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Beyond formality: a bricolage model to navigate between the conflicting considerations in social impact assessments

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Abstract

Purpose

Social enterprises (SEs) are increasingly expected to rely on formal methodologies to assess their social impact. These structured methodologies, which produce objective and evidence-based measures of impact, are sometimes opposed to bricolage approaches that 'make do' with what is at hand. Our paper questions this distinction by identifying the conflicting considerations that arise in the process of implementing a formal methodology, which might lead SEs to rely on bricolage mechanisms. We propose a model of 'formally-driven' bricolage with core principles to navigate between those considerations.

Design/methodology/approach

Adopting an inductive approach, we draw on the in-depth case study of a work integration social enterprise engaged in a formal social impact assessment (SIA) through collaborative research.

Findings

First, we identify five types of considerations (feasibility, efficiency, ethics, legitimacy, aim) that come into tension with the primary considerations of formality in formal methodologies, leading SEs to still rely on bricolage mechanisms. Second, we identify five principles (multidimensional, participative, cultural, mixed-method, adaptive) that permit navigation between those conflicting considerations. Based on our findings, we develop a model of 'formally-driven' bricolage.

Originality

Our contribution is methodological, theoretical and practical. We bridge the gap between theory and practice through long-term immersion in an SE. We contribute to the understanding of the use of bricolage in SIA by investigating why and how bricolage is still at play in formal assessments. Our proposed model of 'formally-driven' bricolage can help researchers and practitioners to better grasp the ins and outs of the SIA process.

Key words: social impact assessment, bricolage, formal methodologies, conflicting considerations, assessment process

1. Introduction

Social enterprises (SEs) are under growing pressure to conduct social impact assessment (SIA). Those hybrid organizations combining social and economic logics adopt entrepreneurial dynamics to provide products and services with the primacy of their social mission (Nyssens *et al.*, 2023). Generating a social impact is therefore their *raison d'être* and external and internal drivers push them to assess it (Lall, 2017). There is no single shared definition of social impact (Rawhouser *et al.*, 2019). In this paper, we rely on its conservative definition based on the impact value chain that parcels out the value chain of an SE into inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts (Clark et al., 2004). In this chain, social impact refers to the effects generated *by* the SE on its stakeholders (i.e. its 'social added-value')—which raises the issue of attribution.

More specifically, SEs are increasingly expected to rely on what Molecke and Pinkse (2017) call "formal methodologies" to assess their social impact. This term refers to structured methodologies that produce objective and evidence-based measures of impact with ad hoc quantitative data collection and based on the hypothesis of a causal chain running from inputs to impact. Many specific methods have been developed in this direction by practitioners and researchers (Grieco *et al.*, 2015; Kah and Akenroye, 2020; Maas and Liket, 2011). The gold standard of the formal methodologies is a randomized assessment inspired by medical trials, known under the abbreviation 'RCT' (Randomized Controlled Trial).

Observing this increasing pressure towards the use of formal methodologies, some authors have suggested that, in practice, SEs in fact delegitimize those methodologies and rely on bricolage methodologies instead (Molecke and Pinkse, 2017; Nicholls, 2009). The concept of bricolage was introduced by Lévi-Strauss (1962) as the ability to make do with what is at hand, and has since been developed in entrepreneurship literature (Baker and Nelson, 2005). In the case of SIA, it refers to the idea that SEs "develop self-constructed accounts of their social impact that [make]-do with at-hand data and interpretations" (Molecke and Pinkse, 2017, p. 551).

However, one may wonder if the distinction between formality and bricolage in the practice of SIA is really that clear. Formal methodologies follow structured procedures addressing concerns of objectivity and evidence-base, but when those are to be put into practice, do not other concerns come into play that would require bricolage mechanisms? If so, how should this bricolage be done? In this context, and using an inductive approach, this paper relies on the in-depth case study of a major Belgian SE that conducted a formal, RCT-inspired, six-year SIA which we accompanied throughout as part of a collaborative research (Lang *et al.*, 2012). Through our documentation and analysis of the assessment process, we investigated *why* and *how* bricolage mechanisms were still at play. The paper thus addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1: When SEs willingly undertake a formal SIA, what multiple considerations arise and potentially conflict with the primary considerations of formality?
- RQ2: If these considerations force SEs to resort to bricolage, on what principles should the bricolage be based to navigate between these conflicting considerations?

Addressing RQ1, we identify five types of considerations (feasibility, efficiency, ethics, legitimacy, aim) that come into tension with the primary considerations of formality in formal methodologies (i.e. what to do 'in theory'). This leads SEs to rely on bricolage mechanisms, even when they are *willing* to develop formal SIAs. Addressing RQ2, we identify five principles (multidimensional, participative, cultural, mixed-method, adaptive) that allow navigation between these conflicting considerations. From an extensive case study and a long-term immersion in the field, we develop a model of 'formally-driven' bricolage that articulates our findings, contributing to the field of SIA methodologically, theoretically and practically.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents a literature review on the use of formal methodologies and bricolage to assess the social impact of SEs. Section 3 describes the case under study as well as the data and methods we used to conduct our analysis. Section 4 presents and discusses the findings, answering the two research questions. Section 5 introduces a bricolage model that we have developed to articulate our findings, and provides a general discussion of the model in relation to the literature review. Section 6 concludes.

