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D4.1

Report on the results of the literature review on co-evaluation, including key findings and recommendations

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Co-assessing co-production benefits to reduce inequalities

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Table of contents

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Introduction

Purpose of this document

“Is our program working?” “And how are our activities / projects evolving?” “What can we learn from what we have already accomplished in order to improve in the future?” These are key questions to ask ourselves from the start of our activities, not only for the sake of accountability but with an eye on *learning* and creating maximum benefits for everyone (from partners to local communities).

In this report, we look at different collaborative evaluation methods which allow for a multiplicity of program and community stakeholders to be involved in the evaluation or follow-up process of our program.

The aim is not to focus on performance of the program alone, but to work collaboratively, to ensure that different contexts are understood, that multiple stakeholder and community perspectives are taken into account (especially of the most vulnerable and marginalized segments), and that data collection tools are appropriate in terms of meaning and feasibility. This, in order to “make evaluation an honest and ongoing discussion rather than a bureaucratic process” (Maccoby, 2003).

This report therefore aims to propose a method for co-evaluation that can not only inform the program implementation (for the sake of program improvement), but also enhance learning, which can benefit all program stakeholders (from program initiators to end users).

The report draws on (evaluation) literature, but also on collaborative and participatory program evaluation guides (Unicef, USAID), as well as insights derived from Fairville workshops with citizens and program partners (Brussels’ Open Citizen Meeting).

Organization of the document

In the first part of this report, a short history of (collaborative) evaluation is first presented, and a diversity of concepts related to participatory evaluation are discussed which are important background information to explain our own “follow-up” methodology.

In this first part, we will also discuss how participatory evaluation differs from other approaches, which are its functions and benefits.

In the last part we focus on “co-evaluation design”, covering “What” to co-evaluate (criteria for evaluation), “Who” should be involved in such an evaluation, “When” and “How”. This part thus serves as inspiration and tool to organize our co-evaluation processes within our different Fairville Labs - including a summary of recommendations.

Glossary of terms

In this report, various terms and concepts will be used which can be defined in different ways. For the purpose of this discussion, these terms are defined here in a short glossary (organized in alphabetical order):

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- **Conventional approaches (to evaluation)**: These are top-down approaches to evaluation, which measure program accomplishments against program objectives.
- **Criteria** vs **Indicators** : While criteria are the standards or principles used to evaluate something (they represent the essential elements or attributes that are considered when making a decision or assessing the quality or success of something), indicators are the more specific, observable, and measurable signs or markers that provide evidence or clues about the presence or level of a particular attribute or quality. Indicators are used to assess or measure the criteria.
- **Data collection**: The collection of quantitative and/or qualitative information through the use of various techniques in order to answer questions of importance to the evaluation or study.
- **Efficiency or impact evaluation**: An evaluation that provides information about the impacts produced by an intervention. Were the specific goals reached? Have specific inequalities been tackled/taken into consideration thanks to the actions carried out? The impact is broader than the evaluation of goals alone, but looks at the effects of the actions as a whole. It's a type of program evaluation that aims to determine if there have been changes in the target group members or in their activities because of the program.
- **Follow-up**: The regular documentation and analysis of the FV Lab activities with the goal of improving how the activities are being implemented.
- **Learning Process Approach (to evaluation)**: An approach to evaluation which focuses on developing lessons for future program implementation based on the analysis of program successes and challenges.
- **Lessons learned:** Based on both accomplishments and difficulties in program implementation identified in a program evaluation, lessons which are developed to improve the program in the future.
- **Outcome evaluation**: A type of evaluation, which aims to evaluate the project's achievements (results), compared to the planned objectives and activities (e.g. described in Operational Plans).
- **Process evaluation:** A type of evaluation which focuses on trying to understand *how* activities were implemented. Process evaluations seek to determine what approaches were used, what problems were encountered, what strategies were successful and why.

Co-evaluation: concepts and alternatives

History of (participatory) evaluation

Interest in more collaborative or dialogic approaches to evaluation in research and practice are not new. The concept of co-evaluation, more often known as collaborative or participatory evaluation (see definitions in the next part - "Different way of approaching evaluation"), emerged for the first time around the 1970s (Tapella et al., 2021). While there may not be a single definitive reference or origin point for co-evaluation (the term is not often used as such in literature), the literature and practices in the fields of development

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programs, community engagement and participatory action research (PAR) are key foundations.

According to Brisolara (1996), participatory evaluation developed from the broad field of program evaluation first, particularly within the context of social and community programs. Several key factors contributed to its emergence: First, it mostly emerged as a response to limitations and challenges associated with traditional top-down evaluation methods. Participatory evaluation emerged indeed during a broader shift in the field of evaluation from a technocratic and expert-driven approach to one that emphasizes more collaboration, participation, and empowerment. This shift reflected a growing recognition that those most affected by programs should have a say in how they are evaluated.

