

Sharing our underlying theoretical frameworks in the Research Hub for Urban Sustainability, Health and Equity (RHUSH)

Report on the RHUSH programme theories workshop on 15th
October 2020

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Introduction

Members of the CUSSH and Pathways community came together to discuss the underlying theoretical frameworks of their programmes in an online workshop held on 15th October 2020, as part of the Research Hub for Urban Sustainability, Health and Equity (RHUSH).

The overall goals for the workshop were to inform each other about the programmes focusing the discussion on CUSSH's programme theory and Pathways' coproduction theory of feedback loops and building block (summarised in Figures 1 and 2). Focusing on the underlying theoretical framework was intended to reflect on what the programmes have achieved so far (against their theories) and spark conversations on the similarities and differences between the programmes.

Figure 1: CUSSH Programme Theory

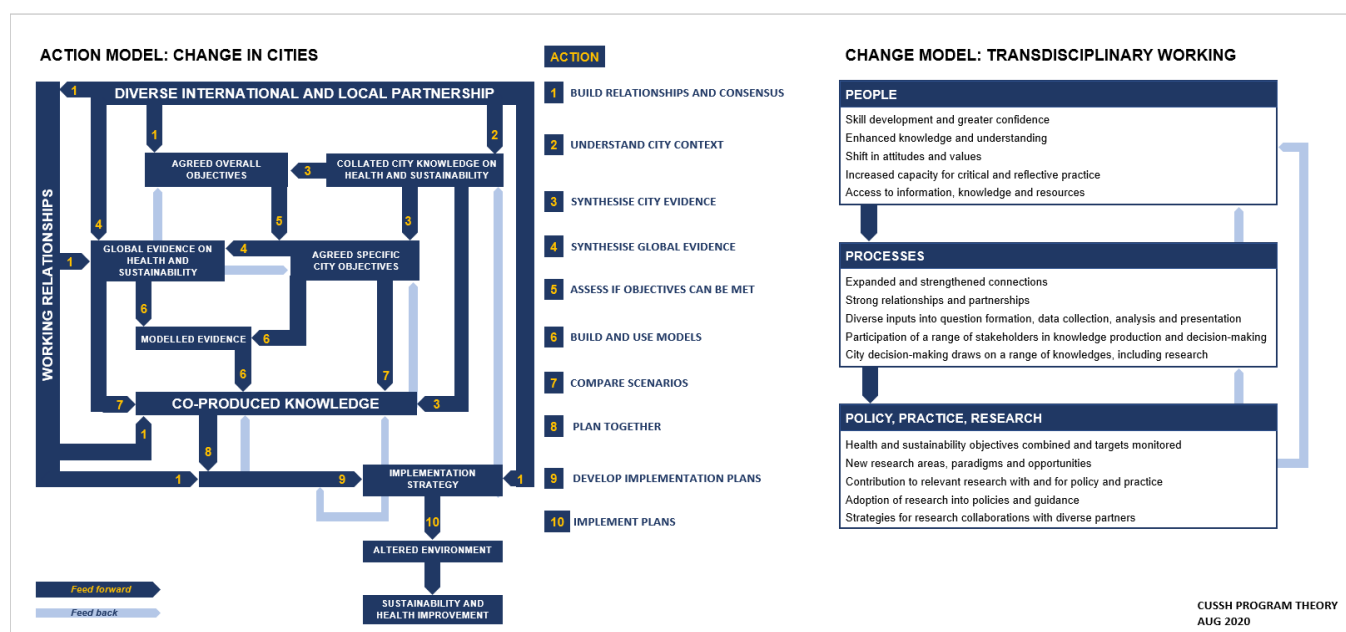
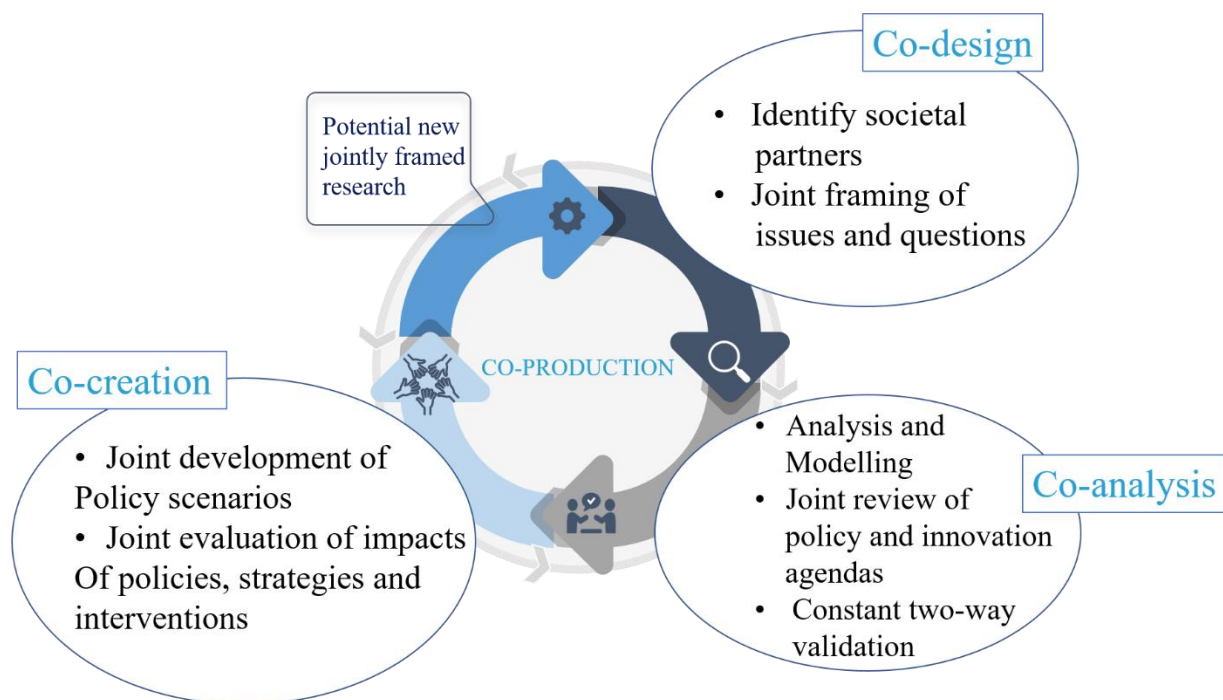


