi-directional proximal processes, discussed in the work of Vygotsky (early 20th century) and Bronfenbrenner (1979). In the Change-scape the children and young people are therefore affected by their context, but there is also recognition that they can change their context – this is represented by two-way arrows on the Change-scape. Although recent socio-ecological theories do not place children at the centre, but connect children to processes, context and time in a more fluid and organic way (Bronfenbrenner 2005, Tudge and Hogan 2005), I have placed children and young people as central, thus highlighting their importance and the imperative for their centrality in decision-making processes that affect their lives, that fits with rights-based approaches. In many ways the visual of children at the centre is also easier for many organizations to take on board.

Children and young people at the centre of the Change-scape includes their identity, inclusion and interest in participatory processes. In the original construction of the Change-scape the identity and interest of children was specified, but as the framework has developed inclusion has been added as an important additional concept when considering how to include different children

and young people in processes. How children construct their identity is an important starting point for inclusive children's participation (also see Mannion 2010). There are structural determinants of inequality that intersect and mean that different children of different age, gender, ethnicity/ caste, religion etc. are included in society and in decision-making processes in different ways. Local power dynamics are key to understanding how different children may participate and what their interest in a process may be. It is an ethical issue whether children take up their right to participate and they need to be given the space to opt out of participatory processes with dignity.

Figure 1: **Change-scape**

The importance of the changing political economy and analysis of cultural beliefs and institutional context arose from the case study research as key driving forces for, or barriers to, local change to improve children's wellbeing. Different levels of resources and continued support or commitment to children's agency also made a difference to changing attitudes and aspirations amongst children and adults. Mechanisms or strategies of communication and collaboration between different stakeholders and the creation of better spaces for children's participation, determined the extent to which decision-makers valued (or did not value) children's evidence in decisions. A 'Change-scape' framework (see figure 1) was created in order to analyse this relationship between context and process. Concepts of critical realism and real world research (e.g. Robson 2002) helped to understand how context could link to processes and how different mechanisms could translate outcomes into action that could be positive for children and young people.

The case study research carried out in Nepal and the UK that led to the construction of the 'Change-scape' provided evidence showing the way in which children participate can change the context in which they live. The extent of this change depends on how different stakeholders, including adults in communities, are involved in the process. Creating or using existing participatory spaces that encourage participation and dialogue while employing mechanisms for communication and collaborative approaches can shift power dynamics, lead to a better understanding of children's lives, and change attitudes and behaviour. This has parallels with Corsaro's (1992) interpretive reproduction in children's peer cultures.

The following sections of the chapter draw on both experiences from the case study research and the application of the Change-scape theory in practice in working with local partners of an international children's charity called ChildHope UK, in Ethiopia, Peru and Sierra Leone.

Communication and collaboration between adults and children

Working *with,* rather than *for* children, that is treating children as active participants rather than recipients of interventions and action, requires shifts in attitudes from those in positions of power. This may become even more profound as children take on different roles in participatory processes, as leaders and designers of research and learning. One of the core principles of participatory appraisal training and learning is to change attitudes and behavior of those people in communities who hold power (for example Kumar 1996). If policy and practice does not change, including financial and human resource policy and implementation, then children and young people's participation may be tokenistic.

Examples from the case study research in Nepal and the UK showed that the level of involvement that children had in the form of dialogue with service providers and decision-makers made a difference to how their contributions were valued. Sometimes shifts in cultural, political and institutional power dynamics were too great to change the minds of all of those decision-makers involved and children's perspectives merely satisfied central government or donor requirements to consult. Mechanisms or strategies of increased communication and dialogue, and being creative about the different spaces for participation in communities and institutions, however, started to shift some of the preconceived ideas about the capabilities and roles of girls, boys, young women and men, and to change some of the minds of people of positions of power.