The idea of participation in evaluation was also a fundamental component of the broader participatory development movement (Chouinard and Cousins, 2015), which gained momentum starting from the 1970s and 1980s (the beginning of what is sometimes now called a 'participatory turn'). The belief that development projects should involve the active participation of the people they are meant to benefit influenced the development of co-evaluation. Various government agencies, NGOs, and international development organizations for instance recognized the value of involving stakeholders in the evaluation process and began to incorporate co-evaluation principles into their practices.

Next to the practice of (development) program evaluation, on the research side, in the late 20th century, many debates in social sciences were also going on, redefining evaluation. These discussions were related to the purpose of evaluation, the role of evaluators, and which methods to choose (Chouinard, 2013). During the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a growing emphasis on empowerment and social justice in the evaluation field (Mertens, 2009). This gave rise to more participatory and inclusive evaluation approaches that involved a wider range of stakeholders (Fetterman, 1996).

The feminist movement, as well as critical social theory, also challenged traditional evaluation practices and called for a more inclusive, democratic, and contextually sensitive approach to evaluation. These perspectives highlighted the importance of multiple voices and experiences in shaping evaluation. Traditional evaluations were indeed often criticized for being biased, opaque, and influenced by the values and interests of the evaluators (Chouinard, 2013). Collaborative or participatory evaluation methods sought to address these issues by involving multiple stakeholders who could provide different perspectives and insights.

Participatory Action Research, which is closely related to co-evaluation, also gained popularity during this time. PAR is a research approach that emphasizes collaboration, collective inquiry, and social change. Many elements of PAR were integrated into the collaborative or participatory evaluation approaches (Tapella et al., 2021).

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On the research side, the emergence of co-evaluation is also tied to the growing recognition of the value of interdisciplinary collaboration in research and evaluation, emphasizing the need for multiple perspectives and expertise in the evaluation process. Pioneers like Fetterman, Scriven, and others have contributed significantly to the development of collaborative and participatory evaluation during that period. They advocated for involving stakeholders in defining evaluation questions, collecting data, and interpreting findings (Fetterman, 2001).

Finally, when looking at public programs, New Public Management (NPM) has played an important role in redefining evaluation processes. In the 1980s and 1990s, reforms in public administration in western societies have started to increasingly emphasize performance measurement and accountability, in order to justify the dismantling of traditional government bodies. Behn (2001) describes NPM as ‘‘the entire collection of tactics and strategies that seek to enhance the performance of the public sector—to improve the ability of governmental agencies and their nonprofit and for-profit collaborators to produce results’’. This led to a growing interest in involving more stakeholders and beneficiaries in assessing the performance of public policies and programs, in order to improve results (= an instrumental approach to collaborative evaluation) (Hood, 1991).

Over time, the field of evaluation has continued to evolve, with co-evaluation methods and principles being refined and adapted to various contexts and sectors. Overall, collaborative and participatory evaluation methods have been adopted today in various fields, including education, healthcare, community development, public programs, ... Many researchers and practitioners in the evaluation field have written about the value and benefits of involving many diverse stakeholders in the evaluation process and the transformational impacts this participation can generate.

Different ways of approaching evaluation

Our follow-up or co-evaluation process in the case of Fairville fulfills different functions.

First, the results of the evaluation should of course provide information to program managers and our funding agency regarding whether program objectives have been met and planned activities have been carried out.

But also, very importantly, this follow-up should lead to the elaboration of **lessons** that will help all involved participants to improve activities and actions in the future. To better define our approach to evaluation, different views on evaluation are discussed below.

Conventional approach or learning approach
Expert-driven & top-down or participatory & bottom-up approach
A balance between outcome - and process- based evaluation
Ethical view and pragmatic views on evaluation

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A conventional or 'learning' approach?

A first discussion during the Brussels' Fairville Meetings was about the aim of co-evaluation. The very concept of co-evaluation, which implies the term "evaluation" (assessment), evokes numerous ideas among project partners, and is sometimes challenged or considered "non adequate", as evaluation would lead us to fail in our main aim which should be reflecting, investigating, learning, experimenting (in creative ways)... Which is not always possible if action is guided by an initial "blueprint", even if that blueprint is created collectively.

> *"(...) Evaluation makes failing not a way of learning, but something that can/should be sanctioned - which, in research, makes no sense. Co-production sometimes, even often, encounters difficulties or fails: as such and/or to reduce inequalities. Understanding why and how is as essential as demonstrating success: reflecting on obstacles and blockages as much as on advances and successes."*
>
> **Claire, Marseille, after Open Citizen Meeting (translated from French)**

Indeed, in the traditional approach to program planning, objectives and activities are initially outlined in a blueprint, guiding the program's implementation. Monitoring and evaluation focus on quantifying the completion of activities and objectives, such as the number of citizens trained or community meetings held.

