

COMMUNITY IMPACT EVALUATION. TELLING A STRONGER STORY

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This paper presents the Community Impact model, which provides a systematic evaluation of a programme or intervention and, consistent with Community Psychology methodologies, proposes new perspectives in selecting strategic tools to support systems, organisations and communities in order to activate a positive process of change. This contribution provides a state of the art in impact evaluation by means of a review of studies on empowerment evaluation, systemic approach, human rights impact evaluation and collective impact, and illustrates the success factors for achieving suitable policies and for promoting stakeholders' involvement in all stages of an intervention. Based on existing literature, a first prototype of the model was drawn up and tested in three case studies in European countries. Subsequently, the Community Impact (CI) evaluation model was defined. This paper presents its theoretical and operational aspects, which comprise six steps that are strictly connected to one another and pertain to: forming accountable groups and leadership, transferring knowledge, transforming “bad data” into useful data, providing added value to interventions, and increasing local partnerships in order to create a more effective narrative regarding the implemented process and its outcomes.

Keywords: *impact evaluation, Community Impact, empowering evaluation, qualitative methods, change process, participatory processes*

1. Introduction. Different Approaches and Definitions of Impact Evaluation

Evaluation is an important step in every project. It represents the most relevant tool to understand the impacts of changes, to design and redefine the phases, and finally to draw up a map of the social actors and stakeholders who are either directly or indirectly involved in the process. Nevertheless, impact evaluation encompasses different definitions. As stated by Khandker, Koolwal, and Samad (2009):

Monitoring tracks key indicators of progress over the course of a program as a basis on which to evaluate outcomes of the intervention. Operational evaluation examines how effectively programs were implemented and whether there are gaps between planned and

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realized outcomes. Impact evaluation studies whether the changes in well-being are indeed due to the program intervention and not to other factors (p.7).

However, for White (2010) the issue is more complex. He observes that “impact” typically refers to the final level of the *causal chain* and is different from outcomes because it refers to long-term effects. Indeed, it is related to “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended” (p. 154). Moreover, he argues that other evaluators define impact as “the difference in the indicator of interest (Y) with the intervention (Y1) and without the intervention (Y0). That is, $\text{impact} = Y1 - Y0$, where an impact evaluation is a study which tackles the issue of attribution by identifying the *counterfactual* value of Y (Y0) in a rigorous manner” (p. 154).

Focusing on impact evaluation, we may observe some key trends, such as the commonly used *socioeconomic approach*, whose methods are often borrowed to measure social phenomena; the *environmental approach*, which is primarily used in studies concerning urban life and participation issues; and the *psychosocial-sociopolitical approach*, which includes the Human Rights impact evaluation (described below), used in well-being and drug policy projects, as well as *participatory evaluation*, which is founded on community and organisational psychology theories. One of its main characteristics is its usability, especially in projects directed at change processes and where the foreseen products are activities or services rather than material goods.

In participatory evaluation, stakeholders actively engage in developing its phases and implementation. Participation occurs throughout the entire evaluation process (Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002; Guijt, 2014). “By the 1980s, concepts of participatory monitoring and evaluation had already entered the policy making domain of larger donor agencies and development organisations” (Estrella, 2000, p. 3) in order to guarantee a more effective investment in social change. Participatory methods allow the perspectives, voices, points of view and interpretations of all social actors, including the least powerful, to emerge.

Choosing an adequate methodology and avoiding the misrepresentation of the considered “object” and its social contexts are crucial issues: an adequate methodology facilitates evaluation of best practices, their communication and replicability.

1.2 Aims

This contribution is aimed at: a) presenting an overview of the contexts in which impact evaluation has its roots; b) outlining some examples of evaluation processes in community psychology; c) highlighting the key aspects and phases of a *Community Impact (CI) model* arising from a review of the literature as well as three experimented collaborative projects. Finally, d) this paper will discuss the implications of the proposed model for the field of community projects evaluation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Impact at the Organisational Level

In a research study promoted by the *European Agency for Safety and Health at Work*, Cox, Swift, and Rhisiart (2015) identified some key factors able to generate *policy impact* from foresight studies, such as “clarify what the foresight study is seeking to achieve, which cannot be achieved by other policy means; [...] engage appropriate stakeholders for its implementation; [...] establish a clear link between foresight and policy agenda; identify clients/beneficiaries and users; [...] use of expert to explain the benefits of the methods; and assume an advisory role to policy makers”. Other recommendations are related to “project management, with frequent communication to keep project on track; measuring impact to increase perceived value; [...] managing expectations” (pp. 16-17). The report additionally demonstrates how to “produce high-quality outputs that can engage with different stakeholder groups”, and concludes with the importance of “adaptation and flexibility, as the client’s goals and the involvement of different actors can change over the course of a project” (Cox et al., 2015, p. 5). Underlining these aspects during research or intervention means selecting techniques to measure long-term impacts and monitor policy changes over time.

It is important to highlight the choice of mixed methods (comprising both quantitative and qualitative techniques) as a way to “help and engage policy makers and stakeholders [...] improving connections between actors in the system; [...] and establishing common understanding” (Cox et al., 2015, p. 11).

Empowerment Evaluation was defined by Fetterman (2001) as “the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination” (p. 3). In 2005 it was further specified, as:

An evaluation approach that aims to increase the probability of achieving program success by (1) providing program stakeholders with tools for assessing the planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their program, and (2) mainstreaming evaluation as part of the planning and management of the program/organization (Wandersman et al., 2005, p. 28).

Its basic principles are: 1) improvement, 2) community ownership, 3) inclusion, 4) democratic participation, 5) social justice, 6) community knowledge, 7) evidence-based strategies, 8) capacity building, 9) organisational learning, and 10) accountability.