2. Social impact assessment in social enterprises: formal methodologies and bricolage

We present a literature review on the increasing pressure to implement formal SIA methodologies in SEs and the use of bricolage as a way of pushing back against them.

2.1. The use of formal social impact assessment methodologies

Interest in SIA has been growing steadily over the last few decades. Three main trends put pressure on SEs to provide an account of their social impact. First, the socioeconomic crises have reduced the resources of public authorities and in the so-called New Public Management paradigm, public authorities favor a results-based management where the social-purpose status of the organization is no longer sufficient, *per se,* to legitimize the granting of public funds; it must account for its effects (Jany-Catrice, 2022). Second, social finance and impact investing are developing; a growing number of private investors wish to invest in enterprises with social added-value, and demand tangible evidence of that impact (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2014). Third, SEs have experienced significant growth and are increasingly in competition with for-profit enterprises. Proof of their contributions is

becoming necessary to ensure their legitimacy in society (Bagnoli and Megali, 2011; Haski-Leventhal and Mehra, 2016; Kah and Akenroye, 2020).

As well as responding to those external pressures to *prove* their social impact, SIA is said to offer SEs the opportunity to *improve* their practices and maximize their social added-value (Bouchard and Rousselière, 2022). An SIA can function as an internal management tool and help in decision-making to amplify the achievement of social objectives (Nicholls, 2009). It can also be used for governance purposes, providing accountability to internal stakeholders (Haski-Leventhal and Mehra, 2016).

As we have seen, these external and internal pressures push SEs to assess their social impact, and to do so, they are often expected to rely on what Molecke and Pinkse (2017) call formal methodologies. Within the current tendency to rationalize the social sector and to quantify all aspects of society (Jany-Catrice, 2022; Power, 2004), those standardized methodologies produce objective and evidence-based measures of impact with ad hoc quantitative data collection and based on the hypothesis of a causal chain running from inputs to impact. Many papers have listed, categorized, discussed many formal methodologies developed by practitioners and researchers (e.g. Grieco *et al.*, 2015; Kah and Akenroye, 2020; Maas and Liket, 2011). For example, in their recent literature review, Kah and Akenroye (2020) develop a framework that is guided by ten (formal) SIA models, to enable SEs to select the most appropriate one.

The gold standard of these formal methodologies are randomized assessments that permit a precise isolation of the social impact. Made famous by the 2019 Nobel Prize in economics, Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) have paved a new and more robust way to assess the impact of social innovation (Molecke and Pache, 2019). RCTs are inspired by medical trials and are nowadays widely used in public policy evaluations and development economics (Parienté, 2016). The trials compare two randomly-constituted groups: a treatment group benefiting from an intervention and a control group not benefiting from it. Measures are taken before and after the intervention in both groups, and the impact is the difference between the evolutions in both groups. Although SEs at an individual level have hardly applied such an experimental design to assess their social impact, because of its assumed high cost and technicality (Hall and Arvidson, 2014; Siqueira *et al.*, 2021), we could say that it constitutes an 'ideal type' of formal methodology (Benjamin *et al.*, 2023; Bouchard and Rousselière, 2022).

2.2. The use of bricolage to assess social impact

Some authors observe that in practice, SEs delegitimize those formal methodologies and rely on bricolage instead (Molecke and Pinkse, 2017; Nicholls, 2009). As Molecke and Pinkse (2017) put it, practitioners "often stress the causal ambiguity of this chain; they contend that impacts are difficult to understand with precision, much less calculate" (p. 552).

Lévi-Strauss (1962) introduced the concept of bricolage in his book "The Savage Mind" in which he contrasts two modes of thought: the mythical mind and the scientific mind. The former combines existing materials, creates structures from elements; the latter shapes materials for a predetermined project, creates elements from structures. A bricoleur makes do with what is at hand. The concept has later been developed in entrepreneurship literature to study how entrepreneurs recombine resources they have at hand to create "something from nothing" in resource-constrained environments (Baker and Nelson, 2005). According to Di Domenico et al. (2010), three core constructs structure the concept of entrepreneurial bricolage. *Making do* refers to "a process whereby bricoleurs acquire resources and recombine them in novel ways to solve problems and respond to opportunities" (p. 689). *A refusal to enact or be constrained by limitations* refers to "efforts to test and/or counteract existing or conventional limitations imposed by institutional or political settings and the available resource environment" (p. 692). *Improvisation* refers to "adapting standard ways of working and creative thinking in order to counteract environmental limitations" (p. 694).

The concept of bricolage has also been developed in the specific case of social entrepreneurship to study how social entrepreneurs creatively use what is at hand to create social value (Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Janssen *et al.*, 2018). Through their empirical work, Di Domenico et al. (2010) identify three further constructs of *social* bricolage, i.e. constructs specifically associated with social entrepreneurship. The first is the *creation of social value* that is the aim of SEs. The second is *stakeholder participation* that is central in the governance of SEs. And the third is the *persuasion* that is used to acquire resources and support.