But since the 2000s, critical voices have started raising their concerns about the real impact of these kinds of program evaluations. "Evaluation is failing to help make the social sector more effective" (Snibbe, 2006, p. 40). Several authors point to "the wasted time and effort spent on creating reports for a multitude of funders, which contribute little to improving program effectiveness" (Hoole and Patterson, 2008). It is argued that this approach lacks a structured system for understanding why activities succeeded or failed, providing feedback for plan modification.

Program evaluators are increasingly discussing how the real impact of evaluations does not lie in findings or results only, but going through the *process* of (co-)evaluating equally brings a lot of value, especially regarding **learning** (Preskill and Torres, 1999).

"If evaluation is not tied to the organization's mission and does not contribute to the fundamental understanding of the people and issues the organization serves but is instead undertaken from accountability pressures or conflicting stakeholder demands, evaluation fails the social sector. This is why it is crucial for evaluation within an organization to support the development of **a learning culture**." (Hoole and Patterson, 2008).

The "learning process approach" to program planning and implementation, involves defining objectives and activities upfront, similar to the conventional (blueprint) approach. However, in this approach, monitoring and evaluation focus not only on the completion of planned activities but also on understanding *how* they are carried out. Qualitative information, emphasizing the process of each activity, takes precedence, enabling

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participants to learn from successes and problems, leading to continuous improvements in program activities and strategies throughout implementation. All levels of participants, including community actors, actively participate in follow-up and evaluation, contributing valuable observations and suggestions to enhance program effectiveness.

In the case of this report, we want to look at a co-evaluation which therefore does not embrace simple goals of performance, but our evaluation ideas embrace more "transformative" goals as well (Preskill and Torres, 1999). Specifically, we are interested in the use of evaluation to facilitate this type of learning. Our focus, next to observing achievements, is on the learning that occurs from the start of the evaluative process until the outcomes. See also "transformative evaluation" in the next chapter on "Alternative concepts".

A participatory & bottom-up approach (instead of expert-driven & top-down)

A second important discussion we had during the Open Citizen Meeting is : "How to define success?" and most importantly "Who defines what success means ?"

The standard of evaluation is indeed traditionally considered to be impartial, objective, and evidence based (Greene, 2005). In the traditional approach to program evaluation, a few (outside) evaluators take full responsibility for defining objectives, designing methodology, and formulating conclusions, which is believed to bring objectivity. However, this approach can lead to a top-down dynamic, with participants of a program feeling excluded and uncomfortable due to the perceived secrecy and reliance on evaluation experts, leading to disinterest and alienation from the evaluation process (Aubel, 1999). This approach to evaluation can therefore also fail in capturing the range of local views, contextualized meanings, and culturally relevant perspectives that are increasingly relevant today (Chouinard, 2013). It usually creates a disconnection between program evaluators, who value efficiency the most, versus participants, who value meaningful and flexible evaluation methods.

> *"We don't feel at ease with measuring "efficiency"; it's a very managerial approach to evaluation (...). We need the evaluation to also have its autonomy and* to be "fun", especially for communities where people do not express well verbally."
>
> **Eleni, Fairville Lab West-Attica, Open Citizen Meeting, Brussels**

In the case of our co-evaluation, we do not wish to rely on outside experts, but we promote a participatory approach. Participatory approaches to evaluation can be defined by the engagement of participants in the evaluation process, rather than by any specific set of methods or techniques (Chouinard 2013). The main focus is on whose voices to include, how to include them, and determining how to make unheard voices be heard (Greene, 2000).

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While the emergence of participatory evaluation processes is really representing a paradigm shift in evaluation research (plenty of resources are now available on the topic[1] - on how to implement it and with whom), in practice these resources still fail to be applied more widely. Indeed, participatory approaches tend to be considered still as complex, time-consuming and resourceful, while the technocratic, "scientific" approaches to evaluation are still considered more straightforward, practical, and "rigorous" (Chouinard, 2013).

A balance between outcome and process-based evaluation

Another tension which has been discussed various times within the consortium is outcome versus process-based evaluation. For some Fairville Labs, objectives are very clear and considered to be stable over time, therefore outcome-based evaluation is the most meaningful, for other Labs, plans tend to change over time, and evaluation needs to be more process-based.

> *"Criteria for assessing our work are never stable, but they change over time. (...) We need to have flexible assessment criteria."*
>
> **Ben, Fairville Lab Marseille, Open Citizen Meeting**

In outcome-based evaluations, the focus is to assess whether program activities and objectives have been implemented as intended. This need for evaluation originally grew out of the demands of funding agencies for accountability. For instance, in this approach, the objective can be to measure (in quantifiable ways) the number of people who attended the meeting, or the number of houses which have been renovated, etc. The results should be intended and observable.