In *Getting to Outcomes* (GTO), Wandersman, Imm, Chinman and Kaftarian (2000) discuss “Ten-Step” and ask the following “accountability questions”: 1) What are the needs and resources in your organisation, school, community or state? 2) What are the goals, target population and desired outcomes (objectives) for your school/community/state? 3) How does the intervention incorporate knowledge of science and best practices in this area? 4) How does the intervention fit with other programmes already being offered? 5) What capacities do you need to put this intervention into place with quality? 6) How will this intervention be carried out? 7) How will the quality of implementation be assessed (process evaluation)? 8) How well did the intervention work (outcome and impact evaluation)? 9) How will continuous quality improvement strategies be incorporated (continuous quality improvement)? 10) If the intervention is successful, how will the intervention be sustained (sustainability)? (See Figure 1) The model (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007) develops an empowerment evaluation system that includes tools, training, technical assistance (TA) and quality improvement/quality assurance (QI/QA) as “key ingredients of a full GTO intervention” (p. 193). GTO studies encounter

challenges of how to combine qualitative and quantitative data, how to contribute to defining policies, and how to refine evaluation tools and systems. The authors contributed to “the conceptual clarity of empowerment evaluation by making explicit the underlying principles of the approach, from improvement and inclusion to capacity building and social justice. In addition, they highlighted the commitment towards the accountability and the outcomes” (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007, p. 180).

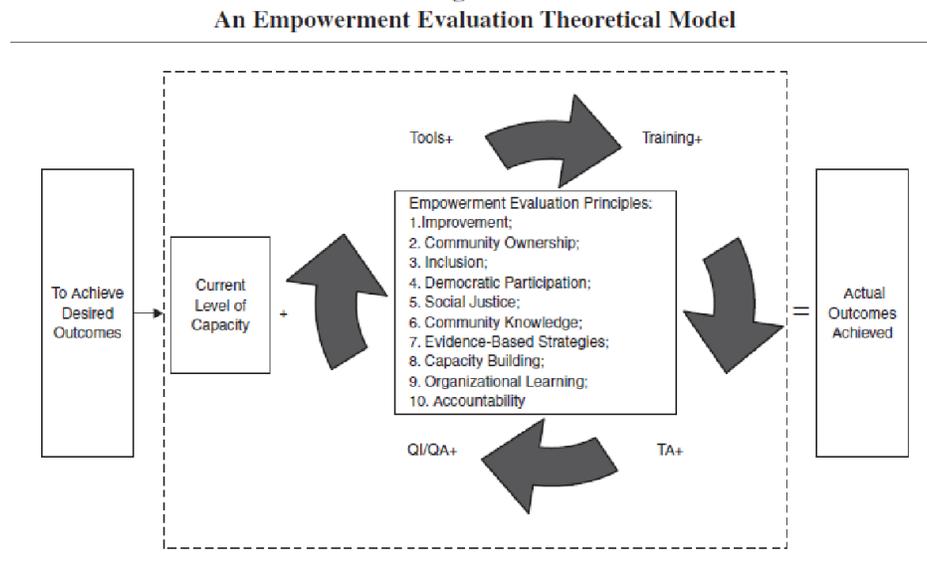
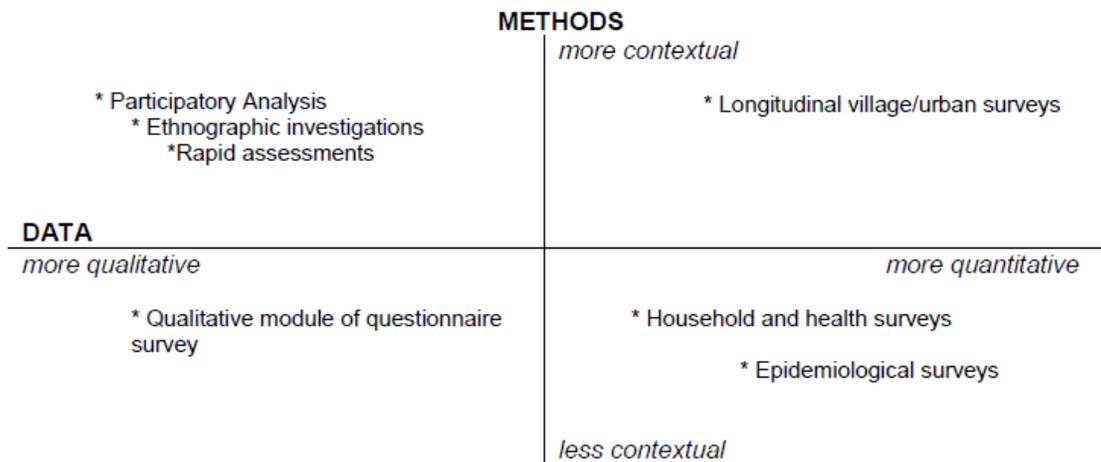


Figure 1. Fetterman and Wandersman’s Model

An *Issues paper* was promoted by the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID) through the *Governance and Social Development Resource Centre* (Garbarino & Holland, 2009), which addresses emerging priority agendas of concern to the international community’s development. The authors of the paper observed renewed interest in impact evaluation among development agencies and donors. Moreover, they claimed that there is often a “mistaken belief” in pushing for an approach based solely on randomised control trials, this being widely perceived as the only rigorous option. Although “randomisers” appear to have gained the upper hand in many debates, a range of approaches including mixed methods have generally been deemed crucial to exploring social problems. DFID similarly stressed the opportunities arising from synthesising qualitative and quantitative approaches in impact evaluation, recognising the need to find indicators, integrated with narratives, which may capture non-material impact and are sensitive to social difference.

As we can see in Figure 2, a wide range of methods is considered (Garbarino & Holland, 2009, adapted from Hentschel, 1999), with considerable emphasis placed on qualitative methods. The purpose of the *Issue paper* is to contribute to the debate on “more and better” impact evaluations by combining qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure – for instance in the case of interventions on poverty – the measurement of the different impacts of interventions on specific groups and the measurement of the various dimensions of the phenomena, particularly those that are not readily quantified (e.g. dignity, respect, security and power).

