What Methods to Evaluate
Social Innovation in Mountain Areas?

A Reflection on Specific Critical Issues

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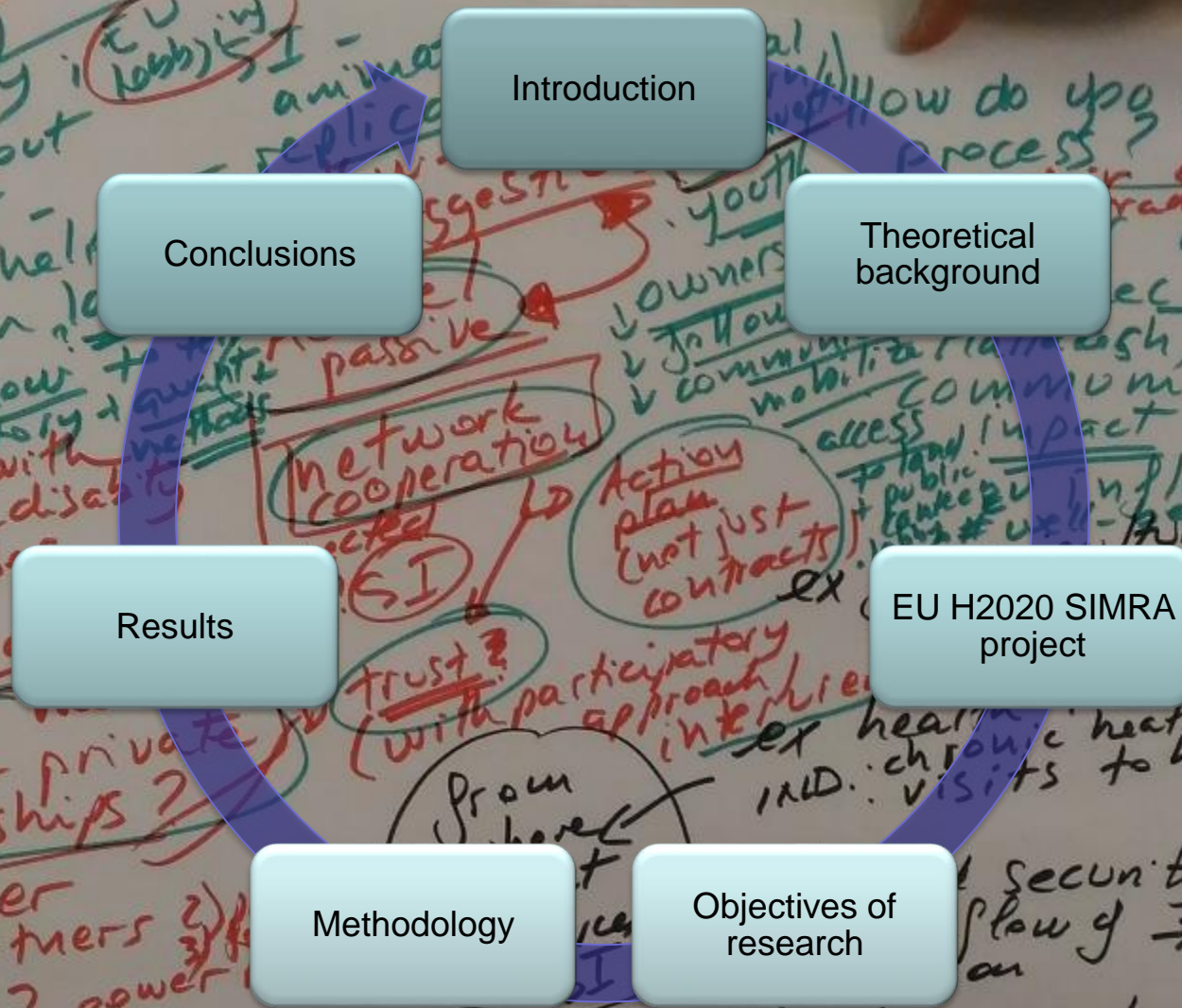
- SI as **the capacity to create and implement new ideas that are likely to deliver value** (thus meeting individual economic interests), **contemporarily responding to social demands** (thus meeting societal needs), that are traditionally not addressed by markets or existing institutions (e.g. BEPA, 2011; Anderson et al., 2015).