Figure 2: Pathways' Building Blocks and Feedback Loops



This report outlines the findings of this workshop and identifies common themes and differences across the programmes. The document concludes with suggestions of next steps.

1 The workshop

1.1 Workshop aims

The specific aims for the workshop were to:

- Share the underlying theoretical framework of the programmes (i.e. CUSSH's programme theory, and Pathways Building Block/Feedback Loops)
- Discuss the similarities and differences between the two programmes theoretical frameworks
- Jointly reflect upon practice, and progress.
- Share and discuss how to take forward thinking about the theories within the Hub

1.2 Workshop format

The workshop was held online, using the software 'Zoom'. The workshop was jointly led by facilitators from both programmes. We hoped that this would help enable participants to feel comfortable to contribute and share their experiences in an informal virtual setting.

The workshop was set up to be interactive and focus on small group discussions and networking; for this reason, we used Zoom built-in "breakout rooms" to split participants and encourage honest and open dialogue amongst the different projects' participants.

The workshop agenda and some detail on each session is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Agenda for the workshop

Time	Details
1400	Introductions and Welcomes
1405	Presentations on the theoretical frameworks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Osrin, CUSSH • Camilla Audia, Pathways
1425	Questions
1435	Where are we “at”, and how do we know? Small group discussion to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflect on practice, progress against our programme theories - Discuss any monitoring and evaluation strategies within the project
1505	What are the similarities and differences between the programmes? Small group discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Differences/similarities workshop exercise
1540	Feedback from the groups Collecting thinking about our discussions the context of the RHUSH Hub – what does this mean for the Hub?
1550	Concluding remarks

1.3 Workshop attendance

There were 26 participants invited to the workshop, with 22 attending. There was an even spread across both programmes, and members represented most of the different cities that the programmes are working in (see Appendix 1).