For a similar purpose, Holland, Brook, Dudwick, Bertelsen & Yaron (2007) have provided an instrument named “Community Score Cards” (CSC; p. 16), an interactive monitoring tool to increase services accountability by soliciting user perceptions on the quality, accessibility and relevance of public services. The CSC is generally used in focus groups with users. It is described as a “mixed method” tool because it generates both quantitative and qualitative data, the former to assess the specific qualities of services and the latter to provide a definition and diagnosis of the problems as well as to identify possible solutions.



Source: Adapted from Hentschel (1999)

Figure 2. Methods for Evaluation Process

2.2 Systemic Approach: Interactive Systems Framework

The *Interactive Systems Framework* (ISF) for dissemination and implementation was created to help bridge research and practice by specifying the systems and processes required to support the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based programmes, processes, practices and policies. The ISF identifies three key systems necessary for this process: the synthesis and translation system, the support system and the delivery system.

Described in a special issue of the *American Journal of Community Psychology* in 2008, and later refined and extended (Flaspohler, Lesesne, Puddy, Smith & Wandersman, 2012), the ISF addresses the gap *between* developing and testing the best strategy for an intervention and ensuring the widespread adoption of practices. It deals with the following questions (p. 278): How do we achieve the widespread use of effective practices, policies and programmes? What infrastructure or systems are necessary to ensure that dissemination and implementation are carried out successfully? How do organisations and practitioners build the necessary capacity to provide effective prevention strategies at a community-wide scale?

2.3 A Specific Issue: Human Rights Impact Evaluation

This kind of evaluation has primarily been adopted for drug policies, where commitment to respecting human rights has been expressly mentioned in European strategies and programmes, and is today well-established in many fields including health, work and justice.

Gallahue, Saucier and Barrett (2012) produced the first example of the model with a *Toolkit* named *Human Rights Impact Assessments: Due Diligence for Drug Control*, in which they reported clear violations of human rights in the criminal field when the person under proceedings was a drug user. Their model, which adopts a plurality of methods, aims to measure risks and impacts in the field of human rights.

The second example refers to the contribution of Andreassen, Sano and McInerney-Lankford (2017) from the Danish Institute for Human Rights, who published the *Human Rights Impact Assessment Guidance and Toolbox*, presenting a model based on *five steps*: 1) *design and observation*, 2) *data collection* (to determine the situation at time 0 and to set indicators to evaluate respect for the human rights), 3) *impact analysis*, 4) *mitigation and impact management*, 5) *evaluation report*. Throughout the process, the involvement of stakeholders who bear duties and rights is crucial.

The interest of this model primarily lies in two aspects. The first concerns the potential negative and iatrogenic effects of a social intervention. While it is generally assumed that an intervention leads to positive outcomes, in some fields (such as drug policies) this sequence is not obvious: both of the policies that favour judicial over social interventions can reduce the phenomenon, but may negatively affect human rights. The second aspect is the central role of stakeholders, who do not only comprise the targets of the policies, but also all those who at the societal level ensure citizenship rights in the legal, political and health fields. Verifying their points of view at every step of the intervention renders it possible to implement timely and effective monitoring before reaching the final outcome.

2.4 Societal Impact

Collective Impact (Hanleybrown, Kania & Kramer, 2012) represents an approach based on the partnership of community-based organisations to reflect the inter-agency commitment of cross-sector organisations towards a common goal, and comprises five conditions for success: 1) a common agenda; 2) a backbone support organisation (i.e. a highly structured process managed by an umbrella organisation); 3) shared measurement systems in order to effectively measure and report outcomes; 4) mutually reinforcing activities; and 5) continuous communication.

This model has become the focus of the scientific community's attention, especially regarding the need to value non-material aspects of projects. Nevertheless, according to community psychologists and scholars, it has received its share of criticism. The main negative observation comes from Wolff (2016), who describes "ten places where collective impact gets it wrong" and highlights its weaknesses in terms of methodological and operational aspects: few case examples exist as "research"; the whole community cannot be simplified into Collective Impact's five required conditions; and the real contribution of Collective Impact to a coalition's effectiveness and the role and power of the backbone organisation are unclear.

Wolff also highlights theoretical/political aspects: Collective Impact emerges from top-down business consulting experience and is thus not a true community development model; Collective Impact does not identify policy changes and systems changes as being essential and intentional outcomes of a partnership's work; and Collective Impact does not address the prerequisites to

meaningfully engaging those in the community most affected by the issues. In short, in Wolff's opinion Collective Impact as described in Kania and Kramer's model misses the social justice core that exists in many coalitions, and from the management point of view it misses the key role of the backbone organisation in building leadership and determining a real societal and community impact.

In Collective Impact, as in the previously described Human Rights Impact, the role of stakeholders is crucial. Brandon and Fukunaga's (2014) review has verified the state of empirical research on stakeholder involvement. Their review includes a detailed description of the major topics related to the role of stakeholders in impact evaluation and provides useful information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of involving them.

The results are categorised into positive findings, negative/mixed-result findings and explanatory or normative findings. The latter provide suggestions regarding contextual issues and descriptions of all of the aspects related to involving stakeholders. The positive and negative/mixed-result findings are generally descriptive, whereas the explanatory and normative findings address the issue of how evaluators might involve stakeholders for maximum benefit. The positive findings often represent accounts that positively underline stakeholder involvement and are most likely to be quoted in the literature. The negative or mixed-result findings highlight some of the difficulties that evaluators might encounter. In any case, the results tend to be more positive with the inclusion of stakeholders, who may improve the level of the evaluation.

Important contributions regarding impact evaluation are provided by European projects related to *Service-Learning*, such as EUROPE ENGAGE (2014).¹ Service Learning is described on its website as an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful community service or engagement into students' curricula, offering credits for learning that derives from active engagement within communities. The evaluation instruments of such activities combine quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Stark (2017) describes the impacts of Service Learning on the local communities where the actions are implemented. The key points concern the possibility of this experience expanding community engagement, improving responsible leadership, transferring knowledge and innovating society, providing added value for society, and strengthening community partnerships, in this case among educational institutions, public or private bodies or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) where the students are carrying out their "service".

