Measuring, researching, narrating: Discussing the (social) impact of restorative justice

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Theoretical background
Impact evaluation: definition and aims

- Impact - ‘positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended’ (OECD, 2002); it refers to changes in the undesired conditions tackled by the intervention

- “Result is the specific dimension of well-being and progress for people that motivates policy action, i.e. what is intended to be changed, with the contribution of the interventions designed” (EC, 2014, pp.7)

- Impact is the change that can be credibly attributed to an intervention/to which an intervention contributed

Impact evaluation: definition and aims

• Impact evaluation - ‘(...) assessing changes in the well-being of individuals, households, communities or firms that can be attributed to a particular project, programme or policy’ (World Bank, 2016, pp.4)

• Impact evaluation - “evaluating the positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects on final beneficiaries that result from a development intervention; assessing the direct and indirect causal contribution claims of these interventions to such effects especially for the poor whether intended or unintended; and explaining how policy interventions contribute to an effect so that lessons can be learnt” (DFID, 2012, pp. 12)

• Impact evaluation – evaluations that answer both the following questions: “did the public intervention have an effect at all and if yes, how big – positive or negative – was this effect; why an intervention produces intended (and unintended) effects” (European Commission, 2014, pp. 6)

• Various applications: policies, programmes, reforms, laws (e.g. IA, Culture Impact Assessment, Poverty and Social Impact Analysis); projects (IAIA Guidelines); products/services (Social Lifecycle Assessment)
### Approaches to impact evaluation: various approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Approaches</th>
<th>Specific Variants</th>
<th>Basis for Causal Inference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>RCTs, Quasi Experiments, Natural Experiments</td>
<td>Counterfactuals; the co-presence of cause and effects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistical</td>
<td>Statistical Modelling, Longitudinal Studies, Econometrics</td>
<td>Correlation between cause and effect or between variables, influence of (usually) isolable multiple causes on a single effect, Control for ‘confounders’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Causal mechanism designs: Realist evaluation, Congruence analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Case-based’</td>
<td>Interpretative: Naturalistic, Grounded theory, Ethnography</td>
<td>Comparison across and within cases of combinations of causal factors, Analytic generalisation based on theory</td>
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<td>approaches</td>
<td>Structured: Configurations, QCA, Within-Case Analysis, Simulations and network analysis</td>
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<td>Participatory</td>
<td>Normative designs: Participatory or democratic evaluation, Empowerment evaluation</td>
<td>Validation by participants that their actions and experienced effects are ‘caused’ by programme, Adoption, customisation and commitment to a goal</td>
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<td>Agency designs: Learning by doing, Policy dialogue, Collaborative Action Research</td>
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<td>Synthesis studies</td>
<td>Meta analysis, Narrative synthesis, Realist based synthesis</td>
<td>Accumulation and aggregation within a number of perspectives (statistical, theory based, ethnographic etc.)</td>
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Source: DFID (2012, pp. 36) Broadening the range of designs and methods for impact evaluations
Approaches to impact evaluation: some examples

• **Approaches based on attribution** (e.g. counterfactual): how much of the impacts of the analysed intervention are linked to the intervention itself; instrumental use of the evaluation ("did it work?")

• **Theory-based approaches** (e.g. theory of change, social mechanisms): "causation without explanation is insufficient for policy learning" (Stern et al, 2012); causal claims about whether, why, how and for whom an intervention has contributed to an impact - **CONTATTO EVALUATION**

• **Social Return on Investment** – framework for measuring and monetizing the social and environmental value creation
### THEORY BASED APPROACHES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory Driven Evaluation (Chen and Rossi)</th>
<th>Theory-Based Evaluation (Carol Weiss)</th>
<th>Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley)</th>
<th>Theory of Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation should provide programmes with a good social science theory</td>
<td>Examination of &quot;how and why&quot; of programmes</td>
<td>Evaluation is a &quot;rational activity in a political environment&quot;</td>
<td>Causal claims about how an intervention reaches its objectives and under what conditions</td>
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<td>Mechanisms of change: not the programme activities, but the response generated by these activities</td>
<td>Focus on actors</td>
<td>CMO configuration: context-mechanism–outcome</td>
<td>Looks at an intervention as a ‘conjunction of causes that follows a sequence ’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Generative causation: changes are not brought about by programmes, but by actors who, when exposed to programmes, activate specific mechanisms</td>
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<td>In simple forms they limit to logical models; in complex forms they also include causal mechanisms</td>
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**Theory of Change**