More recently, the concept of bricolage has also been used in the context of SIA. It is through this concept that Molecke and Pinkse (2017) studied the approaches to social impact measurement of 22 SEs. They distinguish two types of bricolage that these SEs combine in the assessment of their social impact. First, *material* bricolage is about the combination of imperfect resources—imperfect data in the case of SIA. Second, *ideational* bricolage is about the combination of alternative myths—alternative definitions of performance in the case of SIA. They show that SEs increase the legitimacy of their bricolage approaches by delegitimizing formal methodologies through four lines of critique, namely that SIA is immeasurable, imprudent, incomplete and irrelevant. Their work expands on Nicholls' (2009) first efforts to analyze social impact reporting through a bricolage lens.

In this paper, we investigate *why* and *how*, when a SE legitimizes and follows a formal SIA methodology, it might still resort to bricolage mechanisms.

3. Data and Methods

We present the case study of our inductive approach as well as how we collected and analyzed the qualitative data on the SIA process.

3.1. Presentation of the case study and the context of the social impact assessment

Established more than 70 years ago, the object of our case study (which we shall call 'SoliBel') is one of the oldest and biggest Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE) in Belgium that works towards helping people living in precarious situations to become more autonomous. SoliBel currently gathers around 1000 people, of which roughly one third are employed under regular work contracts, one third are employed under integration work contracts and one third are working on a volunteer basis (often as a step towards integration). WISEs have been a prevalent SE type in Europe since the mid-1990s (Nyssens *et al.*, 2023) and our case study therefore constitutes a typical Belgian example of SE—and one with which our university has built up a strong partnership over the years.

SoliBel combines the economic activities of collecting, sorting and selling second-hand items with social activities at two levels: (1) it employs people far from the job market in its economic activities and (2) the profits from those activities are used to partially finance several social activities, the main one of these being an 84-bed shelter for homeless men. The shelter employs 1 director, 3 managers, 13 daytime social workers, 5 nighttime social workers and 5 administrative workers. It offers an integrated approach: for a daily fee, it provides many services such as accommodation, meals, laundry, help with administrative paperwork, psychosocial support, and health management. Although it welcomes very diverse profiles, the average beneficiary is a single Belgian quadragenarian with secondary education who stays for 6 months.

SoliBel engaged in an SIA from 2016 to 2021. The chairman of the board and the executive director initially wanted to assess the impact of their social activities to know "if we were really doing what we claim we were doing" and they chose to focus on their main social activity, i.e. the homeless shelter. To do so, they partnered with our research team and the assessment took place within a collaborative research framework (Lang *et al.*, 2012). In line with the expectations of SoliBel leaders, the ambition was to make the SIA as 'formal' as possible, with RCTs as a benchmark. More precisely, we developed a quantitative before/after methodology (but without a randomized control group)—with the later addition of a qualitative layer.

We accompanied SoliBel throughout the SIA process. The first researcher was in the field during the first 3 years (from January 2016 to September 2018) and the other during the following 3 years (from September 2018 to December 2021). The SIA took place as follows. First, through a workshop with the shelter employees and beneficiaries, we collectively mapped all the potential

effects that the shelter could have on its beneficiaries and selected the most important ones (such as effects related to health, life skills, social network or access to services). Second, to capture those effects, we co-constructed a multidimensional questionnaire with the social workers and the beneficiaries, using scales from the scientific literature. Interested readers will find more detailed information about the content of the questionnaire in Appendix 1. Using this questionnaire, an ad hoc data collection took place from December 2016 to April 2019. Beneficiaries filled in the questionnaire at the beginning of their stay (T1) and after 5 months (T2). All the questions were answered on 5- or 7-point Likert scales and there was always the option of not answering. To ensure confidentiality, the questionnaire was self-administered via a touch tablet with audio support. The social workers were in charge of introducing the study and the tablet to the beneficiaries (each beneficiary is assigned to a social worker). 212 questionnaires were gathered at T1 and 92 questionnaires at T2, whereby 64 could be properly paired for a panel statistical analysis. Results from the quantitative analysis were then qualitatively discussed in seven thematic focus groups with social workers and beneficiaries. (The assessment results are beyond the scope of this paper so we will not elaborate on them here.)

3.2. Collection and analysis of data documenting the social impact assessment process

We assisted SoliBel in its SIA and documented the whole process. We spent full days at the shelter, where we were able to observe the assessment process and the social work in context, and we participated in numerous meetings with social workers, managers, and the board, as well as in many informal discussions. We took regular notes of our observations. We also had access to a large amount of internal and external documentation, such as meeting minutes, strategic notes, activity reports, etc. In addition, we conducted interviews and held focus groups (recorded and transcribed) on shelter premises with social workers and beneficiaries during different phases of the SIA process. Although all social workers were always invited to participate, their presence was conditioned by scheduling constraints. Beneficiary attendance was modulated by the social workers acting as intermediaries.