> *"For us, the objectives are clear. For example, one of our objectives is to draw up a risk management plan. One criterion for success is the establishment of a co-constructed database with effective elaboration by grassroots populations. There are various indicators: risk management plan developed, dissemination, coordination."*
>
> **Fairville Lab Dakar, Open Citizen Meeting (translated from French)**

On the other hand, process-based evaluation focuses on *how* certain activities are being implemented, and decides *how* they can be improved. For example, how and why did objectives sometimes change? What problems were encountered and how were they tackled? In a process evaluation, the focus on qualitative information is bigger than the quantitative information.

In our case, we would need to find a balance between these two approaches. *See also part on recommendations.*

[1] See for instance www.betterevaluation.org

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Ethical and pragmatic views to evaluation

A last important discussion is the tension between the desirability of organizing evaluation in a participatory, inclusive and collaborative ways, and its feasibility (pragmatic view on evaluation).

> *"Ideally, success would be a constant participation of all local actors [in the follow-up process]. But at the same time, actors also change over time with the change of the neighborhood, which poses a (practical) question."*
>
> **Anna, Fairville Lab Berlin, Open Citizen Meeting**

There can be many different reasons to choose for more collaborative ways of evaluating. A participatory approach to impact evaluation can first be for ethical reasons. The principles behind collaborative evaluation are concepts of inclusivity, social or epistemic justice (i.e., people have a right to knowledge, to be involved in decision making that will directly or indirectly affect them, etc.). And participatory evaluation is then associated with numerous benefits. I.e.: empowerment of participants, building capacity, developing leaders and building teams, sustaining organizational learning and growth (Guijt, 2014). Given these potential gains, it is often assumed that participatory evaluation should involve the widest range of stakeholders.

The benefits of participatory evaluation are not guaranteed, however and involving everyone is not always feasible. Building stakeholder participation into an impact evaluation needs to be meaningful but also practical.

That is why more and more pragmatic views to participatory evaluation also emerge alongside the ethical views. These approaches claim that participatory evaluation can also have benefits in terms of efficiency (i.e., better data, better understanding of the data, more appropriate recommendations, better uptake of findings), but that it requires very specific skills to do so (Guijt, 2014). *See also the part on the recommendations.*

Alternative concepts

As discussed already previously, co-evaluation is a concept which is not often used "as such", but which at the same time is really close to other similar concepts which promote approaches to conducting evaluations in a collaborative and inclusive manner. While they share some similarities, there are distinct (sometimes subtle) differences between the concepts. These different practices, their underlying principles and their nuances can inspire our own process of evaluation.

Collaborative evaluation:
In this practice, evaluators create an ongoing engagement between evaluators and stakeholders, who contribute to data collection and analysis, which stakeholders understand and use. Collaborative evaluation covers a very broad scope of practice,

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ranging from just consultation of a limited number of stakeholders, to full-scale collaboration with many stakeholders at every stage of the evaluation (Fetterman et al., 2014).

- Shulha, L. M. et al. (2016). "Introducing Evidence-Based Principles to Guide Collaborative Approaches to Evaluation", American Journal of Evaluation, 37(2), pp. 193-215.

Participatory evaluation:
As explained in the previous chapter, in this practice, all participants jointly share power and control. It encourages participants to not only become involved in defining the evaluation, but also developing tools, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting and disseminating results.

- Cousins J. B., Chouinard J. A. (2012). *Participatory evaluation up close: A review and integration of the research base*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing Inc.

Utilization-focused evaluation:
Utilization-focused evaluation prioritizes the use of evaluation findings. It often involves stakeholders in shaping the evaluation's focus and methods to ensure that the results are relevant and actionable.

- Patton, M. Q.. (2008). “Utilization-Focused Evaluation.” Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 688 pp.

Empowerment evaluation:
As mentioned earlier, empowerment evaluation is an approach that combines evaluation with capacity building and empowerment of stakeholders. It involves them in assessing and improving their programs. Empowerment evaluators view participants and community members as the ones in control of the evaluation. Nevertheless, the empowerment evaluators still serve as facilitators which keep the process organized.

- Fetterman, D. M. (2001). "Foundations of Empowerment Evaluation." Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Community-based evaluation:
This term is often used in the context of participatory evaluation when the focus is on evaluating programs or initiatives within a specific community. It typically involves community members in the evaluation process.

- Thurston, W. E. (2003). "Community-based participatory research and the challenge of racial and ethnic health disparities." Health & Social Work, 28(1), 3-12.

Transformative evaluation:
Transformative evaluation focuses on the political aspects of evaluation processes. This type of evaluation seeks to identify instances of discrimination and social exclusion and aims to address them. A key element for instance is to deliberately involve publics who are typically marginalized in society (Mertens, 2009). Emphasizing that the evaluation process itself should imply transformation (Nirenberg, 2013), it becomes an opportunity to reassess programs and instigate actions for positive change.