### SOCIAL MECHANISMS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social mechanisms: triggers for change in actors’ behaviour derived from reflections and new understandings of a situation in which actors find themselves</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results are changes in actors’ behaviours</strong></td>
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<td>Change does not happen spontaneously; something needs to be done in order to bring about change</td>
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<td>Understand if the policy intervention produces lasting changes in actors’ behaviours</td>
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<td><strong>Changes follow actors’ reasoning</strong></td>
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<td>Not all people react to an external stimulus or input in a similar way</td>
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<td>People change, or do not change, their behaviour based on personal considerations given the situation to hand: e.g. convenience, reputation, values</td>
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<td><strong>Actors’ behaviours are shaped by contextual elements (institutions, policy features)</strong></td>
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<td>Culture and sociological characteristics</td>
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<td>Institutions define what is allowed and what is not</td>
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<td>Characteristics of the policy and of its implementation process, characteristics, roles and activities of the actors involved</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Mechanisms facilitate the achievement of results</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide convincing explanations of why context elements combined with policy solutions shape the behaviour of actors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shaped by the situations in which actors are involved</td>
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Melloni E., Pesce F., Vasilescu C. (2016) Are social mechanisms usable and useful in evaluation research
Application of the theory of change approach to ConTatto project: school interventions

Evaluation team: Cristina Vasilescu and Gaia Giombelli
Special thanks to the ConTatto school working group coordinated by Tiziana Mannello for their active support to the monitoring and evaluation of school interventions
ConTatto project

- Como province: Como (85,543 inhabitants), Lomazzo, Mozzate (8,628 inhabitants), Rovellasca (7,878 inhabitants), Fino Mornasco (9,779)
- Ranks 91 out of 106 Italian provinces by number of denunciations with 2,176 denunciations/100,000 inhabitants (2021, Lab 24)
- Budget: 1,000,000 Euro (50% co-funded); 3% dedicated to evaluation, including also co-funding
- Founded by a banking foundation within a Welfare community programme
- 3 years of implementation (2017-2020)
- 12 partners and over 70 stakeholders supporting its delivery
- Values: kind relations; mutual responsibility; mutual trust; inclusion and participation; recognising the other as an equal and worthy interlocutor; truth through dialogue; respect of the differences; respect for human dignity; solidarity; accountability
**Aims and activities**

- Experiment a welfare model interpreted as a restorative and relational community in the province of Como

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 1</th>
<th>Task 2</th>
<th>Task 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task 1 – Raise awareness and inform intervention contexts on restorative justice</td>
<td>Task 2 – Activate intermediary bodies</td>
<td>Task 3 – Implement learning laboratories targeted to the project beneficiaries</td>
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<td>Task 4 – Test practices of conflict management and resolution through restorative practices</td>
<td>Task 5 – Raise awareness on restorative justice of actors of the justice system</td>
<td>Task 6 – Test restorative practices embedded in justice procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task 7 – Activate restorative paths targeted to victims of crimes</td>
<td>Task 8 – Communication and fundraising</td>
<td>Task 9 – Governance and monitoring</td>
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4 schools (Como, Mozzate, Lomazzo); both primary and low and upper secondary students; classrooms selected by the schools; voluntary participation of schools, teachers, parents and partially of students

Co-design groups; 8 peer education initiatives – 160 students; 21 learning laboratories for students – 229 students; 10 laboratories for teachers – 58 teachers; 7 laboratories for parents – 19 parents; 8 joint meetings – 177 participants; toolkit for the delivery of restorative justice interventions in schools;
Evaluation questions

• To what extent has the project achieved progress towards the expected changes for the foreseen target groups?
• To what extent has the project produced unexpected changes?
• To what extent has the project produced changes for other groups as well?
• How have the changes occurred?
• Which have been the main social mechanisms favouring/hindering the achievement of expected changes?
• To what extent the achieved changes will continue?
• To what extent has the project contributed to the objectives of the Community welfare programme: i.e. innovation of welfare policies; creation of community relations and valorisation of personal, family and community resources; co-creation and co-production of welfare policies
Evaluation process and activities

• Definition of the project logical framework (and also redefinition) part of the feasibility study (first stage of the tender) of the project foreseen by the Foundation; design of the logical framework by the project staff, evaluation team with the support of a consultant nominated by the funder

• Counterfactual approach not accepted by the project officer of the Foundation

• Internal evaluator (evaluation team of ConTatto) and external Welfare programme evaluator nominated by the funder

• Monitoring and evaluation grids designed by the external evaluator and common for all Welfare projects; adapted to ConTatto by the internal evaluator