1.4 Information collection

We gathered information throughout the workshop through recording the group discussion and using Google documents and a “Jamboard” to capture participants’ group discussions. The Google document template contained prompt questions to ensure group discussion was focused, and each separate group focused on the same questions. The Jamboard, a virtual interactive whiteboard tool, was set up to capture similarities and differences across the projects. While this activity was carried out in groups, all groups were able to see what others were pinning to the online board. A facilitator was allocated to the groups and note-takers were identified.

Following the workshop, the collated participants' feedback was captured in a single document. This report provides the summary feedback gathered from the workshop, grouped according to inductively derived themes from analysing the different notes and outputs.

2 Workshop Findings

Below is a summary of the key themes that emerged from the discussions, example comments and reflections to illustrate the themes. The compiled answers are in Appendix 2.

2.1 Where are we “at”, and how do we know?

The first part of the discussion focused on “Where are we at, and how do we know?” Within small groups the workshop, participants were encouraged to reflect on their practice, compared to the presented theories and give examples of where their work would fit within the presented frameworks. The groups were specifically asked to think about their work within a co-production loop (Pathways) or element of the programme theory (CUSSH).

Both programmes shared their progress, acknowledging that they were only part of the way through their journeys. Several key themes emerged from the discussion – which highlighted the importance of certain components of the theoretical frameworks; the ways of working and values that underpin our theories; and challenges that emerge in practice. These are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Where are we at, and how do we know?

Key Theme	Example comments
Building relationships	<p><i>“Workshops undertaken in order to build relationships”</i></p> <p><i>“The workshops were also a way we have understood the city context”</i></p>
Setting the agendas vs responding to ideas	<p><i>“I think we’ve had two or three meetings as part of the Pathways group in Accra. As part of that we have included stakeholders to identify the major environmental and health issues. We were able to establish a hierarchy of the burden of those issues in the city”</i></p> <p><i>“There are alterations in the research questions being posed - shifting work to certain directions.”</i></p> <p><i>“What to do when people who are engaging with want different things than you do?”</i></p> <p><i>“How (are) the existing evidence and our synthesis products (...) used in decision-making and practice/decisions/actions taken by cities?”</i></p>

The shifting and dynamic nature of the process	<p><i>"I think the process is different for different cities and the pace as well. Some components may also happen simultaneously (for instance some researchers engage with stakeholders at the same time some other researchers are focusing on modelling)"</i></p> <p><i>"The processes in each city have been slightly different due to decision-making and societal structures".</i></p> <p><i>There is "temporality and timing of these activities (constrained by 5 year funding, and now have major interruptions with COVID). Do the priorities shift? Conservations may shift, and topics arise."</i></p> <p><i>"Pathways organized early on engagement with cities, baseline research with key informants and stakeholders, (leading to an) analysis phase. As a project, we won't answer questions but will build tools to answer questions: infrastructure, data. Different models (are being used) in different cities."</i></p> <p><i>"Will cities have different questions after Covid19?" "Yes. Implementation phase may also be more challenging."</i></p>
Power	<p><i>There is "power in co-production in process, and in evaluation"</i></p> <p><i>The "loop model shows that it dynamic - links to urban governance and power dynamics".</i></p>
Evaluation	<p><i>"We are starting to think how to use that [the programme theory] in order to evaluate what we do in the project (e.g. document evidence), we are at developing plans, trying to organize things, and now trying to move into application..."</i></p>

Some members reflected on their activities in specific cities, and how that relates to the presented programme theories.