Following the workshop to map the potential effects of the shelter, the first researcher organized two focus groups with social workers and one focus group with beneficiaries to co-construct the questionnaire and organize the data collection. Shortly after the launch of the quantitative data collection, she organized one additional focus group with beneficiaries and another with social workers, as well as five semi-structured interviews with social workers, in order to gather their initial experiences with the questionnaires and, more broadly, their perception of the ongoing SIA process. It was also an opportunity for them to express any need for adjustment to be made of the procedures. Towards the end of the quantitative data collection, the second researcher conducted seven semi-structured interviews with social workers to reflect on the SIA process and their expectations of the results. She also conducted four unstructured interviews with beneficiaries about their personal experience of the questionnaires. While the primary aim of these interviews and focus groups was to

discuss the assessment process, the social workers and beneficiaries also talked about the social work in the shelter. Similarly, the SIA process was occasionally discussed during the seven thematic focus groups organized to discuss the quantitative results. Appendix 2 provides more details on the qualitative data.

We adopted an inductive case study approach, analyzing the data without prior hypotheses and then completing our findings with concepts and findings from the literature in a recursive process (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The analysis was divided into three stages for each research question.

For RQ1, we first coded our qualitative data to systematically identify all the challenges that arose during the assessment process, the issues that had to be resolved and the concerns expressed by the various stakeholders. Next, we grouped those first-order categories into overarching categories in two ways:

(1) The part of the assessment design they were related to. We grouped the first-order categories into five parts of the assessment design that were particularly important: the definition of the impact scope, the building of the data collection tool, the tracing of causality, the collection of 'sufficient' data and the collection of quality data. Those are common steps of formal SIA, which go under various names (McLoughlin *et al.*, 2009; Stievenart and Pache, 2014), and they were mainly used to structure the third step of the analysis.
(2) Their nature. We grouped the first-order categories into five types of considerations conflicting with the primary considerations of 'formality' of the formal methodology: feasibility, efficiency, ethics, legitimacy, and aim.

Based on these groupings, we created a two-way table crossing the parts of the assessment design and the types of considerations that had emerged from our analysis (see Table 1 in the Findings section). The third step was to consolidate this exploratory bottom-up analysis by performing the corresponding top-down analysis. We added a 'formality' column where we explicitly stated what the formal assessment would have looked like in theory (considerations of formality). Then we enriched and re-structured each cell containing the first-order categories by reflecting, for each part of the assessment design, on why it was not possible to do it exactly like this in the field. In this way, we augmented our coded qualitative data with afterthoughts about the SIA process.

For RQ2, we first went back to our qualitative data to identify, for each type of considerations, the choices made together with SoliBel workers and the strategies developed to deal with the challenges, issues and concerns identified earlier. Second, we grouped those first-order categories into five principles that characterized the assessment process and that permitted navigation between the conflicting considerations: multi-dimensional, participative, cultural, mixed-method, and adaptive. Again, we created a two-way table crossing the types of considerations and the principles that had

emerged from our analysis and we enriched and re-structured each cell in a third stage of the analysis (see Table 2 in the Findings section).

Finally, we developed a model that articulates our findings—see Figure 1 in the General discussion section.

4. Findings

For each of the two research questions, we present the findings in table form in a first subsection. These are discussed in a second subsection, illustrated with quotes, and linked with elements from the literature.

4.1. Findings for RQ1: formality conflicting with five other types of considerations

The board chairman and the executive director of SoliBel wanted robust measures of its social impact through a formal assessment.

"Simply having the feeling or the impression that we're doing good things isn't enough; we need convincing facts that have been proven using fairly rigorous methods." (director)

Following the considerations of formality, i.e. theoretically speaking, ad-hoc data should be collected on all the effects generated by the shelter on its stakeholders (impact scope), relying on scientifically-validated scales (e.g. Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale) measured at the beginning and the end of the stay in the shelter (data collection tool). Also, the correctness of the attribution should be ensured by comparing the evolution on those scales with that of a control group which does not interact with the shelter (causality). Furthermore, sufficient data should be collected to ensure statistical significance (data quantity) and those data should be 'true', i.e. providing complete, unbiased and real measures of what is meant to be measured (data quality).

However, during the assessment process, other considerations emerged and came into tension. In addition to the considerations of formality, our analysis revealed five other types of considerations: feasibility (practical constraints), efficiency (optimal use of resources), ethics (moral aspects towards beneficiaries), legitimacy (resistance from field workers) and aim (goals of the assessment). We detail them in Table 1 that we discuss in the following subsection.

Table 1—Conflicting considerations arising in SIA along the different parts of the assessment design