• Continuous monitoring of the project

• Pre-post testing (only 1 year) - methodology requested by the funder; yearly school commitment; worked only in some schools

• Definition of the Theory of change of school interventions

• Interviews with project staff involved in the school activities, teachers coordinating the classrooms involved in the project, parents involved in laboratories (often parents of children involved in the project); focus groups with students of each classroom involved in the project; post intervention survey with students involved in the peer education; use of story creation on restorative justice as an evaluation tool; world cafe

• Discussion of the evaluation findings with the project staff, each school and all schools together
The programme theory of change: a “simplified” use - logical framework

Overall change: limitation and ideally overcoming of the contrast between parties involved in a conflict through the implementation of community restorative practices able to promote the consensual meeting between them. In particular, the pursued change is articulated as it follows:

1. Creation of the cultural conditions in the identified contexts for the activation of a restorative community

2. Reconstruction of social bonds between citizens as well as between citizens, their representatives and institutions and interconnection of the resources of the community in order to provide an integrated and participated answer to the situations that generate conflicts.

3. Increase and diversification of the opportunities for victims’ listening, support and empowerment and creation of bridges between all parties involved in conflicts also through joint and restorative oriented actions.

4. Reduction in antisocial behaviour and prevention of crimes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Expected impact</th>
<th>Output indicator</th>
<th>Verification source</th>
<th>Expected final target</th>
<th>Achieved final target year</th>
<th>Result indicator</th>
<th>Expected final target</th>
<th>Achieved target year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of learning journeys on restorative justice and practices for the various target groups</td>
<td>Delivery of restorative learning courses in schools</td>
<td>3 courses implemented during the three years for each school</td>
<td>Increased knowledge and competences of the participants in recognising, intercepting and managing conflicts in a restorative way</td>
<td>Number of courses targeted to teachers, students and parents in each school involved in the project</td>
<td>Signatures record/activity report</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>% of participants that declare an improvement in their knowledge and competences on restorative management of conflicts</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100% of teachers participating in the evaluation activities (i.e. 52% of the overall teachers involved in the course)</td>
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</table>
The programme theory: a “complexified” use in the interventions targeted to schools

- Laboratories targeted to students
  - Knowledge of interpersonal and conflict dynamics
    - Awareness of the relational dynamics within the classroom, awareness of conflict elements, awareness of conflicts as an opportunity for the reconstruction of relations and not as a fracture of them, awareness of the impact of one's behavior on the others...
  - Positive and dynamic vision of conflicts
    - Knowledge of conflicts as an appeal part of the community life from which does not need to escape and that has to be dealt with as an opportunity to reconstruct relations
  - Attention to the communication with the others (not interrupt others when they talk, wait for the others to finish their discourse before talking, listen to the needs of the others and understanding and respecting others views, even if diverse, critical express one's feelings in a peaceful way to negative behaviors of the others, discuss without fighting, use a nonviolent and peaceful language...)

- Attention to the care of relations (respect one's colleagues, attention to the other's emotions, thoughts and needs and their respect, suspension of the judgement, interest to know one's colleagues, interest to talk with all colleagues, ...)
- Pay attention to the classroom as a whole (attention to the interests of the classroom as a group, responsibility towards the classroom, ...)
- Capacity and availability to manage conflicts in a restorative way (openly openly about conflicts, understanding the views, the feelings and the emotions of all parties involved, reflect on the causes of the basis of conflicts, identify shared solutions for the management of conflicts, that do not damage parties involved and that take into account their needs, active and responsible participation to the management of the conflict of all parties involved in a conflict)

- Improvement in the classroom climate and in the learning context (increase in students' attention during the lesson, reduction in the tensions between students, students and teachers, etc., trust in expressing one's views and feelings, feel part of the classroom, trust in the others...)

- Reduction of suspensions
  - Reduction of antisocial behaviors (e.g., bullying, discrimination, school shaming)
  - Improvement in certain capacities of students (e.g., analytical capacity, capacity to understand and elaborate complex information, capacity to express oneself)

- Continuous feedback

Context factors
  - Existing level of analytical capacity of students
  - Existing level of students' ability to express oneself in Italian
  - Previous involvement in activities aimed to improve students' soft skills and their level of soft skills
  - Habit to work in groups
  - Habit to openly discuss about feelings and emotions
  - Level of trust in each other