- SI might include (EC, 2013 and 2015):
  - new **institutional environments and arrangements** (e.g. *new formal or informal rules, new administrative procedures*);
  - new **fields of activity** (e.g. *social entrepreneurships and social enterprises, new social uses of forests*);
  - new **actors' relationships and interactions** (e.g. *new forms of collaboration, new networks; new attitudes, values and behaviours*).

https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/policy/social_en

Schumpeterian innovation	Social innovation
Product	**New outcomes**: new businesses, organisations, services or products (social end)
Process/methods of production	**New approaches** to value creation and policy/service delivery, new people involved and shifting control of processes
Exploitation of new markets	Serving the breadth of society; responding to **social needs (local demand)**
Inputs	Maximizing the use of **local resources**, including **human and social capital**
Organisational innovations	**Network approaches** and innovative partnerships

(Bosworth et al., 2016: 5)
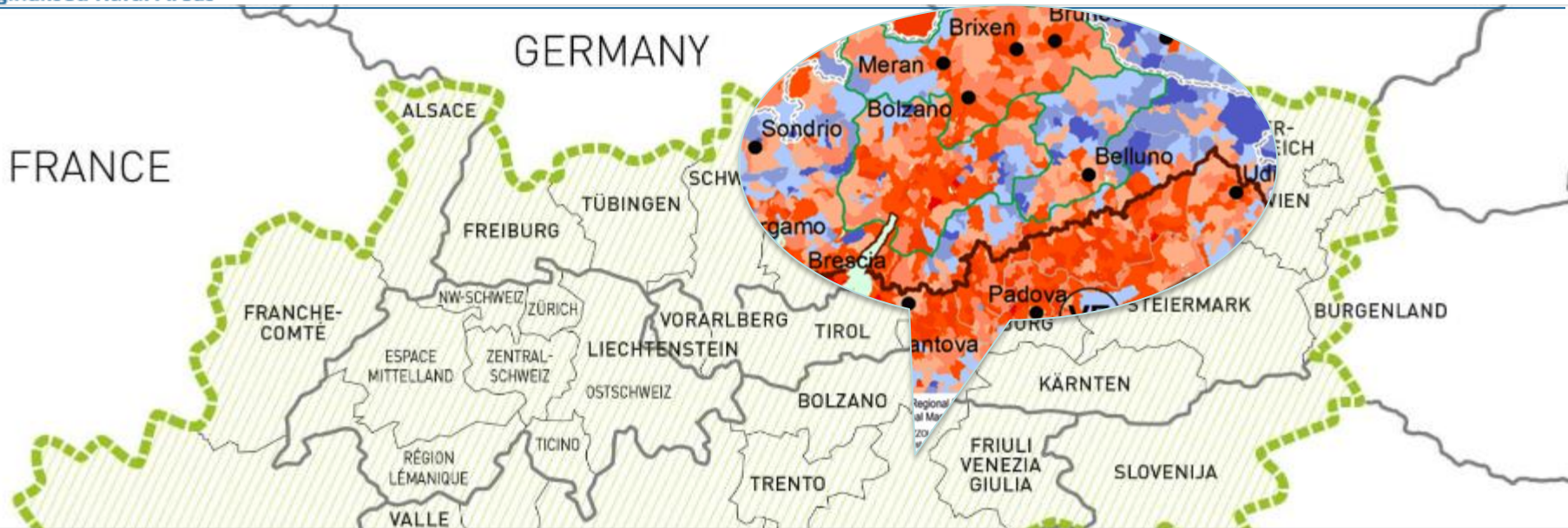
Alpine areas are often characterised by marginalisation processes

- **Ageing** of local population and **demographic decline** (e.g. – 2,6% between 2011-2015 in Belluno Province in the North-East of Italy)
- Inadequate or **limited access to public mobility**
- Continuous **loss of social services**
- Socio-cultural identify under threat
- Reduced entrepreneurial spirit /innovation capacity (if compared to other contexts)
- **Abandoned** or semi-abandoned **agricultural and forestry areas**

1960
Photo: G. Frescura

2015
Photo: M. Guadagnini

Solivi di Fastro in the Belluno Province (North-eastern Italy)

1

Identify whether and how existing methods, approaches and tools can be used or adapted to propose a **new evaluation framework** that measures **SI and its impacts in mountain areas.**

2

Identify specific **critical issues for evaluation** of SI and impacts in mountain areas.

3.

Reflect on how evaluation of SI can support more **effective mountain development policies**.

Objective 1: method, tool and results (1.1)

Analysis and selection of existing methods, approaches and tools **based on the literature review** of **SI and Evaluation** in rural and mountain areas