	Formality considerations (theoretically speaking)	**Considerations of feasibility (practical constraints)**	**Considerations of efficiency (optimal use of resources)**	**Considerations of ethics (moral aspects involved in dealing with beneficiaries)**	**Considerations of legitimacy (resistance from field workers)**	**Considerations of aim (goals of the assessment)**
Impact scope	- Identifying all the effects of the SE's activities - On all the stakeholders of the SE	- Effects are multidimensional (possibly infinite) - Some outcomes are unforeseen - Invisibility bias – what is not assessed becomes invisible	- Assessing more effects is more resource-consuming - Reaching more stakeholders is more resource-consuming	- Including effects important to beneficiaries (with potentially competing views)	- Including effects important to workers (with potentially competing views)	- Focus on some effects - Focus on some stakeholders
Data collection tool	- Scientifically-validated measures - Taken at entry and on exit	- Ensuring the understanding of the scientific scales by the respondents - Questionnaire limited in length (to moderate length) - Integration into existing processes - Too difficult to collect data on exit	- Implementable by the SE to limit the cost of independent interviewers - Long questionnaire is unlikely to be completed in full	- Aligning with the beneficiaries' timing reality - Avoiding sensitive topics in the assessed effects - Careful wording of the scales to avoid giving offence - Ensuring confidentiality	- Integration into existing processes - Resistance to quantification (invisibilization, reduction of social complexity) - Ensuring confidentiality - Training on the assessment tool	- Risk to remain stuck at the "so what?" phase with quantitative results - One-shot or long-term utilization of the tool?
Causality	- Proving that the effects are due to the SE activities (control group)	- Difficulties setting up a control group - Time effect—difficult to isolate the SE part in (very) long term effects	- Setting up a control group is time-consuming - Setting up a control group is costly (e.g. requires intensive follow-up)	- Random or denied access to the SE activities (to constitute the control group) - Co-construction of the impact between the SE and the beneficiary	- Reassuring that the assessment is about the SE, not the individual workers	- Focus on net effect vs. average sector effect (control group would only capture the added value of the assessed SE, on top of other SEs in the same sector) - Attribution or contribution (collective impact difficult to assess)
Data quantity	- Large databases - To ensure statistical significance	- Limited by population size - Limited by the duration of the data collection and the SE context evolution	- Intensive follow-up is time-consuming (additional workload for the social workers) - Longer data collection is more costly - Staff turnover means losing experience and having to train newcomers to collect data	- Allowing the freedom to participate or not - Creating the conditions for participation (e.g. ensuring accessible language)	- Questioning the perceived added value of the extra work - Data collection is not the priority of the social workers	
Data quality	- "True" data (real measures of what is measured) - Complete data (no missing data) - Minimum sample and selection bias	- Only subjective data can be gathered - Attrition (answers in T1 and not T2)	- Long questionnaire is unlikely to be completed in full	- Perceived motivation for the questionnaire may influence the quality of the answers - Allowing freedom to skip questions		

4.2. Discussion of the findings for RQ1

4.2.1. Considerations of feasibility

Several practical constraints came into tension with the considerations of formality, echoing the discussions around the difficulties of operationalizing SIA (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery, 2018; Barraket and Yousefpour, 2013).

First, regarding the impact scope, the effects generated by the SE are multidimensional and possibly infinite, such that outcomes will inevitably be missed in the assessment. This issue is related to the *computational* complexity identified by Stievenart and Pache (2014), which refers to the many diverse elements that must be taken into account. Some authors have also discussed the issue of emergent effects that cannot be determined a priori (Benjamin *et al.*, 2023).

Second, regarding the indicators used in the data collection tool, the psychosocial literature has developed many scales to assess social dimensions quantitatively but, as SEs generally target precarious beneficiaries, adaptations might be necessary (Ambuehl and Inauen, 2022). In the case of SoliBel, some items of existing scales had to be adapted to ensure that they would be understood by the beneficiaries and make sense in the specific context of the shelter.

The timing of the data collection also had to be adapted, since taking measurements at the time of exit from the shelter was in many cases unrealistic, as illustrated by the quotes below. Consequently, for the T2 data point, we decided to collect data after 5 months, which is close to the 6-month average stay but meant losing shorter stays and not accounting for the effects of longer stays (affecting data quality).

"If the resident is expelled, it's going to be very difficult to administer an exit questionnaire." (Social worker)

"Even when their departure is positive for them, they don't want to hear anything more from this place." (Social worker)

Third, setting up a randomized control group to trace causality would not have been feasible (as well as being costly and ethically undesirable—see 4.2.2 and 4.2.3.) as randomization was incompatible with the admission process of the shelter. In the end, we could weakly trace causality with a before-after design but without any proper control group.

Finally, with respect to data quantity, collecting enough data to achieve sufficient statistical power was a major challenge. The fixed capacity of the shelter (84 beds) de facto restricted the sample size. Extending the period under study (to two years and a half) increased the statistical power but this has other negative side effects, as the external environment may change significantly if the study period becomes too long.

4.2.2. Considerations of efficiency

It is well known that SIAs are resource-consuming, in a context where SEs have limited resources (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery, 2018; Grieco, 2018). SoliBel was able to benefit from extra resources from the research team (time, money, expertise) that SEs seldom benefit from but they were still limited and choices had to be made to contain expenses.

Regarding the impact scope, assessing more effects and/or reaching more stakeholders is more resource-consuming. More particularly, considerations of efficiency were involved regarding the length of the questionnaire—which affected both the building of the data collection tool and the data quality. A long questionnaire enables the assessment to take into account more effects and to use appropriate scientific scales (usually long with several items), but it also greatly increases the risk of incompleteness.