For example, from CUSSH one member stated:

"Kisumu is an example of where we have progressed furthest. Looking at the change model: building relationships and consensus - this took time and effort. We have managed to maintain these relationships and via many workshops we built consensus about the area of focus (waste management). The workshops were also a way we have understood the city context and been able to build systems models of the problem. Related to step 7 [of the programme theory] that has allowed us to compare different scenarios. I think we can evidence that we have moved along the action path. I don't think we are yet at the implementation strategy though we have given it thought. It has been a process with significant highs and lows, but we now have a large bid under

consideration for GCF. Found it very helpful to map our work to the CUSSH action model.”

For example, from Pathways on member stated:

“We have worked ... in Vancouver and Beijing... We did a lot in terms of early engagement - e.g. interviews to elicit problems. I think it’s true in all the cities we are working in, that we are not just saying what the literature tells us. We are actually doing the baseline research in the cities to understand relationships. We’re still in the analysis stage - we probably won’t answer questions but we will have tools to use with partners to answer the questions together We have been putting emphasis on building the infrastructure and data to use those tools. We have a long list of issues that are of interest - that has been helpful to co-production.

The processes in each city have been slightly different due to decision-making and societal structures. E.g. in Beijing use more key informants. Vancouver was the first city -many partners said don’t come back to us until you’re ready! We already identified together what the issues are - they touch base but want to have a tool they can use before holding more workshops. They are very interested in the project but have time pressures”.

This discussion continued in plenary; participants were able to share some of their work and to reflect on the frameworks, looking at how their engagement and other processes were fitting within the different stages of the projects. This conversation highlighted that both were set up as the project had already been ongoing and with very little involvement from policy partners. As both projects are focussing on engagement, a key next step could be to disclose and discuss frameworks and theories with non-research partners, get their input and potentially modify as needed.

2.2 Similarities and differences between the programmes

The second structured discussion focused on the similarities and differences between the two programmes. A “jamboard”, an online whiteboard and interactive post-it-note tool, was used to capture the discussion in the small groups (shown in Appendix 3) and summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Similarities and differences between CUSSH and Pathways

Similarities	Differences
<i>A strong focus on the potential for implementation</i>	<i>Different emphasis on places in the chain / framework</i>
<i>They share guiding principles such as transdisciplinarity / transformative change.</i>	<i>Different project organisation and different ways of implementing activities</i>

<p><i>Shared understanding of the challenges of doing this kind of work</i></p> <p><i>Complex systems thinking: formally part of CUSSH and implicitly part of Pathways.</i></p> <p><i>How we deal with difference - listening, adapting etc.</i></p> <p><i>Tension between co-creation with policy makers and requests from policy makers for tools/ things given to them</i></p> <p><i>Ways of working: Awareness of conversations happening, being opportunistic</i></p>	<p><i>Specific skill sets represented in each project</i></p> <p><i>Use of building blocks within Pathways model, vs. more fixed structure of CUSSH model, perhaps?</i></p> <p><i>Evaluation is explicitly part of CUSSH.</i></p> <p><i>Different approach in how we chose to present program theories.</i></p>
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The insights from this exercise revealed that there are numerous similarities between the two programmes – not only in the focus and goals (transformative change in health and sustainability) but underlying values in how we are approaching this challenge: i.e. building relationships, involving diverse knowledges, responding to, thinking. The differences were more how the projects are organised (in terms of structures) and how we present and communicate our programmes.

2.3 Reflections for the Hub

We had limited time to consider how what we discussed means in relation to the Hub, and how the programmes work together. Instead, as a group we spoke about our ways of working in practice, which are not necessary captured within the theories. As researchers in such programmes, some noted that their wider remit than providing knowledge or tools. For instance, roles covered:

- Building relationships with partners
- Influencing
- Seeking opportunities
- Connecting the dots between policies and issues

The outputs of this workshop can act as a baseline for further discussions regarding the Hub. Participants are now aware not only of goals and outcomes but also of methods, underlying values, overarching theories and some practical example of the work undertaken across projects; a next step would involve reflecting explicitly on **how to turn similarities into common values** and shared guidelines for future engagement, evaluation, monitoring and learning across both projects.

3 Discussion

The findings from the workshop highlight that both programmes are working to bring about change; it was useful to reflect upon our roles in “change” – the motivations, knowledge and actions within that process.