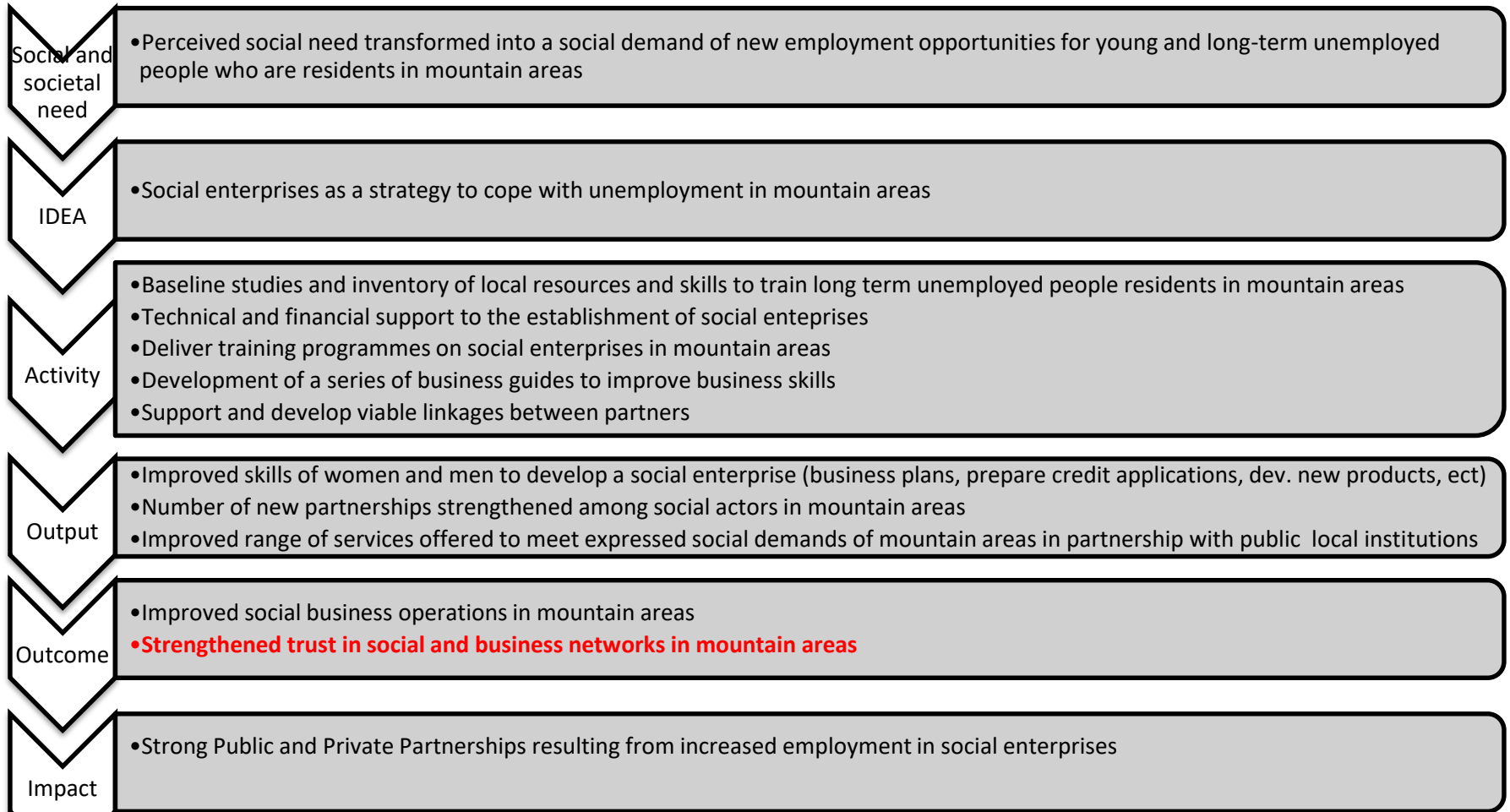## Database of SI methods, approaches and tools

Section 1. General characteristics of the framework/approach/method/tool	Section 2. Specificity to SI of the framework/approach/method/tool	Section3. Evaluation characteristics of the framework/approach/method	Sheet 4. Features of the tools (within methods, approaches or frameworks)
ID	ID	ID	ID
Name of assessment framework/approach/method/tool	Name of assessment framework/approach method/tool	Name of assessment framework/approach/method/tool	Name of tool
Abstract/Summary of the framework/approach/method/tool	Explicit reference to SI of the assessment framework, approach, method or tool	Meaning of the terms (framework, approach, method, tool) as used in the reference.	Data source
Evaluation design	Reference to Approach	Participatory approaches assessment	Scope and details of application of the tool
Full reference	Type of innovation considered	Evaluator	Primary data sources
Website address	Relation to domain	Counterfactual analysis	Secondary data sources
Source	Sector focus	Evaluation approach	Strengths and advantages of the tool
Intended context of application	Territorial of intersectoral focus	Evaluation phase	Weaknesses and limitations of the tool

Mountain regions, territories of innovation, Grenoble, France, 11-13 January 2017

Objective 1: method, tool and results (1.2)

Propose a **new evaluation framework** that measures **SI and its impacts in mountain areas** based on the **THEORY OF CHANGE**

Result-chain tool

Social and societal need
- Perceived social need transformed into a social demand of new employment opportunities for young and long-term unemployed people who are residents in mountain areas