Processes carried out in Ethiopia, Peru and Sierra Leone therefore prioritized increasing communication between people that may be involved in changing children's lives locally. Training and workshops created spaces where children and adults worked together to discuss barriers and facilitators for children and young people's participation in their local communities and to develop a local action plan. Any of these training workshops were also seen as integrated into a process of longer term learning, changing institutional policies

and challenging attitudes of staff and adult volunteers within the communities. Children's participation was also therefore examined within an organisation's theory of change and ongoing organizational development. In creating constructive training in children's participation, we may also need to shift our understanding of pedagogy, drawing on UNESCO's pillars, from 'learning to know', to also 'learning how to be, do, and live together' (Thomson *et al.* 2012). If training involves staff, adults and decision-makers from the community as well as children, then preconceptions about children's capabilities and roles can be confronted and challenged. Training needs to address how local realities and action planning are embedded in cultural contexts and how children's participation can seek to transform not only individuals and organizations, but also attitudes and beliefs about children in broader society.

To encourage deeper thinking about children and young people's participation, staff in an organization can be involved in creating a change in attitudes towards children and young people and in creating more dialogue between adults and children in communities. Children and young people's participation training in ChildHope UK involved running a five-day workshop on understanding children and young people's participation and local action planning with children, teachers, social workers and community child rights advocates (see Johnson *et al.* 2013). Experienced local facilitators were trained as trainers so that training could be rolled out more broadly and children and young people's participation considered throughout the organization over time.

Rather than assuming that children and young people are homogenous, their identity, inclusion and interest, as suggested in the Change-scape, was taken into account to ensure that the most marginalized were reached in training, action planning and ongoing participatory work in communities. As children and young people's participation has become more visible or popular in broader international social development processes, in order to achieve meaningful outcomes for children, power dynamics evident in different contexts need to be recognised and addressed. Challenges may relate to broader contexts, including how to convince those people in positions of power to go beyond tokenism in children's participation, build on dialogical approaches, and encourage innovative and flexible participatory processes with children and young people.

Comparisons have been made linking the movement of 'women in development' to gender studies. Similarly the invisibilisation of children in science and social science can be seen in first recognising children as a separate group in childhood studies, and then the emerging recognition that there needs to be a more relational understanding of childhood and age (Alanen 2005). Interestingly, in training processes in Africa where children's participation was taken seriously and age sensitively was gradually addressed, the issue of including adult women in the training and action planning workshops had to also be addressed to ensure gender and age sensitivity in participatory processes. Ongoing awareness of how to address age and generation in broader participatory development processes needs to be considered so that child rights are not assumed to be addressed through only consulting and working with

adults in communities.

Creating participatory spaces for inclusion

Participatory spaces can encompass going out to where children and young people are rather than expecting them to enter more adult orientated spaces, also creating new spaces for participation that are child/ young person friendly and promote dialogue with adults in communities and decision-makers (for example, Cornwall 2004, Kesby 2005). Children's participation training can also build on ideas from Chambers (1983) in terms of moving away from development tourism, or White and Choudhury's (2007) analysis that suggests going out to where children are so that action planning with children is carried out on their terms and in their contexts. Therefore training workshops run by ChildHope were held within communities and local children were given space to build their confidence to work with local adults and decision-makers from the community. This process took time and different visual methods and games were employed to ensure that workshops were relevant but fun.

Examples of participatory spaces and dialogue encouraged in the case studies in Nepal and the UK included:

- Peer groups in which issues were discussed and action planned and evaluated;
- Reference groups of service providers who are educated about children's involvement and evidence
- Showcases and visits of service providers and decision-makers to interact with children including presentation using different media
- Informal lunches and networking events to stimulate dialogue between stakeholders including children and young people
- Feedback and dialogue sessions including children's clubs which may be supported by adults but run by children
- Supportive relationships such as mentoring provided by adults that can support children and young people when needed

Examples of creating participatory spaces in the workshop trainings in Ethiopia, Peru and Sierra Leone were: children working together on analysis; children taking adults out on guided walks; using skits and role plays to show different scenarios and power dynamics; co-constructing physical maps and photos of safe and unsafe areas for children for example, where children's knowledge was shown to be vital to create the map. Local adults were often surprised by the degree of competency shown by children and young people. However, children, sometimes boys and girls separately, needed to work in separate groups on some issues to build up their confidence and ideas and to decide what and how they presented these to adults.