- Mertens, D. M. (2009). “Transformative research and evaluation: the intersection of applied social research and program evaluation”. New York: Guilford Press.

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Other terms which have emerged from discussions are for instance: “suivi / follow-up”, “reflective analysis” or even “critical analysis”.

In order to show that evaluation is conducted in a critical way and is not a performance measure, but has many aims, a **mixed term** could be used, which could be : **“Co-produced follow-up”.**

The concept entails two key components:

Co-produced: The term "co-produced" indicates that multiple stakeholders, including researchers, community members, practitioners, and possibly other relevant parties, are actively involved in shaping and implementing the follow-up or evaluation process.

Follow-up: "Follow-up" involves assessing the process, impact, effectiveness, or success of the research action project. It observes and acts upon various aspects such as the achieved outcomes, the relevance of the research, the implementation of recommendations, and the overall contribution to the intended goals. According to the lessons learned, recommendations can be made, applying findings, or carrying out further initiatives based on the outcomes.

Recommendations for planning and conducting a co-evaluation or *follow-up*

As we already mentioned before, the utilization of participatory and collaborative approaches in evaluation, especially in literature, are often claimed to have numerous benefits. The process is considered to be 'empowering,' 'cost-effective’, and 'more meaningful’ and ‘relevant' (Chouinard, 2013; Tapella and Sanz, 2019). However, criticisms of participatory methods present opposing views, deeming it 'too time-consuming and complexe’,' 'inefficient’, ‘not rigorous’, 'subjective,' or even 'tokenistic' (Guijt and Groves, 2015). These claims underscore the importance of establishing clear standards and guidelines for our follow-up, which has to be tailored to the intended purpose(s) and feasibility within the given context. Such clarity is crucial for managing expectations and having a meaningful involvement of the different partners.

Numerous sources, as described by Guijt (2014) affirm how it is imperative to recognize that the advantages of participation in impact evaluation do not unfold automatically or come with guaranteed outcomes. Committing to such approaches entails acknowledging the associated implications for timing, resources, and focus. Effective facilitation skills are also essential to ensuring a high-quality process, potentially necessitating additional resources for capacity building.

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In the following part therefore we focus on gathering some essential attention points and guidelines to conduct an effective and meaningful evaluation process, which is both ethical (follows our principles) and practical (feasible in terms of time and resources).

The guidelines will be structured as follows:

- Who
- What
- How
- Step by step (cycle)

"Who" should be involved in the *follow-up* activities?

Without careful consideration of *who* is included in participatory research and evaluation activities and in what way, co-evaluation methods may perpetuate existing biases and injustices.

As mentioned earlier, involving a diversity of stakeholders in the evaluation process has the potential to empower individuals, contribute to knowledge sharing (learning), and reduce the democratic deficit within organizations and communities. Nevertheless, our literature review also reveals that these participation processes can also be employed merely as a symbolic gesture, perpetuating the existing power imbalances in the real world. This occurs when participation is inadvertently confined to those possessing the necessary resources to take part in the assessment: they have the time, resources, right knowledge, maybe a greater influence, ...

It is crucial therefore to take the time to ensure that participation extends beyond individuals with enhanced skills and authority. Failure to do so may lead to the replication of power asymmetries.

At the same time, this report also shows that the role of an evaluation team is highly important, serving as facilitators throughout the entire participatory follow-up process. They make sure the guidelines are followed. They follow-up on the aspects which should be evaluated, how the evaluation should be conducted, and define the resulting conclusions and recommendations (Tapella et al., 2021).

Therefore, a first recommendation which appears often in literature on participation and evaluation is to appoint a **facilitator** (Fetterman, D. M., 2001; Aubel, 1999; Tapella et al., 2021).

"The facilitator is more akin to the person who ensures that the evaluation process is completed as a combined effort and that all members of the team actively participate, express their opinions and contribute to the process. Throughout the whole process, the facilitator is the one to motivate or guide the other participants (as members of a team) and ensure that their participation is effective. They are the ones who take on the responsibility of ensuring that the process is completed and that the aims set out from the beginning are achieved. In other words, the facilitator is not a supervisor or leader: the participatory evaluation process facilitator is the one who ensures that it is a truly participatory process."
"Facilitators are, to a certain extent, the process 'managers'. The facilitators plan the process and ensure that the team achieves the aims set out." (Tapella et al., 2021)

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Next to the facilitator and depending on the activities to be evaluated, categories of community stakeholders should also be involved and as diverse as possible:

- formal, but also informal community leaders
- different genders
- youth
- different ethnic and socio-economic groups
- ...

