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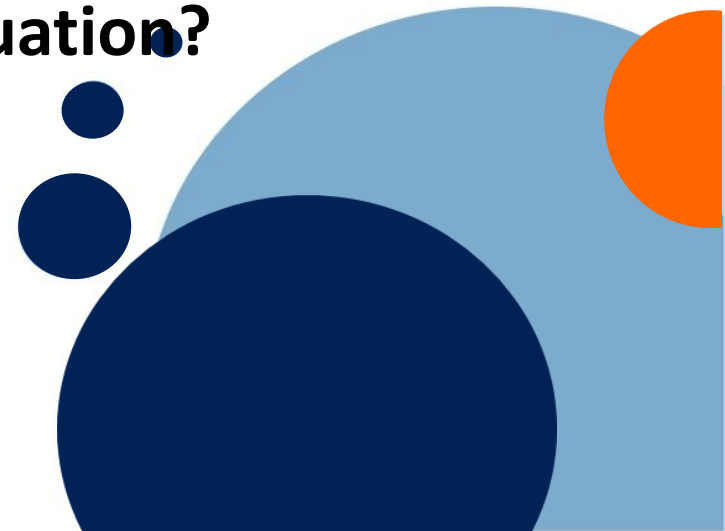
Stakeholders' role to produce impact from social science research: what lessons for evaluation?

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AIM OF THE WORK

To analyze how stakeholders have been involved in social science academic *research projects* in order to:

- Identify elements that increase the likelihood of producing an impact on policy and society
- Discuss the influence on research evaluation both at the ex-ante level (elements characterizing the design of the project) and ex-post level (achievements and practices indicating that an impact is produced or signaling the possibility an impact might occur).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- Participation of stakeholders improve the likelihood to produce an impact beyond the academic context from research activities (Lang et al. 2012 ; Weik et al. 2014; Reale et al., 2017)
- The effect of interaction are related to the ways in which researchers and stakeholders use to communicate about research, its goals and societal demand (Molas-Gallart, 2012)
- Social impact is a consequence of a comparison process between different knowledge and expertise to achieve specific objectives that are relevant for the progress of society (Spapeen and Van Drooge, 2011).
- A participatory research process could affect deeply the sustainability of research so it must be implemented since the beginning of projects (Talwar 2011).
- Stakeholders 'contribute' to the impact generation through the co-definition of their interest along the 'impact pathway' (Joly et al., 2015)

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Stakeholders' involvement presented in literature can be typified around three main categories of contribution:

- i) Co-creation of knowledge between academics and non-academics (Weik et al, 2014; Edelnbons et al., 2011; Spaapen and van Drooge, 2011; de Jong et al, 2013);
- ii) Unpacking the research objectives into sub-task that are more manageable for producing usable results (Bell et al. 2012);
- iii) Discussion and dissemination of research results after their production in order to facilitate generating an impact (Spapeen and Van Drooge, 2011; Weik et al, 2014).

Muhonen et al. (2018) developed 4 pathways to social impact involving stakeholders: *dissemination, co-creation, reacting to social impact, driving social impact*. They are articulated in 20 models of stakeholders involvement.

HYPOTHESIS

There is a direct link between the *degree* and the *way* of stakeholders' involvement in the project and the emergence of social impact of research.

Way of involvement

Two-way process: continuous involvement of stakeholders in the different phases of the project with stakeholders showing a concrete willingness to contribute in a substantial way to the research achievements.

Degree of involvement

Ability to generate a common language between the different actors, scholars and non-scholars, so that exchanges are able to create new knowledge and mutual understanding.

Extensive and effective co-participation in research set the conditions for generating impact pathway.

METHODOLOGY

Comparison of two illustrative examples of successful research project - DISCIT and INCLUD-ED) funded under the EUFPs with a broad involvement of stakeholders:.

Four aspects of interaction between actors involved are considered:

- Modalities and communications
- Timing
- Language
- Outcomes

Triangulation of different sources: documentary analysis, data and indicators on research outputs, interviews with researchers, coordinators, and stakeholders involved in the activities

2 out of 22 top success stories collected within the IMPACT-EV Project.

CASE STUDY: INCLUD-ED

INCLUD-ED– Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education

Five-year-long project funded under FP6.

Interdisciplinary team. The Consortium is composed by 15 organizations from 14 different European countries.

The main objective is *to analyse educational strategies that contribute to social cohesion and educational strategies that lead to social exclusion providing key elements and lines of action to improve educational and social policy (Successful actions)*

Focus on how education can be improved such that all children succeed in school and have greater opportunities for social inclusion.

CASE STUDY: DISCIT

DISCIT – Making persons with Disabilities Full Citizens is a three-year-long project funded under FP7.

DISCIT includes six universities, two research institutions and a civil society organizations from nine countries plus an European organization -each member of the consortium cooperates with a national stakeholder committee plus an European committee.

Main goal is to redefine the European Social Model, examining the crossed effect of different type of policies on the enhancing of Active Citizenship, an idea of social participation of disabled persons based on three pillars: security, autonomy and influence.

The main point of analysis of the project is based on the collection and processing of data through interviews with over 217 people with disabilities in 9 European countries.

COMPARISON DISCIT – INCLUD-ED

	Modalities and communications	Timing	Language	Outcomes	Model of interactions (Muhonen et al. 2018)
DISCIT	<p>Circular exchange of information</p> <p>Diffusion and discussion of the methods of analysis with external stakeholders</p>	Intense involvement of stakeholders in the review and investigation phases, partial discussion of policy proposals	Harmonization between countries and areas of interest	<p>Formal involvement in policy making process</p> <p>Exchange of best practices</p> <p>Cultural impact: new idea of disability</p>	<p>Collaboration model</p> <p>Research engagement</p> <p>Knowledge ‘creeps’ into society model</p>
INCLUD-ED	Dedicated events for targeted stakeholders (training for teachers, dissemination for scholars, political meetings for institutional representatives)	Continuous involvement of all stakeholders along the five years of the project	Communicative methodology	<p>Formal stakeholders’ involvement in knowledge creation</p> <p>Replicability of the outputs in different national and institutional contexts</p>	<p>Collaboration model</p> <p>Public engagement model</p> <p>Mobility model</p>

SUMMING UP

In both cases:

- Stakeholders involvement produced a different approach to the social problem addressed
- Cultural impact (new language, wording) is extremely important but difficult to measure or to single out through empirical observations
- Political impact takes a long time to emerge (beyond a project time limit) but it is directly linked to the cultural impact
- Good practices exchanges and guidelines are important means for productive interactions generating impact beyond the project participants

Special features:

- Institutional barriers are present and affected the sustainability of the impacts produced
- Claim of negative effects of stakeholders' involvement on the quality of research (capability to pursue innovative approaches)

WHAT LESSONS FOR EVALUATION?

Ex-ante evaluation

- Theory-based approach for stakeholders' involvement (Habermas' theory of agents of social change/Active citizenship approach)
- Conceptual framework of the projects designing ways and degree of stakeholders contribution to impact pathway

Ex-post assessment

- Stakeholders help to follow effects derived from the project for a longer period and in different national and institutional contexts, figuring out limitations in the results achieved and problems of impact sustainability.
- Common harmonized language is a key result for generating cultural impact.
- Stakeholders' contribution as carriers for political impact is very relevant.

Room for further investigation:

- research project results can produce different impacts in different contexts
- possible trade-off in SS between pursuing an impact and the quality of the outputs

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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