Some of these elements have provided a reference point for our *first prototype of Community Impact model*, which has since been redefined and enriched with other features so that it can be used in different social contexts.

3. The *Community Impact* (CI)² Evaluation

3.1 Background

¹ Project EUROPE ENGAGE (2014) *Developing a culture of civic engagement through Service-Learning within higher education in Europe*. 2014-1-ES01-KA203-004798. Co-Directors: Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain and National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland. Partnership: Spain, Ireland, Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Austria, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Finland, Croatia, Lithuania.

² *Community Impact* (Authors, 2018) has a Creative Commons license BY-NC-ND.

Community Impact evaluation is a process that aims to understand the changes taking place in a complex human system. It differs from environmental impact assessment based on the prediction of the consequences of investments in each ecosystem. It also differs from a socioeconomic impact assessment that seeks to read the outcomes of projects through statistical methodologies with moderate involvement of participants.

The specificity of CI evaluation is to propound qualitative methods to fully highlight the experiences and perspectives of all involved actors and to capture their narratives. The information collected via quantitative methods provides important elements to be discussed in an evaluation process, whereas the qualitative analysis of each of an interviewee's sentences may represent and comprise a universe of meaning and signifiers.

Evaluation may at times include an unbalanced power relationship between those who evaluate and those who are evaluated. Evaluation may imply a polarisation of skills between those who control the process knowledge and the algorithms affecting the final results and those holding relationships, social maps and memories. The paradigm and tools of community psychology propose an epistemology in which the observed and the observer are not separated in ascribed roles, but rather participate in the construction of meaning and narratives, as well as collaborate in the construction of a shared memory of experiences and for imagining a common future (as in the Fourth Generation Evaluation method of Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Wider community processes may require more complex analysis because the community is not the simple sum of groups and their stratifications and organisations. In this case, the more the evaluation process considers the complex articulation of the explored community, the more creative and inclusive it will be.

Community impact evaluation aims to bring out the differences in storytelling between different social groups with various levels of inclusion and power. Evaluation recalls the work of the historian engaged in reconstructing a shared narrative of events and processes so as to make the sources speak. It constitutes a careful search for different points of view from these sources. Impact evaluation is a communication process aimed at explaining and consolidating the memory and narrative of diverse events and experiences.

3.2. The Community Impact Prototype

The first prototype of the Community Impact model has been tested on three projects in order to identify the characteristics that are useful in appraising impact at all levels of the community, the engagement of stakeholders (even the least powerful persons and groups), the description and recognition of the changes and their effects; and the construction of more effective narratives for community development. The prototype is based on some of the characteristics of the studies mentioned above, such as:

- Stakeholders' engagement;
- Development of a functional narrative within the community and groups;
- Transferring knowledge;
- Highlighting the added value of the interventions.

In the testing step, we recognised the importance of two key points, which were subsequently added to our model:

- The first referred to suitable training for achieving effective leadership, able to carry out sustainable work and self-monitoring activities;
- The second concerned attention to be paid to data collection.

In other words, participants were often unaware of the extent and complexity of the data of which they disposed, if only they knew how to collect and analyse them.

4. Case Studies at the European Level

The following part presents three case studies that permitted testing of the prototype of the Community Impact model in order to define the ultimate key factors of Community Impact. We have selected them due to their research characteristics and intervention applied at the national and European level. We will present some introductory notes about each case study, explaining how the prototype of CI evaluation may deal with the weaknesses observed.

4.1 Case Study 1. Resilience and Healthy Lifestyle

Resilience and Healthy Lifestyle was a regional project aimed at increasing communities' and schools' resilience, thus supporting teachers in helping students³.

The project provided experiential training for teachers (more than 1,000 teachers and professionals from other services were involved) based on the methodology of “learning by doing”. During the sessions, participants had the opportunity to experiment with appropriate activities to raise awareness and knowledge about different domains of resilience. We referred to theoretical framework about resilience as a dynamic and multidimensional process (Meringolo, Chiodini & Nardone, 2016; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2008, Norris, Tarcy & Galea, 2009; Pietrzak & Southwick, 2011).

The project analysed here was an action-research aimed at fostering abilities related to resilience and thus creating the functional experiences capable of producing a second-order change. We refer here to Watzlawick, Weakland and Fish (1974), for whom a first-order change takes place within the system framework, while a second-order change modifies the structure of the whole system, reframing its functioning rules.

The main topics to be deepened and implemented during the training included:

- Increasing close and caring relationships (as in Werner, 1982);
- Increasing perceived social support, acquiring techniques to facilitate more effective cooperation and create supportive relationships (such as material and emotional support);
- Promoting creative problem-solving capability, as the ability to overcome difficulties and find creative solutions.

³ The Project was promoted by the Ministry of Education, University and Research; Tuscany Region; Regional Educational Office; Health Education Public Service of Tuscany; Centre for Health Research, Education and Promotion of University of Siena. The project was conducted using the CARE [Creative Commons license BY-NC-ND] (Chiodini, Volpi, & Meringolo, 2018), and it was implemented by LabCom, academic spin-off of University of Florence

The Community Impact model permitted the detection of weaknesses (i.e., lack of communication, conflicts within the team and lack of cooperation, etc.) and helped realise the changes desired. Here – as in the subsequent case studies – we will focus on some of them.

Forming responsible groups and leadership

The evaluation used mixed methods based on collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data by means of a readapted version of an American tool (CART, Pfefferbaum et al., 2013)⁴. Data obtained through focus groups, self-reports and the CART Survey were integrated into an overall design. The research and evaluation tools enabled data collection and promoted discussion of the main issues of the project, contributing to achieving its goals. For this purpose, accounting for intended effects and identifying those that occurred unintentionally (both positive and negative) was crucial.