The idea of creating spaces for children in ongoing action planning was addressed in a training workshop held with children and adults from the local community, teachers and staff, working with a Sierra Leonean organization 'Streetchild of Sierra Leone'. Child clubs were seen as one way of allowing

children space to work together, although these will also need to be monitored to see how seriously children's views are taken. Natasha Kwakwa Tesfai talks about what happened after one of the training workshops in Sierra Leone.

"The outcomes of initial community training with children, adults, teachers and staff, carried out for Street Child of Sierra Leone, are demonstrated by the increased activity of 'kids clubs' which have been set up in 17 schools, involving over 1000 children. Children in these clubs have set their priorities for involvement in decision-making in the school and home environment, including more autonomy to elect school prefects, more consultation over next-level school choices and the space to plan and carry out their own child rights advocacy. As part of a wider programme that involves reunification and the reinsertion in school of street-connected children. 'Kids clubs' members have reduced stigma and discrimination against children who have lived in the street or teenage mothers who have come back to school by organising debates and discussions on the topics and counseling peers. Children in these clubs have been pivotal in championing not only child rights, but also children's responsibilities that go with rights, responding to tensions between traditional leaders and children, who complain of a loss of respect for elders. The challenges that the local organisation now faces are adapting ways of working, and securing resources to ensure that children participate in planning, implementing and monitoring activities that affect them."

Children and adults facilitating children in Sierra Leone

Being immersed in participatory processes in ongoing interventions in Peru, one of the young women from the Andes region had the confidence to share her experiences with young people from the UK in an international conference on children's participation, and many participants commented on how profound her contribution was to their thinking about participation in different parts of the world. One of the young people, Zoraida Mamani Rosado,

aged 19, discusses her experiences of participating in the conference: Children, Young People and Adults: Extending the Conversation, Preston, UK, 2012.[1]

"Personally I feel very motivated because the conference was led by children... or young people. It was impressive to see how kind, participatory and respectful they all were. I loved the way they welcomed me. I struggled a bit in communicating with them due to the language barrier, but I felt more relaxed with the presence of the translator and felt even happier and prouder of being the only

I liked all the experiences that each of the young people shared with us, but what struck me more profoundly was the way they were paying attention to my own experiences, and the realities my country suffers. They showed interest and appreciation for what I had to say and who I am..... I believe that keeping silence is not the way to solve problems; on the contrary it is through conversation and exchange of ideas that problems in every country can be solved. I hope the other participants take with them everything that I said, as I am taking with me some great moments and the experiences they shared with me."

Capacity building and champions for children

Commitment and capacity of decision- and policy-makers can increase as confidence in children and young people's participation grows and their evidence is seen to be meaningful and worthwhile. For example, in one of the case studies revisited in the UK, members of the scheme's partnership board were divided in opinion about the value of children's evidence in evaluation until some of the members of the board saw that children offered a fresh perspective. With children's rigorous presentation of visual and audio evidence to back up the external evaluators evidence, board members and service providers became more convinced of the value of children's input. Some of the service providers said that they needed to be convinced as they learnt new visual approaches and methods that helped them interact with children and their families in a meaningful way. Consequently some changed the way in which their service was delivered to incorporate the views of girls and boys who were at the receiving end of their programme. Evidence was collected in the case study research of changes of services and allocation of resources made on the basis of children's input to participatory evaluation processes. This process of moving from just capturing children's pictures, stories and quotes to influencing decision-making can be helped along by 'champions for children'. In the UK this proved to be mentors, senior members of partnership boards and heads of services; in Nepal, managers and researchers, and in one of the villages, a child member of the childclub who motivated peers to work with adults in their community in an innovative and structured way. He is now a local journalist.