*"*Social worker 1*: Honestly, the only thing that scares me is that it's really long. […]* Social worker 2*: Is it possible to take a break in the middle, or does it have to be completed in one sitting? [...] Even if it's just for a cigarette... Otherwise, they're likely to botch it at the end because they're fed up."*

Regarding the data collection tool, hiring independent interviewers to administer the questionnaire would have been too costly. Consequently, data collection had to be managed by SoliBel. The challenge was to ensure confidentiality and prevent the process from being too time-consuming for social workers and interfering with their work (we will return to this in 4.1.4.).

"And then there's the resources. [...] first of all, workers should have been allocated time to do this, because after all, we've got a lot of other things to do [...] that's where we would need time, energy, you know, other people like you [researcher]*, [...] ideally there should be, I don't know, 3 or 4 of you."* (Social worker)

Relying on social workers to collect data on top of their daily work probably reduced the data quantity. The reality of staff turnover combined with the long data collection also meant that several workers left the shelter during the study and we had to reintroduce the study and the tool to newcomers each time, losing some questionnaires in the meantime.

Finally, developing a control group, even a non-randomized one, to trace causality would have been very costly. It requires extensive follow-up, as individuals in this group evolve outside the SE, and homeless people are very hard to keep track of.

4.2.3. Considerations of ethics

Ethical considerations towards beneficiaries were involved in the different parts of the assessment design. Regarding the data collection tool, the social workers and beneficiaries who co-constructed the questionnaire repeatedly expressed concerns about how the questions, derived from scientifically validated scales, might be received by the beneficiaries—judging some of these questions (too) direct, intrusive, or inappropriate. In the end, questions that were deemed to be too sensitive (such as questions related to the beneficiaries' children) were simply dropped from the

questionnaire. As the following quote reveals, ethical concerns were also raised when the beneficiary did not understand the question fully and the social worker had to simplify it excessively.

"One social worker told me that he had given the questionnaire to someone and that it had been very complicated because that person had comprehension difficulties. In the end, the social worker had to rephrase the questions using language like "are you a loser or not?" And at the same time, there was no possibility of using other words." (Researcher)

This concern about the beneficiaries' perception of the questions was also mentioned when discussing the timing of the data collection. Out of respect, taking measurements at the time of entry was avoided, as illustrated in the quote.

"When you come here, it's because you've got problems: you've got no money, you've been thrown out, etc. So if you're asked questions like "are you okay?", "do you think you'll get better?",... that's not going to work. So, in my opinion, the first 15 days, it's better not to [ask questions]*."* (Beneficiary)

In addition to considerations of feasibility and efficiency, the idea of creating a randomized control group to trace causality raised major ethical concerns. In particular, randomized admission process would not respect the equipoise principle, which requires that, prior to the start of the trial, there is uncertainty about the benefit of the treatment. Rigorously respected in clinical experiment, it often seems to be missing in RCTs in social sciences (Abramowicz and Szafarz, 2019). This echoes a broader debate about the ethics of RCTs (Bédécarrats *et al.*, 2020). In the case of SoliBel, we know that the 'treated' individual would receive better treatment since he would otherwise have to find another solution. We discussed the option of randomizing the admission process with the director of the shelter, but they found it completely inappropriate and unrealistic.

The freedom of choice to participate in the study or not, to answer some questions or not others and to answer freely also raised ethical concerns—and was in tension with obtaining sufficient and quality data. Even if presented as non-compulsory, beneficiaries might feel forced to participate in the study or answer in a certain way, given the unequal power relation between them and the shelter. This is also why ensuring confidentiality was key and required specific setup and processes.

This last quote from a social worker sums up the tension between considerations of ethics and formality well: "we lose data, but we're aware of that, and we know why we're losing it: it's because we respect the other person."

4.2.4. Considerations of legitimacy

Legitimizing the SIA for SoliBel workers was another important consideration. Had they boycotted it, it would have failed. The managers and the board were in favor of the assessment (they requested it), but social workers were reluctant at first and the assessment had to be legitimized to ensure that it would run smoothly. This included integrating them in the design of the assessment, starting with the identification of the effects to assess in the impact scope.

Regarding the data collection tool, social workers were skeptical about the quantification process that is a simplification of a complex reality (Desrosières, 2002; Espeland and Sauder, 2007). Approaching complex effects through the lens of quantitative scales does not capture all the nuances and contradictory aspects that the beneficiaries could explain in an interview. Adding a qualitative layer was thus key to balance those concerns.

"I have the impression that this thing [the questionnaire] *is like a net: it catches things, I'm not saying it doesn't, but a lot of things get through."* (Social worker)

Regarding causality, some social workers also expressed concerns that the assessment would become a tool for measuring their individual performance. The director of the shelter and the researchers had to actively reassure them that the objective was to analyze the effectiveness of the shelter as a system.

"If management evaluates on the basis of whether you tick "good" or "bad" exit, at some point it will become biased, that's clear. [...] If, at an end-of-year assessment, management says "you've recorded X number of good exits X number of bad exits..." (Social worker)

Finally, they expressed doubts about the usefulness of the assessment in their daily work and the added value of this extra work. We regularly had to remind them about the importance of suggesting the questionnaire to 'their' beneficiaries so as to collect sufficient data, but some still forgot.