The evaluation process used the collected data to propose new questions in order to increase knowledge and awareness, thus promoting three levels of change:

1. Change at the strategy level;
2. Change at the communication level;
3. Change at the relational level.

The three levels of change represented the new outcomes generated by the CI evaluation, and were explored using the matrix presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Change’s Levels

| <i>Evaluation’s questions</i> | <i>Change at the strategy level</i> | <i>Change at the communication level</i> | <i>Change at the relational level</i> |
|--|--|--|---|
| Are close and caring relationship increased? | | More effective communication (with students) | Increasing empathy Interpersonal support |
| Has the level of participation increased? (For instance, did the target groups involve other people?) | Suggesting and planning interventions and activities by trainees | Increasing communication and sharing information (with colleagues) | Increasing the number of meetings and improving relationships with other professionals and social actors (directors, colleagues, parents, office workers) |
| Is it necessary to have a plan intervention to support leadership and team capabilities? | New plans of action Training on leadership and teamwork | | |
| Is psychosocial and mental well-being increased? | Acquiring specific techniques and tools | Active listening | Welcoming new teachers and students |
| If goals have been achieved, have new goals been set? | Guidelines and good practices Proposals for new goals | | |

⁴ University of Florence and LabCom Academic spin-off are currently running an adaptation of CART to Euro-Mediterranean contexts)

Using focus groups and the CART survey, participants were invited to identify the main issues of interest and to discuss the options, strategies and actions that should be implemented. For example, one of the main discussions pertained to conflict and lack of communication within the group. In this case, the evaluation process helped identify suitable actions to support relationships within the team. The outcomes of these activities (including their weaknesses and strengths) were discussed to define new strategies and actions, involving the whole group, with every person asked to take responsibility for the process.

Transforming bad data into good/useful data for evaluation

Information regarding results, opportunities and programmes within the school are often inadequately shared and are consequently untapped. In this experience, the Community Impact evaluation process helped overcome this difficulty by creating self-report tools and training participants to select, collect and use the main data. The project assumed the communication of outcomes and the sharing of information to be fundamental. Each trainee was involved in a large number of meetings with colleagues in order to 1) present the aims and outcomes of training and discuss them, and 2) explore new needs and define new aims. In this way, planning new actions and designing new intervention strategies was made possible. Community Impact used a *visual representation* of the results for each main domain. It constitutes a method to support discussion within target groups and stakeholders, as illustrated in the figure below (Figure 3).

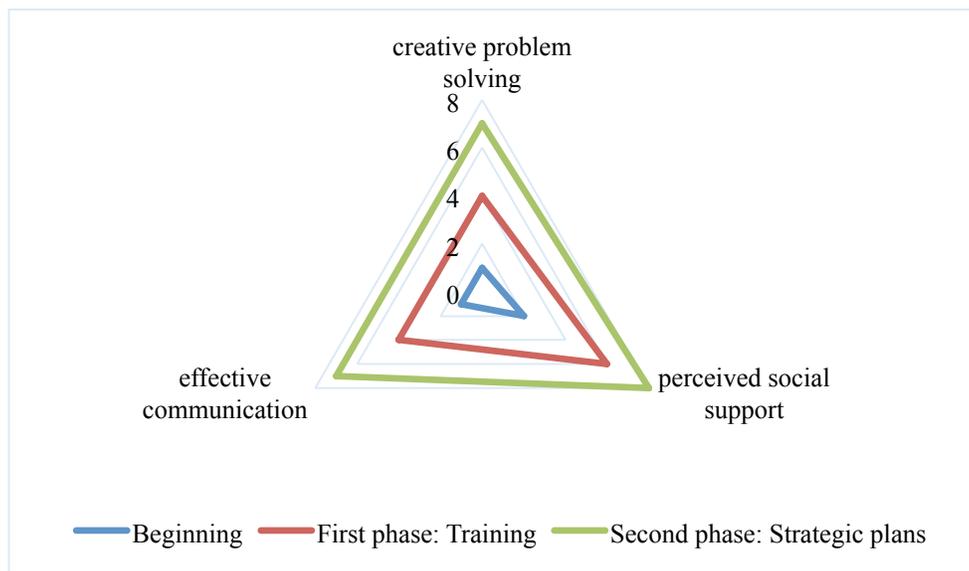


Figure 3. Representation of Outcomes

During the meetings, the groups discussed the change achieved by comparing the new level of effectiveness regarding the *three main areas of work*: social support and perceived social support; communication capability and effective communication; problem-solving strategies. The comparison of levels from time 0 (before the training) to time 1 (first phase: training course) and time 2 (second phase: planning of development actions) was represented by a visual map.

4.2 Case Study 2. HIE-DP- Human Rights Impact Evaluation in Drug Policy

The project was designed in the framework of European Call Justice: Supporting initiatives in the field of drugs policy⁵. The project aimed to improve respect for the human rights of people who use drugs, as well as their civil, health and social conditions by promoting rights-based drug policies. The project planned a Community Impact evaluation to integrate human rights-based approaches and an evidence-based methodology. Impact evaluation of the project was based on the common factors highlighted by Community Impact (CI) and Human Right Impact Assessment (HRIA) (i.e. the relevance of stakeholder engagement and the benefits of utilising existing data, comparing and integrating the different approaches, optimising resources and promoting the sharing of knowledge).

In this section we exemplify the possibility of combining different evaluation methods within the framework of Community Impact in order to strengthen the potential of both models. Both HRIA (Götzmann et al., 2006) and CI underline the importance of drawing on diverse sources when collecting data. HRIA shares with the CI some key criteria that relate to the process as much as to the content, such as:

- Participation: the evaluation process guarantees the meaningful participation of target groups during all stages of the project and the evaluation process. Impact evaluation becomes effective when conducted with all stakeholders' participation.
- Empowerment: CI and HRIA support the capacity building of participants, with particular attention to those at risk of vulnerability or marginalisation.
- Scope of impact: the evaluation project includes actual and potential outcomes and is focused on the description of the change process.
- Accountability: the evaluation process pays attention to the roles and responsibilities of the individuals and groups involved in the management of impacts and in the mitigation of negative or risky consequences. A human rights perspective and community evaluation model place significant emphasis on accountability. This includes recognising the differentiated yet complementary responsibilities of governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Creating stronger and more effective narratives

Table 2 presents an example of impacts and outcomes in creating common narratives, capable of increasing the capacity of the project to achieve its goals. Exploring expectations regarding mid-term and long-term impacts and the direct and indirect effects caused by the interventions helps draw up a common synthesis on the situation. Such a common narrative permits a perspective *beyond the problem*, clarifying the goals to be attained.