It is very important to take into account people's needs and interests to participate in the evaluation process. Their participation will depend on many factors (Guijt et al., 1998), which are summarized below in the form of a checklist and which can be interesting to go through before constituting the "evaluation team".

- ➔ Is there maturity, capacity, leadership, within involved groups, and an ability to share power? (Without being experts necessarily, participants need to understand the logic of the evaluation process and help the different evaluation tools in enough depth that they are able to use them.)
- ➔ Are the necessary time resources available?
- ➔ Which are their perceived benefits (alongside potential costs) of the follow-up process?
- ➔ Does the impact of the follow-up align with the priorities of participating groups?
- ➔ Is the process flexible enough to address diverse and evolving information needs?
- ➔ Can we ensure the fulfillment of expectations arising from the follow-up, including the implementation of any recommendations?
- ➔ Which material conditions are available to allow a proper operation of the process (e.g., pens, books, video recording, etc.)?

"What": Which criteria can be used?

Four distinct criteria for co-evaluation were already described in the Fairville project/grant agreement. These transversal criteria will be complemented by more specific criteria in deliverable D4.2 "**Checklist of criteria and indicators for multi-criteria co-assessment".**

- **Efficiency of Fairville labs** : were the specific goals reached? Have specific inequalities been tackled/taken into consideration thanks to the actions carried out in the pilot projects?
- **Participation** : did the pilot projects lead to an increase in the numbers of participants, a greater engagement of communities, academics and local authorities ? Does it give more sense to democracy ?
- **Inclusiveness** : did the actions implemented reach beyond the circle of the most engaged, did it reach the most marginalized and reduce the segregative trends ?
- **Knowledge sharing** : did it reduce epistemic inequalities through co-learning processes throughout the process, till the co-assessment ?

Recommendations regarding indicators will be elaborated on in D.4.2.

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“How”: Which different approaches and methods can be used?

This report has not the objective of giving an overview of all possible methods but rather emphasizes an approach to conducting evaluations in a co-produced way. As illustrated by numerous examples below, a diverse array of methods exists, not only to collect data (investigation methods) but also to present them (restitution methods), requiring various skills.

Engaging in co-produced evaluation goes beyond simply gathering qualitative data on program participants' opinions through specific data collection methods. Instead, it allows for the utilization of any method or a combination. The key lies in harmonizing the extent and type of stakeholder involvement with the combination of methods necessary to address the evaluation questions.

We will first describe different investigation / data collection methods here, and then go on with restitution / visualization methods.

1) Data collection

Data collection is one of the most crucial phases in the follow-up process and it should start **as early as possible.** Data collection should also happen all along the action-research process. Various methods can be chosen based on the study's objectives, nature of data, and available resources. Each method comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages, but also requires some skills and expertise, which will be described below.

A. Surveys and questionnaires:

Advantages: Efficient for gathering data from a large sample, standardized responses, and anonymity for honest answers.
Disadvantages: Limited depth, limited possibility to ask for clarification of responses (lack of flexibility), and potential for low response rates.
Expertise/resources needed: Skilled facilitators to ask probing questions and interpret results.

B. In-depth interviews:

Advantages: Allows in-depth exploration, flexibility, and clarification of responses.
Disadvantages: Time-consuming, potential for interviewer bias, and susceptibility to socially desirable answers. Ethical concerns: it might be difficult to involve all participants whenever different set of interests or conflicts are at stake.
Expertise/resources needed: Interviewers who can ask meaningful questions and navigate sensitive topics.