IDEA
- Social enterprises as a strategy to cope with unemployment in mountain areas

Activity
- Baseline studies and inventory of local resources and skills to train long term unemployed people residents in mountain areas
- Technical and financial support to the establishment of social enteprises
- Deliver training programmes on social enterprises in mountain areas
- Development of a series of business guides to improve business skills
- Support and develop viable linkages between partners

Output
- Improved skills of women and men to develop a social enterprise (business plans, prepare credit applications, dev. new products, ect)
- Number of new partnerships strengthened among social actors in mountain areas
- Improved range of services offered to meet expressed social demands of mountain areas in partnership with public local institutions

Outcome
- Improved social business operations in mountain areas
- **Strengthened trust in social and business networks in mountain areas**

Impact
- Strong Public and Private Partnerships resulting from increased employment in social enterprises

Objective 1: method, tool and results (1.3)

Outcome indicator based on the result-chain tool proposed

Indicator	Strengthened trust in social and business networks in marginalised mountain areas	
Description	The indicator measures changes in trust over time among members of social and business networks in marginalised mountain areas	
References	Survey to the social network members	Survey to the business network members
Question	Over the last five years, has your trust in the members of the network	
Responses and codes	Improved (1) Remained the same (2) Worsened (3)	Improved (1) Remained the same (2) Worsened (3)
Response range	[1,2,3]	[1,2,3]
Calculation	Weighted average of responses	Weighted average of responses
Final range	[1-3]	[1-3]

Objective 2: method, tool and results

Identify specific **critical issues for evaluation** of SI and impacts in mountain areas by means of participatory approaches with SIMRA's stakeholders

World cafè with stakeholders

Need for both **outcome-oriented and process-oriented** evaluation methods

Process-oriented
Provides indications of success and failure
Context dependent and 'informal'
Need for qualitative indicators

Outcome-oriented
Political expectation
Quantitative indicators
Part of learning process

Need for both **participatory and experts-based** evaluation methods

Participatory-based
Validation and legitimacy
Better implementation and adoption
But, takes longer and requires follow-up to avoid loss of interest

Expert-based
Addresses potential bias
Lends objectivity and credibility
Helps to craft a convincing story for policymakers

Primary and secondary data should be complementary (triangulation required)

Secondary data
Not available for SI, only for enterprise innovation
Not available at the local scale

Primary data
SI is locally oriented→ requires primary data
Importance of focusing on "soft data":
Perceptions, visions, expectations
Time, funding and willingness to collect it

Mixed qualitative and quantitative methods needed

Qualitative methods:
More suited to measure SI
Give in-depth information (descriptive) about case study/process
But, can be subjective
Long training of evaluator
More expensive to measure

Quantitative methods:
Easier to communicate to policy makers
Easier to measure
But, can also be subjective depending on how data is treated

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Objective 3: method, tool and results

Reflect on **how the evaluation of SI and its impacts** can support more **effective mountain development policies** by means of participatory approaches

World cafè with stakeholders

The evaluation of SI can help address social demands of vulnerable groups in marginalised mountain areas:

- **Long-term unemployed**: training, local employment opportunities;
- **Persons with disabilities:** access to health assistance centres and transport, leisure, reduced barriers, work integration, e.g. social farms;
- **Minority groups**: integration, recognition, dignity, respect, voice;
- **Women**: child care provisioning services; assistance for childbirth and post-childbirth care; options for increasing career development;
- **Offenders, Elders, Children and youth.**

The evaluation of SI can help address the societal challenges in marginalised mountain areas:

- **Ageing:** accessible and sustainable access to health care and services
- **Migration:** new employment opportunities in MRAs, e.g. living labs, rural social enterprises, rural social cooperatives
- **Climate change:** green products and services, e.g. ecosystem service.

C. Burlando

After consultation with stakeholders, **a clearer definition of social innovation is needed** to develop an effective and comprehensive evaluation framework.

The **evaluation methods and tools need to be differentiated** according to, and properly tailored to:

- the needs and purpose of the evaluation;

- the type of project under evaluation;

- the scope of the evaluation i.e., whether it is a process or a "result/outcome" evaluation.

The **identification of specific critical issues in the evaluation of SI** in mountain areas **can support more effective and inclusive mountain development policies** by:

- Adopting **indicators** that capture the tangible and intangible elements of SI (*e.g. network building, trust, quality of participation, strength of ties, policy response*)

- Highlighting the importance of **following the story** and **supporting processes** that lead to SI in MRAs, rather than simple outcomes (e.g. number of new jobs created)

- Understanding the **complexity** in the identification of indicators and the appropriate 'evaluation moments'

Join our discussions in SIMRA!

Tell us about cases of SI in MRA
Contribute to our blog
http://www.simra-h2020.eu/

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