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[1] This conference is linked to this publication and video footage of the young women refereed to can can be found on the publications website http://www.dvigc.com

In Ethiopia, a local organization called CHADET (Organisation for Child Development and Transformation) identified that their work with girls migrating into cities from rural areas needed to be more sensitive to their participation. They were willing to understand how their organization may need to change in order to do this. This process was encouraged and supported by Comic Relief who had recognized children's participation as one of CHADET's core organizational development goals. Allan Kiwanuka discusses the longer-term implications of training with children, adults and staff from a local community in Arsela in Ethiopia:

"Building on initial training on children and young people's participation run by Vicky, the Organisation for Child Development and Transformation (CHADET - ChildHope's partner organisation in Ethiopia), organised a training of trainers in children's participation for an additional 70 staff from its Wolliso, Kombolcha and Debre Tabor project sites. It also developed an organisational Guideline on Children's Participation that includes children and adults from communities in community training including action planning to encourage children's participation in community decision-making.

CHADET is an organization working to improve the lives of girls migrating to cities from remote rural locations and have increased emphasis on children's involvement in identifying new project beneficiaries. Nearly 1,600 vulnerable out-of-school girls were identified by their peers, who are members of girls' school clubs supported by CHADET and have now been supported to resume school. These girls' clubs have played a key role in annulling arranged marriages for 52 girls with support of teachers and local child protection committees. The girls sent teams to parents, negotiated and convinced them to allow their peers to resume education. Some girls' clubs have amended their club laws to allow some boys to participate in their clubs because they say they need male actors during community awareness activities.

Children's voices in project planning, monitoring and budgeting is also increasing. Two children's project management committees have been created at Kombolcha and Debra Tabor Woredas to ensure children's perspectives inform CHADET's field teams. They reviewed and made recommendations on CHADET's 2012 annual plan and budget. While disseminating results of a qualitative baseline survey carried out by CHADET in Debra Tabor (March 2012), the researcher reported that one child was forced to run away from home to streets after stealing nearly £2,900 from home. The children unanimously queried credibility of this finding because according to them: "no household in our village has such large sums of money"."

Sharing knowledge and new ways of thinking about inclusion, rights, power, cultural and political context and participation need to underpin any children and young people's participation training. As discussed below, a range of models and theoretical frameworks can be discussed both with staff and facilitators planning training in local communities and with children and young people. Providing a range of theoretical inputs and frameworks allows facilitators in training of training sessions to select the aspects that will best suit

their ongoing and longer term participatory work and context, thus giving more chance of long term sustainable change. It is also critical that training and 'training of trainers' processes allow facilitators and participants the space to develop their own frameworks and models of participation.

During training of trainer sessions in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Peru, frameworks and concepts were discussed and debated for their relevance to the local organization, the context and the type of training that staff wanted to deliver in communities. In Sierra Leone, staff discussed a range of concepts for their local trainings with staff, teachers, community adults and children. They wanted to include concepts from Berry Mayall's work (for example 2002) on power dynamics between children and adults, and Mary Kellet's work (for example, 2004) on children as researchers. A simple spectrum to consider whether we are working *for* children, *with* children, or whether processes are carried out *by* children, was found to be useful across all training programmes.

In Ethiopia, a workshop was run with orphans and vulnerable children as well as *Idir* (funeral society) leaders who have started to provide services for children. Facilitators chose to illustrate Hart's (1992) ladder of participation with different international and local examples of participatory processes. They drew out issues of whether children had, or had not, initiated participatory processes into a participatory exercise with the group. The Change-scape was also used to explore what people locally mean by 'a child' or 'a young person', their identity, inclusion and interest in the processes of participation. Participants analysed the relevance of local cultural, political and institutional features of context that facilitate or hinder children and young people's participation.

Peruvian children suggested that theoretical input was necessary for them to understand fully the concept of children's participation and take ideas to their peers in order to put their training into practice. Peruvian colleagues also presented their own model of children's participation, discussed how models fitted together, and how one could modify ideas depending on practice and the different frameworks and concepts presented. Training can therefore start with a realization that children and young people can engage in theoretical discussion.