Table 2. Type of Impact and Type of Outcomes

| <i>Type of impact that CI took into account</i> | <i>Type of outcomes related to the project's goals that CI helped to achieve</i> |
|--|--|
| Direct impact: caused by actions of the project (i.e. increasing effective communication, change in drug policies) | Increasing competencies and knowledge of professionals |

⁵ Project's partners: University of Florence, Italy; Forum Droghe, Italy; La Società della Ragione Onlus – Italy; Coalizione Italiana Libertà e Diritti Civili (Cild), Italy; Agencia Piaget para o Desenvolvimento, Portugal; Ana Liffey Drug Project, Ireland; Jogriporter Alapitvany, Hungary; A.S.U.D., France; Stichting de Regenboog Groep, Netherlands. The Project is currently under revision.

| | |
|--|---|
| Indirect impact: linked to the project (i.e. promoting training for professionals, change in health policies) | Sharing information and disseminating results among other professionals |
| Foreseen long-term impact: related to the changes realised by the project (i.e. new partnership with other services and civil society organisations) | Developing guidelines and toolkit to implement new changes |

4.3 Case Study 3: *PROVA Project*

PROVA (Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and of Violent Actions in Intergroup Relations) is a European project financed by the Erasmus+ programme⁶. PROVA sought to prevent the violent radicalisation of juvenile offenders. It was addressed to professionals, stakeholders committed to inclusion policies and minors under criminal proceedings. The indirect beneficiaries were university students who were involved in the implemented actions. Training was addressed to professionals, to improve, via participatory methods, their competencies in preventing conflicts. Stakeholders were involved in the use of urban spaces for fostering youth aggregation. Workshops introduced activities for youth under criminal proceedings, and involved university students, with the aim of reimagining urban spaces including the inner spaces of juvenile detention institutions.

According to the main objective of the project of promoting stakeholder engagement and commitment, the CI helped strengthen partnership and create innovation, as described below.

Strengthening partnership

In this contribution we will highlight the tools used to render the tangible and intangible outcomes of the project more effective, resulting in stronger partnerships at a community level.

Self-evaluation questionnaire to evaluate and promote participation and engagement (Ebener et al., 2017). The self-evaluation questionnaire included four areas and was employed to explore participants' perceptions of a) interest and involvement in the topic, b) acquired knowledge, c) individual contribution to the discussion and d) possible suggestions. Two indicators were applied to analyse the first area: the usefulness of the topics proposed during the meetings and their satisfaction with the activities. A Likert scale was used to evaluate them. On the other hand, acquired knowledge, individual contribution and possible suggestions were explored through open-ended questions.

Community Empowerment Scale (Laverack, 2004; Labonté & Laverack 2008). The Community Empowerment Scale was applied to explore participants' perceptions of their worksite. This instrument explored nine domains of community capacity. Participants were asked to express their perceptions of: 1) community participation; 2) problem assessment; 3) local leadership; 4) organisational structures; 5) resource mobilisation; 6) links with others; 7) ability to "ask why"; 8) programme management; 9) role of outside agents.

⁶ Call: EACEA/05/2016 Social inclusion through education, training and youth. Project's partners: University di Florence, Italy; aufBruch, Germany; LabCom, Italy; Psiterra, Romania; University of Barcelona, Spain; Fundació Bosch i Gimpera, Spain; Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci, Italy. *DISCLAIMER: This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This document reflects the views of the authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

Community impact tools facilitated the realisation of two of the major topics promoted by CI: strengthening partnership and creating a more effective narrative. The impact evaluation of professionals' training was focused on the important issue of networking among institutions. Via participatory methods, the training and evaluation provided support to the local partnerships and institutions in facing societal crises and violence. Networking allowed professionals to value already implemented good practices, empowering them and providing more effective interventions.

Transferring knowledge and creating innovation

SWOT analysis (Helms & Nixon, 2010; Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011). As a participatory evaluation instrument, SWOT analysis was used to analyse the main problems and objectives pertaining to violent radicalisation in participants' opinions. Through the SWOT matrix, participants were asked to identify the Strengths and Weaknesses of their organisations, as well as the Opportunities and Threats (as internal positive resources and external negative resources) perceived in their work. The SWOT analysis was additionally used to define a micro-objective in the participants' work environment in order to plan strategies for its achievement. Data from the actions undertaken were discussed during restitution meetings. From the debate, three clusters that grouped the main factors (social, cultural, economic and institutional) pertaining to violent radicalisation and the varied levels of possibility of controlling them emerged:

1. Factors contingent on professionals of the Juvenile Justice System;
2. Factors contingent on other social actors;
3. Factors contingent on societal aspects (beyond the control of participants and stakeholders).

Tracing a distinction between these three clusters helped contextualise actions and plan new strategies of intervention

5. The Community Impact Model: Structure and Phases

The proposed model for Community Impact evaluation identifies six specific actions (Figure 4). For each, appropriate methodologies and instruments from Community Psychology can be used. We have defined the model enriching the prototype with aspects that have demonstrated their importance in the testing step, especially those related to *training* and *data collection*. The six actions are represented as phases of a circular process. In each step, the community and stakeholders are directly involved in the process and remain the final depositaries of the narratives. Donors or promoting institutions, even if part of the community, are not the only final recipients of the evaluation. They can, nevertheless and under any circumstance, become the beneficiaries of the evaluation process.

In this section we will analyse each phase in depth, proposing *Guidelines* for the more effective use of the CI model.