4.2.5. Considerations of aim

A final type of considerations concerned the goals of the assessment. First, the aim of the assessment can influence the scope of outcomes to assess (Dufour, 2019). Depending on how the results will be used, the assessment can target some specific effects or stakeholders. In our case, the focus was on the beneficiaries and we collectively mapped the relevant effects to consider.

Second, the purpose of the assessment also influences the data collection tool—particularly if the goal is to prove or to improve the social impact (Molecke and Pache, 2019). In our case, SoliBel initially requested a quantitative, RCT-inspired design to prove its impact. However, when the primary quantitative results were computed, the question was "where do we go from here?". The formal methodologies, with their quantitative data, seem to be too limited to answer that question. Consequently, adding a qualitative layer was necessary to be able to act on the results and improve the impact generated by the shelter.

"I wonder about those results on the second reaction after an "oh, ok "... and then what, you know what I mean? […] After this statement, when we say to ourselves "here we see a parabola of results, we have figures, we have percentages", [...] what are we going to do with that, knowing that each topic [...] also still contains a lot of unanswered questions... I don't know. In fact, it depends on how the results are interpreted afterwards." (Social worker)

Third, regarding the causality, an RCT-inspired methodology tries to isolate the 'net effect' that is attributable to an SE. However, the aim of the assessment can be to demonstrate an average

sector-effect, i.e. in our case, the effect of *a* shelter—but not the additional effect of the SoliBel shelter compared to other shelters (where people in a potential control group would have gone). The aim can also be to prove a *contribution* to several outcomes, together with contributions from other services or the beneficiaries themselves, instead of proving the *attribution* of the impact to the shelter.

4.3. Findings for RQ2: five principles of the bricolage process to be able to navigate between these considerations

The identified considerations conflicted with the considerations of formality and led the formal assessment process to integrate bricolage dynamics as well. Indeed, the research team and the SE stakeholders had to creatively 'make do' with available resources (Baker and Nelson, 2005) and navigate between what was feasible, efficient, ethical, legitimate and relevant. They 'made it work' and overcame the concerns arising in the assessment process (Janssen *et al.*, 2018). They refused to be constrained by the limits of the environment and the assessment was successfully completed (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010).

Going further, we identify five principles characterizing how this bricolage was effected in order to navigate between the aforementioned considerations and to be in line with the values of the SE. These are principles that were put into practice in our long-term case study and that we identify as important in order to make bricolage in (formal) SIA 'work'. We describe them in more detail in Table 2, which we discuss in the following subsection. More precisely, we show that the SIA process needs to be multidimensional, participative, cultural, mixed-method and adaptive. In so doing, we also stress that the assessment *process* is at least as important as the *results* it delivers (Barraket and Yousefpour, 2013; Benjamin *et al.*, 2023; Bouchard and Rousselière, 2022).

Table 2 — Principles of bricolage permitting navigation between the conflicting considerations

	Multidimensional (broadening and discussing the outcomes)	**Participative (involving stakeholders and giving them a voice)**	**Cultural (developing a new evaluation culture)**	**Mixed-method (adding a qualitative layer to quantitative results)**	**Adaptive (staying reflexive)**
Considerations of feasibility (practical constraints)		- Ensuring an appropriate-length questionnaire - Ensuring a good comprehensibility of the questionnaire			- Setting the timing of T1 and T2 data points correctly
Considerations of efficiency (optimal use of resources)		- Reduced assessment costs through staff involvement in data collection - Using on existing processes within the social enterprise	- Less resource-consuming if stakeholders are used to evaluative context		- Avoiding undesired (costly) effects of the assessment
Considerations of ethics (moral aspects involved in dealing with beneficiaries)	- Including effects important to beneficiaries - Collective discussion - Broaden excessively narrow indicators	- Taking the beneficiaries' reality into account - Reducing potential adverse effects of the assessment - Alignment with SE values (voicing)		- Taking into account beneficiaries' lived experience	- Avoiding intrusive questions/not asking them at inappropriate times - Avoiding pressure to answer
Considerations of legitimacy (resistance from field workers)	- Including effects important to workers - Collective discussion - Broaden excessively narrow indicators	- Addressing staff fears (e.g. that we were evaluating individual staff performance) - Reducing staff reluctance (assessment seen as extra burden)	- Convincing staff to participate in the assessment - Change management	- Qualitative layer very much appreciated by staff	- Alignment with SE values (and not detrimental) - Alignment with SE practices (and not detrimental)
Considerations of aim (goals of the assessment)	- Including relevant effects in line with the goals of the assessment		- Making the aim of the assessment clear (how it will be used)	- Acting on the results - Resolving tensions between aims of proving and improving	- Staying aligned with the goals of the assessment

4.4. Discussion of the findings for RQ2

4.4.1. Multidimensional process

We explained that including all the effects in an assessment is practically impossible and even including many effects is resource-consuming. Still, to address considerations of ethics, legitimacy and aim, the assessment should include relevant multidimensional effects, collectively defined. In our case, the stated mission of the shelter is to accommodate homeless men and help them regain their autonomy to be able to re-integrate into society. This mission is very broad, so it was important to identify multidimensional effects with the stakeholders (including the beneficiaries)—instead of being limited to a few direct indicators such as the percentage of people leaving the shelter with a housing solution which does not fully reflect the social impact of the shelter.