"Presenting and discussing complex or abstract theories around children and young people's participation in a manner that is accessible and interesting for young people themselves was a challenging but necessary part of the training. Peruvian young people said that theories helped them to understand the ideas behind the issues in children's participation and essentially this would help them to pass on the knowledge they had learned to their peers. For them to gain full understanding of the theories, it was not enough to simply present and discuss them, it was essential to find innovate ways of exploring theories and to explain them in simple and accessible language with which diverse groups of participants can engage. By using dynamic and inclusive techniques to explore theories, children and young people can not only learn about different existing theories, but can text theories based on their own experiences and contexts".
Esther Ojulari, previously partnerships and programmes officer for ChildHope UK.

Principles of participatory training, sharing, and immersion have been advocated through participatory learning and action processes over the years. Children and young people's participation needs a dual approach in encouraging flexibility and 'relaxed' use of participatory approaches and methodologies, following Robert Chambers (for example, 1992, updated in 2011), while ensuring there is a safe and participatory space for the engagement of children and young people with each other, and in dialogue with adults and decision-makers in communities. Moving on from the debates in the early 2000s about the juxtaposition of child participation OR protection, safety and ethics have more recently been seen as going hand-in-hand with participation by many national organisations, INGOs, donors, and academic researchers. Many organisations working in participatory ways with children and young people have developed child protection policies and procedures to dealing with issues of abuse and disclosure. Applying ethical protocols is an important aspect of rights-based research (Beazley and Ennew 2006).

Conclusions: Children at the centre of change

In order to achieve meaningful children and young people's participation, their evidence needs to be taken seriously and recognised by decision-makers including local adults in their families and communities. In turn decision-makers need to be convinced that children and young people can contribute to improving services and interventions intended to improve children's futures. Children and young people's right to participate therefore needs to be respected. In order to translate the rhetoric of rights into practice in a broad range of contexts as discussed in the 'Change-scape' presented in this chapter, participatory processes can seek to support strong mechanisms or strategies of communication and collaboration, creating participatory spaces and addressing local power dynamics, both within and outside organizational settings. Processes of capacity building and identifying 'champions for children' can help to sustain interest, enthusiasm and belief in children and young people's capabilities.

In terms of progressing to systematically include generation and age analysis into the children's participation agenda, the following lessons are drawn from the interviews with children, researchers and managers in Nepal and the UK. Children's participation can lead to lasting positive changes in their lives and circumstances, and can avoid unintended negative consequences. Children can be both participants and/or facilitators of participatory planning and evaluation and, given responsive and child or youth friendly support such as mentoring, they can become more empowered as the process progresses. The involvement of other stakeholders in the participatory process should be encouraged from an early stage and continued throughout the process as confidence in children's participation amongst adults can grow, thus shifting local adult-child and institutional power relationships as a key to lasting change.

> *Gradually the awareness is growing in the global community about*
> *the valuable input that children can make and people can no longer*

deny the importance of their participation.

(Researcher from Nepal)

These mechanisms have been reinforced and added to through applying the Change-scape theory in training in Ethiopia, Peru and Sierra Leone. The following additional learning has been applied during these processes. Firstly, that in creating spaces for dialogue between community adults and children, children and young people still need separate spaces in order to build their confidence and to interact with decision-makers. Local adult women also need to be included, otherwise decision-makers in the community may only be identified as men and important gender power dynamics will be missed. Boys, girls, young men and women may need to work separately as well as together to bring out different issues that may affect their lives. Issues of difference such as dis/ability, ethnicity and religion also need to be considered in children's identity and inclusion in participatory processes. Child clubs that may be creating in ongoing participatory action in communities need to continue to take power dynamics between children and with adults into account. This will take resources and time in order to achieve lasting change. Organisations will also have to review policies to support children and young people's participation. As capacity is built and staff and decision-makers become aware of the value of children and young people's input and of their capability and innovative ideas, then trust in their evidence and roles in participatory processes can grow.

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