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Local Community and Stakeholders</i> | <i>1. Forming accountable groups and leadership</i> |
| | <i>2. Transferring knowledge and creating innovation</i> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | 3. Transforming “bad data” into useful data for evaluation |
| | 4. “Telling a stronger story”: creating a more effective narrative |
| | 5. Providing added value to the interventions |
| | 6. Increasing the partnerships and coalitions |

Figure 4. The Community Impact Model

1. Forming accountable groups and leadership

The first step consists of redefining the map of the actors involved, enriching it both horizontally (finding new actors not included before, and new stakeholders left at the edge of the process) and vertically (for instance with new umbrella organisations). The aim of this phase is to better understand the features of the groups involved and to provide tools to improve awareness of intra-group relationships and strategies for sustainable changes, according to the analysis of levels of change described in Case Study 1 (explained in the previous Table 1).

By means of CI evaluation, groups may take advantage of knowing their dynamics, the negative and positive aspects of their intragroup relationships and how to exploit the resources available in the social context. This process will simultaneously be an evaluation and a powerful form of training, by means of questions and tools such as those presented in Table 3.

Moreover, each aggregation will identify explicit or implicit leadership, help sub-articulations to emerge and identify the opinion leaders capable of structuring or restructuring a shared narrative. At the end of the evaluation process, the formal and informal groups’ history will be composed into a common memory, thereby improving the community’s self-representation.

Table 3. Forming Accountable Groups

| <i>Questions</i> | <i>Outcomes</i> | <i>Tools</i> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| What is your personal (emotional, financial, relational...) interest related to the aims or critical issues faced by the project? | Increasing knowledge and awareness | Interviews, focus groups |
| What is your engagement in actions to promote change by means of the project? | Increasing awareness and engagement | Interviews, focus groups |
| What is the optimum level of change in your perspective? | Increasing awareness and engagement | Interviews, focus groups |

2. Transferring knowledge and creating innovation

Working on CI evaluation enables participants to acquire competencies in new techniques and to create a new approach to the issues. Often the focus is on *problems* and not on *resources*: in this phase, the different actors should enhance their knowledge of the project and further their own experience. Community aggregations rarely have an overall vision of the actions developed by a programme or an intervention under evaluation, including its costs, benefits and potential efficacy. Moreover, institutional actors sometimes have a limited perception of events occurring in time and space, whereas the community shares a longer term history and a wider narrative that must be recognised and valued, beginning with innovations that have been provided by the implemented experiences.

The CI model defines a procedure including questions, expected outcomes and tools that facilitates (using a participatory methodology) increased awareness and knowledge acquisition, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Questions, Outcomes and Tools for Transferring Knowledge and Creating Innovation

| <i>Questions</i> | <i>Outcomes</i> | <i>Tools</i> |
|--|---|---|
| What are the needs and resources that your organisation intends to implement by the project? | Shared knowledge and awareness of needs and resources | Interviews, focus groups, SWOT analysis |
| What are the goals that your organisation intends to achieve? | Common definition of goals | Scales for choosing objectives |
| How does the project fit with other interventions already realised? | Cooperative work and cooperative inquiry (Napan et al., 2018) | Survey, focus groups |
| How does your organisation intend to use the evaluation results? | Analysis of implementation strategies | Survey, focus groups |

3. *Transforming bad data into good/useful data for evaluation*

Education, prevention and health promotion programmes are usually more focused on the implementation of actions than on selecting and collecting useful data. The aim of CI evaluation is to provide value to quantitative and qualitative data as well as to community maps and narratives, even including information that might appear incoherent, weak, marginal and contradictory compared to the general frame (so-called *bad data*).

Involved groups and communities generally have more data than they think. Sometimes data are collected inaccurately, or are collected but remain unused. Some information may be discarded because it is deemed inconsistent with the existing framework or dissonant compared to the “dominant” narrative. The evaluation should pay specific attention to these “bad data”, proposing them as elements to be discussed, verified and re-read in a new framework. This kind of action is also related to the phase of *transferring knowledge*, and the CI evaluation may become a means to assure the future sustainability of projects.

In order to allow stakeholders to produce and manage effective data, the CI model provides social actors with operational tools. Some of these are presented in Table 5. Furthermore, presenting the outcomes to participants and the general audience (such as citizens, stakeholders and the whole local community) is an important step. Case study n. 1 allowed us to experiment with a *visual representation* to express the results and discuss them with the entire target group, so as to render the knowledge acquired effective and make the innovation sustainable.

Table 5. From Bad Data to Useful Data

| <i>Questions</i> | <i>Outcomes</i> | <i>Tools</i> |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| What are the main data required? | Individuation of good/useful data | Self-report, interviews |
| How do you select data? | Awareness of the process of data selection | Self-report, interviews |
| How do you collect data? | Awareness of the process of data collection | Self-report, interviews |

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| What are the perspectives of professionals and target groups regarding the main issues? | Individuation of <i>second-level</i> data | Self-report, interviews/focus groups |
| What are the perspectives of other stakeholders? | Identification of <i>undirected</i> effects | Self-report, interviews/focus groups |

4. “Telling a stronger story”: Creating a more effective narrative

Rappaport (2000) has defined *community (setting) narrative* as a story common among a group of people. He argues that such narratives tell members important things about themselves.

Individual and social change can be understood in terms of idiosyncratic personal stories and shared narratives. [...] While some community narratives are quite direct, many well-known narratives are coded as visual images, as symbols, as stereotypes, and as performances of behaviour so ritualized that we may be unaware of the narratives we implicitly accept and enact, even in our own personal life stories (p. 5).

Community narratives help detect the *barometers of change* of entire communities, including their history and social structure (Sarason, 2000). Olson, Cooper, Viola and Clark (2016) have proposed a methodological approach that consists of turning personal stories into community narratives. They have used qualitative tools as “story” and “narrative” in a collaborative process with community members (p. 43). Each participant was asked about high points, low points, past history, experienced transitions and revitalisation strategies in the neighbourhood. Such narratives helped community members learn from and reflect on stakeholders’ varied perspectives and stories. The outcomes were organised into *visual logic models* in order to create working maps of key community events (p. 47).