C. (Participant-)observation and ethnographic work

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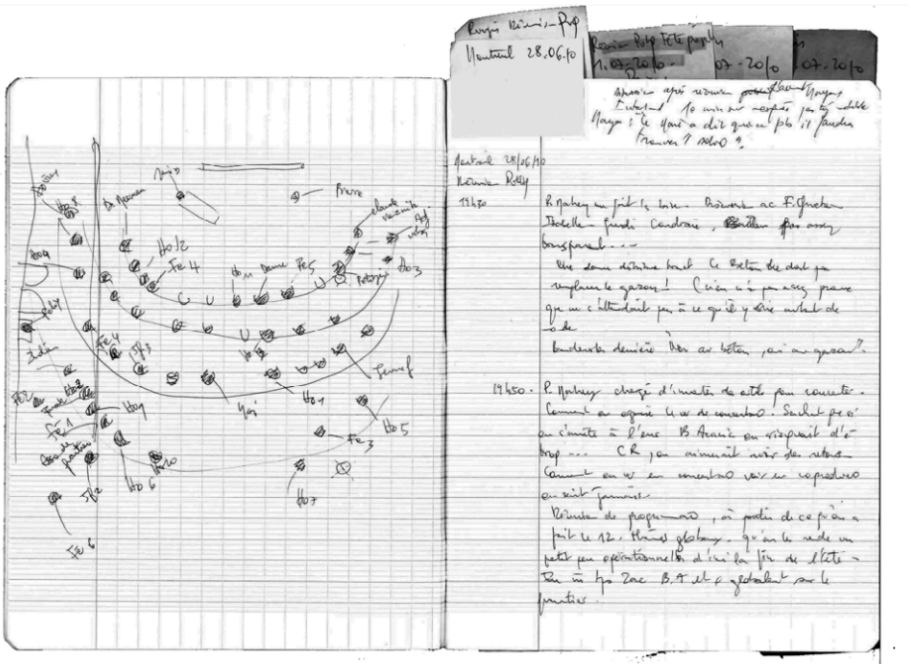
This method was described in detail during a dedicated Fairville Mutual Learning Seminar. Advantages of observation include: Providing direct, firsthand information on practices. The immersive understanding of a social context also provides very rich qualitative data (going beyond what was planned initially). It is also useful for studying non-verbal cues which is not always possible with other methods.
Disadvantages: Potential observer bias. To avoid this bias: it is important to define in advance the focus of the observation, train observers, if possible use a multiplicity of observers and use different tools of observation (ex photos / videos).
Some ethical concerns regarding privacy also exist. Finally as was stated during the seminar, observation is quite time-consuming. Making generalizations is also limited.
Expertise and/or specific resources needed: conducting ethnographic research involves prolonged engagement, independence and being able to interpret contextual nuances. Cultural and social sensitivity are very valuable (!).

➔ *For more inspiration and guidelines regarding participant observation and note taking, please refer to the report of Fairville Mutual Learning Seminar of 25/01/24.*



Example of note taking (while drawing) by sociologist Khedidja Mamou (2011)

Presented during Fairville Mutual Learning Seminar of 25/01/24.

D. Focus groups:

Advantages: Stimulates group discussion, generates diverse perspectives, and insights into social dynamics.
Disadvantages: Group think, dominance of individuals, and applicability to specific research questions.
Expertise/resources needed: A skilled facilitator is required to guide the group discussions, manage dynamics (e.g.: speaking time), and elicit meaningful responses. Understanding group dynamics and qualitative analysis is important.

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E. Document analysis (gray literature,…)

Advantages: enables access to more historical records, is non-intrusive, and provides rich contextual data.
Disadvantages: Relies on document availability and quality, limited control, and potential for bias.
Expertise needed: Critical reading skills, and the ability to analyze and interpret diverse types of documents.

All by all, selecting the appropriate method involves careful consideration of research goals, available resources, and ethical considerations. Researchers often employ a combination of methods to enhance the robustness of their findings.
The methods mentioned above are very general approaches. Some additional methods which can be looked into, which are very meaningful for enabling participation are further described below (derived from Biggs et al., 2021):

- **Photovoice (for instance in a focus group setting)**, which involves individuals to use photography to document and express their experiences, perspectives, and priorities, followed by group discussions about the photos. These kinds of visual methods can reduce power imbalances between researchers and the researched. Participants remain in control of what information they share. Photovoice also enables learning processes by capturing and sharing complex issues through a visual narrative and allows for the co-construction of knowledge and creating collective meanings. Photographs also allow participants to convey a message, for instance to authorities.

- **Collaborative mapping**, where participants contribute to mapping exercises, identifying key locations, resources, or issues in the area/community.

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Collaborative mapping exercise in Giza. Picture by Kawkab Tawfik

Presented during Fairville Mutual Learning Seminar of 25/01/24.

- **A transect walk** (Biggs et al., 2021) involves a structured stroll undertaken collaboratively by the research team and local community members along a predetermined route (transect) within the community or project area. This joint exploration aims to investigate specific social, economic, and environmental contexts by means of observation, inquiries, and attentive listening. The outcome of this process is the creation of a transect map. Typically, these walks are carried out in the initial stages of fieldwork.

- **Arts-based methods (for instance in a focus group setting) (**Biggs et al., 2021) encompass a wide range of participatory approaches that specifically incorporate one or more diverse art genres (such as drawing/painting, (theater) performance, writing, photography, collage, sculpture) for data collection purposes. The collaborative creation of artistic pieces with participants has the potential to evoke knowledge, values, and emotions. Jointly crafting art and performance pieces can facilitate discussions on a shared platform that resonates with many individuals, and may even result in a 'boundary object' capable of being interpreted differently by various participants, thereby initiating discussions.

- **Storytelling and narrative methods**, where participants share personal stories or narratives to convey their experiences and perspectives.

- **Community surveys and questionnaires**: participants are involved in the development of survey questions and the collection of survey data.

2) Restitution and visualization methods

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Different forms of analysis and restitution can be used to make the results of the data collection more visible, relatable or tangible.

First of all, it is important to rework the **written material**. Writing conclusions is one of the first methods for restitution.

