

Impact Assessment of Collective awareness Platform for Social innovation and Sustainability (CAPS) - the IA4SI framework

The IA4SI methodological framework is based on a quali-quantitative multi-stakeholders approach, which engages projects coordinators, their partners, project users and European citizens. It builds on previous research in the field and takes advantage of well-tested methodological frameworks adapted to the peculiarities of the Digital Social Innovation sector and, particularly to CAPS (Arniani and others, 2013).

The assessment uses eight synthetic indices: 4 of them are related to specific areas of impact and related sub categories and are illustrated in the figure below. The vertical indices are: Social impact, Economic impact, Environmental impact and Political impact. Each vertical index is built up from sub-indices each corresponding to a specific category. For example the synthetic index Social impact is composed of 6 indices, one for each subcategory such as Impact on “Community building and empowerment”, “Impact on information”, “Impact on way of thinking and behaviours”, etc.

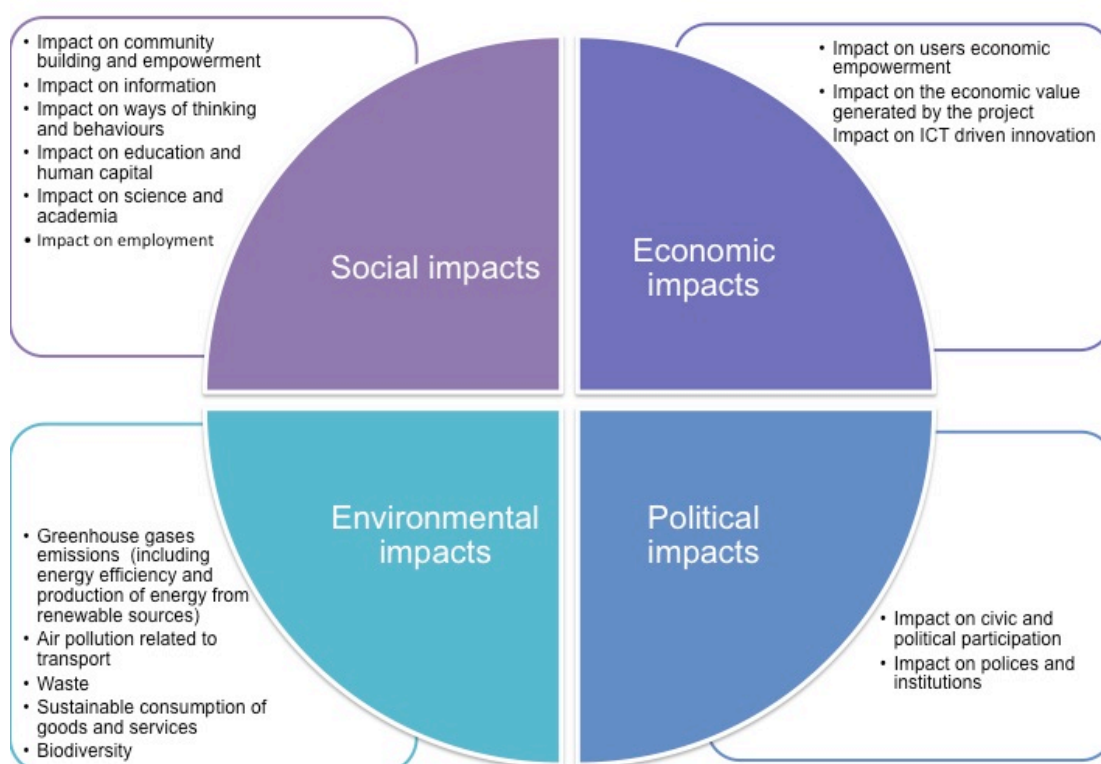


Fig. 1 -- IA4SI vertical indices (Source: Passani and others, 2014b)



Besides the four vertical indices, the IA4SI methodology includes 4 transversal indices that provide information about the process followed by the CAPS projects in determining their impacts. In other words, the transversal indices are related to the attributes of the innovation developed. The four indices are: efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and fairness. These four indices are inspired by Philip, Deiglmeier and Miller, that describe social innovation as a solution which is meant to be: *“more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions”* (2008:36).

The IA4SI methodology is based on Cost-Benefit Analysis, on Multicriteria Analysis and on the Social Media ROI. To analyse any changes in CAPS users' attitudes and behaviours a Stated Preference methods and Revealed Preference methods will be used while for the environmental impact assessment the Ecological Footprint methodology and Global Reporting initiatives approach is used.

Impact analysis of CAPS projects takes advantage of two online tools developed by the IA4SI project: a “Self-assessment toolkit” (SAT) and a “User Data Gathering Interphase” (UDGI). The first is dedicated to CAPS projects coordinators and partners and the second one to CAPS users (grassroots communities). CAPS projects are asked to enter information in the SAT in the six-step process below:

1. First, describe the inputs of their project including the budget, the human resources available at project level, the pre-existing technological and non-technological elements the projects builds on, (the resources to be committed)
2. Second, enter the selected stakeholders and end-users intended to benefit from the project outputs (select the 'who')
3. Third, describe the expected or actual outputs: technological and non-technological including for example publications, service licences, patents, etc.
4. Then select the impact dimensions that are most relevant. The IA4SI methodology is modular so that each project can personalise it. As an example, a project can select 'impact on employment' and 'impact on information' as relevant and exclude 'impact on education and human capital' because its outputs and its activities are not leading to this kind of impacts.
5. At this point the SAT tool will show the relevant questions related to the impact dimensions selected by the project representatives.
6. The data inserted by CAPS representatives is elaborated in real time by the SAT that provides an impact assessment report. In a graphic, easy-to-understand way, project representatives will be able to visualise their impacts and be able to compare their performance with a set of benchmarks (Passani et al, 2014a).

In parallel, CAPS users will be invited to fill in the UDGI, which looks like an online questionnaire and investigates the CAPS benefits from the point of view of their users. The information gathered by the UDGI will then appear in the SAT and each CAPS project will be able to see the opinions of its users in an aggregated, anonymous way. It will be possible to compare the results of their self-assessment with the point of view of their users.

A third online tool, the Impact4you platform will present CAPS outputs to European citizens which



will be invited to provide their opinions on those outputs by answering few questions. CAPS projects will be able to see other citizens opinions and engage with them through a dedicated discussion forum. IA4SI believes that for CAPS projects it will be important to have feedbacks from their direct users and from the general public of European citizens. This aggregate information, together with the impact assessment will lead them to fine-tune their activities and thus maximise their positive impacts.

The IA4SI team will analyse the gathered data for its two impact assessment reports: one will include the assessment of each CAPS project and one will analyse the data at aggregated, domain level. Besides these reports, a set of best practices will be identified and further analysed using a case-study approach.

The methodology was developed following a participative approach so that CAPS representatives have been involved in the methodology development. Impact analysis covers both qualitative and quantitative evaluation (value assessment) taking stock of the value paradox, and taking advantage of the recent research on intangibles and 'beyond GDP' new statistical indicators developed at National level and international level (Bund et al, 2013).

For a more detailed description of the methodology please see Passani et al. (2014b) at <http://ia4si.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/D2.1-IA4SI-Methodological-framework-First-version.pdf>

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