Team members discussed on how we enact our programmes theories, thinking about the working practices that create the conditions for good partnerships and coproduction. Much of the discussion focused on **people working together** – “partnership”, “collaboration” and “relationships” were terms that ran throughout the small group conversations.

For both programmes, the importance of **building relationships is key** – and this was the foundation for the co-production of knowledge. Participatory relationship-building is illustrated in both programme theories, but a reflection that emerged from the discussion was the need for us to be clear about levels of **power and agency** in such partnership programmes (i.e. what decision are open, what has been decided already, where/who get funding etc).

Participants recognised that a degree of **flexibility** is needed in practice with the delivery of the programmes (and this may challenge our usual ways of working). Members of both CUSSH and Pathways spoke about when changes in direction happened, with new ideas or new areas to focus upon (i.e. waste, housing) being proposed by partners. Being adaptable and flexible was part of the practice, but it isn’t necessarily captured in the underlying theoretical framework.

The group discussion revealed the “**messiness**” of the programmes – with some team members sharing the importance of **listening, influencing** and looking for **opportunities** in the process. This cemented the idea that co-production isn’t a straightforward or linear process; rather, it’s about being open to creating and supporting opportunities along the way.

The **evaluation** of the programmes was a thread that ran throughout the workshop, with participants discussing how the frameworks can be used to help guide the evaluation. It was agreed that it was a key next step for both projects –with an acknowledgement that decisions need to be made beforehand on what to evaluate who is involved in the evaluation and these decisions reveal what is “valued” in such projects.

4 Concluding remarks and next steps

The workshop was an important step to discuss and finalise frameworks and overarching theories underlying actions and work that is being undertaken. It gave time for programmes to reflect on their engagement and project activities, discuss and collectively learn in the process. As both projects presented their theories, the discussion was focussed on how each step, event and measure fits within the bigger picture; participants were asked to take a step back from their daily procedures and look at how every single one of them could have been an entry point in the process of triggering transformational change in our cities.

The opportunity exists to push these reflections further in two ways: on one side, this workshop and its proceedings may act as a baseline to bring out **joint guidelines and values** on how to function as a hub. On another side, these initial reflections now need to be **shared** beyond the workshop participants to be fully input back into the project.

In order to do so, workshop organisers will lead a joint Webinar on November 26th to present discussions and results to the broader group across the two projects. This has the merit of widening participation, increasing transparency and broadening the discussion to all research actors.

Another potential next step would be to organise a webinar for non-research actors such as government authorities, decision-makers at different levels, policy professionals and NGO partners; this will be discussed during the webinar and potentially aims, outcomes and opportunities will be identified at that time.

These meetings provide opportunity, time and space to collectively reflect on ongoing work; there is potential to organise more RHUSH workshops once the projects reach later stages.

Appendix 1: **CUSSH & Pathways Joint Workshop Registered Attendees**

Name	Project
Gemma Moore	CUSSH
David Osrin	CUSSH
Susan Michie	CUSSH
Paul Wilkinson	CUSSH
Nici Zimmerman	CUSSH
Jo Hale	CUSSH
Kristine Belesova	CUSSH
Mel Crane	CUSSH
Helen Pineo	CUSSH
Aarathi Prasad	CUSSH
Catalina Turcu	CUSSH
Ioanna Tsoulou	CUSSH
Mike Davies	CUSSH
Jana Sabinowska	CUSSH
Majid Ezzati	Pathways
Frans Berkhout	Pathways
Meghan Winters	Pathways
Zahidul Quayyum	Pathways
Samuel Agyei-Mensah	Pathways
George Owusu	Pathways
Ying Long	Pathways
Jill Baumgartner	Pathways
Brian Robinson	Pathways
Gary Adamkiewicz	Pathways
Judith Rodriguez	Pathways
Giulia Mangiameli	Pathways
Mike Brauer	Pathways
Camilla Audia	Pathways

Appendix 2: Group discussion, combined answers

Comments:

- There are questions - around how our work/research influences policy, as well as how we do it. Pathways: workshops undertaken in order to build relationships (first bits of the model) There are alterations in the research questions being posed - shifting work to certain directions (i.e. Accra- housing)
- Reflections on the links to evaluation - of both the procedure of engagement, and the knowledge generated does affect change
- What to do when people who are engaging with want different things than you do? Example in Kisumu. Work is participatory, but might not met key goal (transformative change)
- Power in co-production in process, and in evaluation. KPIs and measurements - provide a way to govern a certain end. Think about the dialogue between action and change model.
- Loop model shows that it dynamic - links to urban governance and power dynamics.
- Temporality and timing of these activities (constrained by 5 year fundings, and now have major interruptions with COVID). Do the priorities shift? Conservations may shift, and topics arise.
- Power dynamics - who owns the decision and who owns the authority? In which direction to these things move. Who is responsible for certain areas?
- Synthesis of global knowledge on the types of action that cities can take/have taken to achieve climate change mitigation and adaptation goals as well as the strategies that have been used to help the implementation of these actions and factors that influence the success of implementation. My concern is how the existing evidence and our synthesis products are used in decision-making and practice/decisions/actions taken by cities.
- Kisumu is an example of where we have progressed furthest. Looking at the change model: building relationships and consensus - this took time and effort. We have managed to maintain these relationships and via many workshops we built consensus about the area of focus (waste management). The workshop were also a way we have understood the city context and been able to build systems models of the problem. Related to step 7 that has allowed us to compare different scenarios. I think we can evidence that we have moved along the action path. I don't think we are yet at the implementation strategy though we have given it thought. It has been

a process with significant highs and lows, but we now have a large bid under consideration for GCF/ Found it very helpful to map our work to the CUSSH action model

- Wonder what was the added value of having a programme theory? Through a systems approach we were able to get people from different groups to think about entry points and levers, and a theoretical approach, rather than working in siloes.
- I think we've had two or three meetings as part of the Pathways group in Accra. As part of that we have included stakeholders to identify the major environmental and health issues. We were able to establish a hierarchy of the burden of those issues in the city. Sanitation and housing came out quite prominently and we were able to go into those in more detail.
- I can add a bit about what we have worked on in Vancouver and Beijing. We did a lot in terms of early engagement - e.g. interviews to elicit problems. I think it's true in all the cities we are working in, that we are not just saying what the literature tells us. We are actually doing the baseline research in the cities to understand relationships. We're still in the analysis stage - we probably won't answer questions but we will have tools to use with partners to answer the questions together. We will probably realistically run out of time and leave tools for cities to use. We never said that we would implement the plans, but that the partners could come back to us to refine tools. We have been putting emphasis on building the infrastructure and data to use those tools. We have a long list of issues that are of interest - that has been helpful to co-production. The processes in each city have been slightly different due to decision-making and societal structures. E.g. in Beijing use more key informants. Vancouver was the first city -many partners said don't come back to us until you're ready! We already identified together what the issues are - they touch base but want to have a tool they can use before holding more workshops. They are very interested in the project but have time pressures.
- Will cities have different questions after Covid? Implementation phase may also be more challenging.
- At CUSSH, we are starting to think how to use that in order to evaluate what we do in the project (e.g. document evidence), we are at developing plans, trying to organize things, and now trying to move into application (and implementing policies).
- Only in CUSSH for a few months now, but I think the process is different for different cities and the pace as well. Some components may also happen simultaneously (for instance some researchers engage with stakeholders at the same time some other researchers are focusing on modeling).

- in leading an effort for housing and health, they have spent their time so far in assembling the researcher view, and they are in the early stages of the Pathways program theory (in a code developed framework).
- our program theory has developed really after what we have done, so now we are starting to think about using it.
- in Pathways, it is a bit of both; program theory works as a guide, so it links to activities and activities link back to theory. They discussed the framework with policy makers and they found it interesting (more open interactions would be desired).

Appendix 3: Jamboard