Other (common) methods for restitution include (derived from Guijt and Gaventa, 1998):

- ★ **Maps**: to show the location and types of changes in the area being evaluated.
- ★ **Venn diagrams**: to show changes in relationships between groups, institutions, and individuals.
- ★ **Transect diagrams**: following a route along which a survey or observations are made.
- ★ **Flow diagrams**: to show direct and indirect impacts of changes, and to relate them to causes.
- ★ **Photographs**: to depict changes through a sequence of images.
- ★ **Matrix scoring:** to compare people's preferences for a set of options or outcomes.
- ★ **Network diagrams:** to show changes in the type and degree of contact between people and services.
- ★ **Spider diagrams**
- ★ **Audio, photo, video material**
- ★ **Story telling**
- ★ **Collective drawing**
- ★ **Illustrated posters**
- ★ **Roleplay / theatre / public testimony or presentation**

Matrix ranking, ladders (see example below) and 'spider' diagrams are visualizations of detailed discussions, either with individuals or with groups, about the relative appreciation of the intervention or specific changes. These methods can be used to compare and quantify a wide range of topics such as different types of changes (e.g., confidence, capacity or motivation), different degrees of change for one impact (see example) and different causes of change.

Example of a ladder of scores for an inclusion of women in the neighborhood committee

0 - No women come to the meeting.
1 - Women are members of the neighborhood committee, but do not regularly attend
meetings.
3 - Women members take part in the meetings but are not involved equally in decision making
4 - Women attend the meetings of the committee and take decisions
5 - Genders are represented equally in the committee and take decisions jointly.

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Co-evaluation / follow-up process: a summary

While every FV Lab has moving targets and objectives, which include objectives which are less tangible to measure, e.g.: “empowerment of the local community”, it is still important to define a process for co-evaluation that is well-defined, repeatable, and transparent. This method should aim to minimize biases, allow for transversality and yield a level of accuracy that is sufficient to make the co-evaluation useful and provide ‘lessons learned’ for future activities.

We therefore propose the following step-by-step process for every FV Lab to apply in its case. It builds on and refers to the recommendations mentioned previously in the paper.

Method for co-produced follow-up per FV Lab

1. Identify: who should and wants to be involved in the follow-up process? (see p.13 & 14)
    a. Who is (are) the *facilitator(s)* for our Lab? (See also what is defined in WP3)
    b. Who is part of the *evaluation team* (+ roles) ? What is the level of independence of this team and how does it represent the diversity of participants including “communities”?
    c. What are the capacity and resources of this team to dedicate to the process?
2. List the *FV Lab objectives and / or questions* you want to follow-up and reflect on and why (e.g.: which benefits in terms of ‘learning’?) (e.g.: objectives from the operational plan). *! When doing this, check the different Fairville topics (housing.environment.risks) as well as the objectives in terms of inequalities and democracy when formulating the questions and the expectations for co-production.*
3. Which *criteria and indicators* are relevant to follow-up on these objectives? (cf. D4.2 Criteria for co-assessment which is due in February 2024).
4. Define the associated *investigation methods (*p.15-18) + time span.
5. Define the associated *restitution methods* (p.18) and the dissemination of these results.
6. Clarify the timings, steps of the FV Lab’s process and responsibilities

Conclusion

This report started by summarizing the historical background of the interplay between evaluation and involvement / participation of stakeholders. Tensions, challenges, or critiques related to (co-)evaluation, derived from literature as well as Fairville discussions with researchers and citizens have been underlined. Moreover, as the concept of

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co-evaluation itself is rarely used in literature, alternative concepts and forms of (co-)evaluation processes were discussed and defined, bringing to the front key principles in the evaluation process, with among others: participatory evaluation, transformative evaluation, empowerment evaluation, and collaborative evaluation.

These approaches allow us to better define the principles as well as the benefits behind participatory evaluation processes: acknowledging and valuing local, situated knowledge, encouraging stakeholders to take ownership of processes and results of programs, enhancing skills, creating empowerment,.... However, it is important to note that participation does not always result in the expected outcomes. While there are instances where participation is merely used as a label (symbolic value), there are other times when it gradually creates opportunities that foster advancements in rights, inclusion, and equity, varying according to each context. To do so, and in order to make participation in evaluation feasible, the right tools and procedures need to be put in place, which facilitate the co-evaluation process. “Who”, “What”, and “How” to co-evaluate are essential discussions to have before starting the whole process.

This is why, in the context of the co-evaluation of our Fairville Labs, this report can be used as a flexible tool, both to get inspired, promoting active and meaningful participation among diverse stakeholders, incorporating their voices, needs, interests, and knowledge, into a follow-up process. But also, it should allow for a practical application of co-evaluation, with concrete ideas and steps to organize and facilitate the process.

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