Design features & mechanisms
  - Whole school approach and long period of intervention
  - Restorative practices embedded within teaching and school regulations
  - Co-design and co-production of activities to be implemented
  - Use of informal settings not necessarily connected to the class context to enhance communication (especially in case of conflicts)
  - Creation of concrete outputs that can commit participants and provide them with a "fratification"
  - Use of interactive tools that can trigger curiosity, interest, enthusiasm, self-efficacy, learning by doing
  - Use of safe sharing spaces to trigger attributional retraining
Outcomes

• Increase in knowledge of restorative justice (all schools)
• Increase in students’ awareness regarding conflict dynamics in their classroom, but also outside school: e.g. increase in knowledge on their colleagues; greater recognition of conflicts; better understanding of the effects of one’ behaviour especially (not in all schools)
• Higher attention to the care for relations: e.g. higher collaboration between students, higher opening to relating with other colleagues and to create new connections, higher respect for others; tendency to overcome prejudices; improvement in students’ relations (not in all schools; not the same intensity in all classrooms)
• Higher attention to communication with the others: e.g. overcoming fear to express one’s feelings; increase in dialogue and sharing with teachers; peaceful/positive way of expressing; attention to the language used (not in all schools; not the same intensity in all classrooms)
• Activation of a process of reflection on one’s own behaviour as well as on the facts that happen at school: e.g. higher reflection on the causes of conflicts, one one’s actions, words as well as higher understanding of the consequences of less respectful behaviour towards teachers; higher attention to put oneself in the others’ shoes (not in all schools; not the same intensity in all classrooms)
• Positive and dynamic vision of conflicts: e.g. new reading of conflicts; conflicts not as a fracture but as a dialogue (not in all schools; not the same intensity in all classrooms)
• Attention to the classroom’s interests: e.g. solidity of relations, interest in supporting colleagues (only in one school and classroom)
• Conflict management in a restorative way: e.g. conflict management through dialogue and in a peaceful way (not same intensity in all schools)
• Improvement in the learning context (especially in one school)
Evaluating restorative justice: lessons learnt
How to evaluate outcomes of restorative justice: lessons learnt (1)

- **No standard and ideal theoretical and methodological framework** – approach adapted to the intervention and learning needs of stakeholders;

- **Attributive approaches** – provide an answer to the “did it work” and “for whom it worked” questions; use with caution:
  - The counterfactual group is not always possible/easy to create: e.g. RJ interventions adopting a “whole school approach”, interventions at community level
  - Ethical issues especially when there is an ex-ante selection
  - RJ outcomes especially in community RJ interventions are often deriving from multiple interventions taking place in a context and can be difficult to attribute them to a single intervention: e.g. some schools participating in ConTatto had multiple programmes dealing with soft skills improvement, reduction/prevention of bullying, civic education
  - Does not provide an answer to the “why it worked and how it worked” questions
  - In case of pre-post testing, attention to the stability of the group (same participants at the beginning and at the end) and definition of outcomes to be expected and measured

- **Contributive theory based approaches**:
  - Provide an answer to “did it work; form whom; why and how” questions
  - Based on the awareness that restorative activities intervene in a complex setting where other projects/initiatives are delivered and that they are also influenced by the social context
  - Need for a definition of the project theory since the design phase of the project
  - Need for a good knowledge of the restorative justice topic and scheme analysed; **not a design done by the evaluator**, but a **common effort of the project staff and stakeholders** facilitated by the evaluator
  - In **highly innovative RJ interventions** it may be **complex to design a theory of change** — other approaches should be used (e.g. **outcome harvesting**, see Ricardo Wilson-Grau, 2014)
How to evaluate outcomes of restorative justice: lessons learnt

• Mixed approaches - more suited to evaluate complex programmes
• Any kind of evaluation (continuous or impact) needs to be recognized as a valuable learning activity by the project staff and be supported by at least part of the project staff in order to prevent the evaluation to be seen as a “tick” activity, especially in contexts not used to evaluation
• Independent evaluator, but acknowledged as reputable in the restorative intervention field by the project staff
• Independent evaluator involved in the project since the beginning and throughout the project
• Impact evaluation should be accompanied by continuous evaluation or at least continuous monitoring, especially in the case of highly innovative interventions, to provide continuous learning on the intervention implemented
• Need for relevant time resources for the effects of restorative justice interventions to be deployed – long-term evaluations
• Need for adequate skills on both evaluation and restorative justice
• Need for adequate budget
• The values of restorative justice should be embedded in the evaluation of restorative justice interventions
Find out more on impact evaluation
References


Website on monitoring and evaluation approaches, methodologies and tools:
• https://www.betterevaluation.org/en
Thank you for the attention!

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