In CI evaluation, the final report may be described as an effective and communicable story, focused on the presentation of system values that underpin strategies and actions. Tangible and intangible results (achieved goals, occurred changes, positive climate and trustful relationships) may be presented, highlighting their value and usefulness for target groups. In this phase, it is possible to promote a debate among groups regarding the development of community narratives even if there are conflict situations. In many cases it may prove useful to proceed with re-aggregations, overcoming internal conflicts and proposing common aims for building new representations about experienced situations, emerging outcomes and a common vision of the future.

The CI evaluation model has identified ten key issues/areas related to the definition of problems, resources, expected outcomes and desired changes, aimed at turning a story into a stronger and more effective narrative (Table 6).

Table 6. Towards a New Narrative

- 1) Clear and operational description of the problem
- 2) Clear identification of involved actors
- 3) Representation of the problem (graphical, metaphorical, descriptive, etc.)
- 4) Social, economic and psychological aspects related to the problem
- 5) Previously implemented actions and interventions
- 6) Effects of previously conducted interventions

-
- 7) Resources (at social, economic and psychological levels)
 - 8) Network analysis and checking of the strength of the partnerships
 - 9) Representation of solutions (graphical, metaphorical, descriptive, etc.).
 - 10) Shared picture of a common future
-

5. *Providing added value to the interventions*

The CI evaluation, including collecting data and discussing results, allows for the detection of strategies, actions and interventions, even when these are not explicitly included in the project design. Emerging data support participants in identifying strengths, resources and positive outcomes already achieved. One example in the school programmes was the innovative use of traditional tools such as individualised teaching, or new methods of cooperation and sharing information such as peer group supervision and peer support.

A useful instrument to provide added value to a project and to bring out a stronger narrative is the follow-up, in which it is necessary to agree on what has really been achieved and what should be considered in the future. As in Flaspohler and colleagues (2012), the implementation of a programme, the restitution of outcomes and the dissemination of results are closely linked, enabling the local community to *become itself the first promoter of its value*, spreading communication in order to upscale the interventions and provide them added value.

6. *Increasing the partnerships and coalitions*

The CI model moves from an awareness that *networks* differ from *partnerships* and *coalitions*: in the latter two the issue is not only to exchange information in a specific situation, but to build coordination, cooperation and collaboration, aimed at sharing resources and possible risks (Albanesi, 2012; Himmelman, 2002). The CI evaluation involves social actors and stakeholders such as citizens, policy-makers, professionals, public and private bodies and NGOs. Their involvement in the process permits communication and relations among different institutions, creating new partnerships and/or making them stronger. The clarity of actions and aims, as well as the shared responsibility of the outcomes, promotes effective links among social actors and mutual confidence among institutions.

This model – according to the community psychology approach, which shifts the focus from (unresolved or new) problems to available resources – may strengthen existing partnerships and coalitions, or create new ones, providing stakeholders with tools and strategies to design new phases and implement innovative actions. Some important topics to be discussed in this step include the following (Table 7):

Table 7. Increasing Partnership and Coalitions

- New alliances and partnerships for a new phase
 - Emerging new leadership
 - Designing the community map at the end of the process
 - Influence of the project on the involved actors' life choices
 - Perception of risks (whether old or new) at the end of the process
 - Available resources not identified before the evaluation
-

Discussion and Conclusions

The literature review highlighted how mixed methods approaches are commonly used by impact evaluation programmes (e.g. Holland et al., 2007; Garbarino & Holland, 2009; Cox et al., 2015). The Community Impact model particularly emphasises the role of a qualitative approach and its relationship to the theory of change. The six main dimensions of CI share a number of key characteristics with other models, such as the role of stakeholders and their engagement (Andreassen, Sano & McInerney-Lankford 2017), and tools of participatory monitoring and increasing awareness according to Zukoski and Luluquisen (2002), Guijt (2014) and Stark (2017). Community Impact differs from the other models because these dimensions represent parts and actions of a system working in a circular way. Community Impact evaluation considers impact and change as two faces in a circular interaction: impact evaluation supports change and the change process creates a new impact. CI evaluates interventions while improving the communities where it is applied. As we have shown in the six phases of the process, the specificity of the CI model consists in bringing together: a scientific approach to data collection *and* an innovative and creative way of expressing data by means of narratives; and an evaluation process *and* empowering actions carried out with the stakeholders and communities involved.

Finally, some observations regarding the implications of applying the model.

Community-based approach: the Community Impact evaluation may constitute an application of Participatory Action Research, which has highlighted the involvement of participants from the first contributions by Kurt Lewin (1946) to studies developed by Montero (2009) and Kagan et al. (2011). It may be also an application of “community mapping”, an infographic instrument inspired by Moreno’s (1946) sociogram and redefined by authors such as Luke (2005), which can be used to tell a story about what is happening in a community. Nevertheless, a map will not be defined once and for all, but rather will be the subject of continuous enrichment in terms of the number of elements and the relationship between them.

Facilitation: in an evaluation process it is necessary to collaborate with the different actors involved. Especially in certain situations of intercultural distance, participatory observation skills may constitute distinctive competencies to ensure the quality of the impact evaluation process, centred on the continuous process of presentation, negotiation and review of the evaluation plan. Renegotiating the title of one action, introducing new blocks of activity, changing the timing of an event, or extending the number of participants are significant aspects of a process, initiated via evaluation and may become powerful.

Effective management for future and stronger aggregations: the evaluation’s effectiveness may also be revealed in managing time and resources in order to permit inner knowledge to emerge (Stark, 2017), hence defining a new map of formal or informal partnerships and existing or possible coalitions, and avoiding the risk of maintaining past solutions without the prefiguration of innovative solutions.

Restitution as the redefinition of community narratives: given that it is intended as a narration and communication process, evaluation would finally leave a visible and significant trace that becomes part of the collective memory of the community involved. The outcome of the evaluation process will not be confined to a report: the restitution of the results, the discussion of the feedbacks, the reframing with participants and ultimately the publication of the shared narratives will constitute the most appropriate and representative forms for telling a stronger story about the communities involved.

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