"In the end, a lease doesn't mean anything. [...] they give up housing because housing isn't everything—[no,] *it isn't everything. There's something else behind it and this "something else" is very difficult to work on."* (Social worker)

SEs tackle complex problems that include many dimensions that may be perceived differently by different stakeholders (Studer, 2022). This echoes the *axiological* complexity identified by Stievenart and Pache (2014) that refers to the non-universality of values and vision of society—so the SIA might create debates among stakeholders on what to value. This is why collectively mapping the potential (positive and negative) outcomes of an intervention is already an insightful exercise in itself.

4.4.2. Participative process

Participation is often encouraged in SIA (Benjamin *et al.*, 2023; Bouchard and Rousselière, 2022; Nicholls, 2018). In line with an interest in a collective mapping of outcomes, it seems that assessments conducted externally by experts alone miss parts of the picture (White, 2010). In addition, participation is a way to directly engage with and resolve many considerations, i.e. ethics, legitimacy, efficiency and feasibility.

First, involving beneficiaries in the assessment design is a way to address ethical considerations, allowing their reality to be taken into account, and reducing potential adverse effects. In social entrepreneurship, giving voice to the beneficiaries is encouraged (though often still missing) (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2014) and in line with the values of SEs. Social workers and managers of the shelter regularly underlined beneficiaries' involvement as the biggest strength of the SIA.

"This exercise puts them in a position where they're asked for their opinion, and they don't always have the opportunity to give it, or in any case, it's been a long time since we've been interested in them." (Social worker)

Second, involving social workers in the SIA process was a way to legitimize the process for them, which was a condition for its success. Their participation in the design of the tools and procedures to collect the data enabled their concerns and fears to be addressed, thus reducing their reluctance.

Third, involving social workers was also necessary for considerations of efficiency. As explained, the resources were limited and social workers directly supervised much of the data collection (managing the tablets, informing beneficiaries when to complete the questionnaire, explaining the context, procedures, and purpose of the assessment to them). Their participation was crucial to contain the costs and ensure the quality of the collected data.

Finally, inputs from beneficiaries and social workers were necessary to address practical constraints and set up an appropriate data collection procedure with an adapted tool, such as ensuring a reasonable length and good comprehensibility of the questionnaire through testing.

4.4.3. Cultural process

Developing an evaluation culture is important to facilitate assessment (Barraket and Yousefpour, 2013; Benjamin *et al.*, 2023). In our case, such development mainly addressed considerations of aim and legitimacy. As explained, social workers feared that the assessment would become an evaluation of their individual work. Beneficiaries also needed to be convinced to participate even though they would not directly benefit from the assessment (unless they come back to the shelter at some point). Overall, it was important to be clear about the aim of the assessment and the use that would be made of results (even though the aim could evolve in the process).

Implementing SIA also requires change management skills, as the assessment might result in changes within the SE. As the quotes illustrate, those changes can be feared, or, conversely, they can be necessary to motivate stakeholders to participate.

"There are some workers here who aren't necessarily very motivated by this kind of thing. Because maybe they've been here for a while and it's all routine and that's it. Anything that involves a bit of reflection, change, etc. It's hard to get them moving." (Social worker)

"Social impact is such a big word, meaning everything and nothing at the same time that... well now, it depends, could it open up some leads perhaps, work leads or things like that?" (Social worker)

4.4.4. Mixed-method process

Implementing a mixed-method design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018) was necessary to mainly address considerations of legitimacy and aim. Although there is a general trend towards quantification in our society, many authors have stressed the limits and risks of the (over)simplification it entails (Espeland and Sauder, 2007; Jany-Catrice, 2022; Power, 2004; Studer, 2022). Indeed, it seems that quantitative data cannot fully render the complexity of social impact.

In our case, adding a qualitative layer to the quantitative results (through thematic focus groups where they were discussed) allowed SoliBel to act on the results and resolve the tension between proving and improving aims. As a social worker put it after the presentation of the quantitative results: "the actual work begins now". Completing the process by adding a qualitative step was crucial to make organizational practices evolve. This echoes the distinction made by White

(2010), who differentiates between extractive research—where researchers collect data and go back in their ivory tower to analyze and publish them—and empowering research—where results are fed back to the community to deepen their understanding of their practices.

This qualitative layer and the complexity it reintroduced was also much appreciated by the social workers, increasing the legitimacy of the assessment for them and echoing the alternating phases of simplification (from external demands) and complexification (from internal forces) in SIA identified by Kleszczowski and Raulet-Croset (2018). In particular, it allowed the integration of the beneficiaries' experiential knowledge

"I think when you translate qualitative into quantitative, [...] you simplify everything, and for me, it's not binary... it's not "it's good or it's not good". There are subtleties involved, and qualitative can bring them out." (Social worker)

4.4.5. Adaptive process

Any assessment process has a performative dimension, i.e. it influences the reality it is supposed to assess (Gond *et al.*, 2016; Keevers *et al.*, 2012). Therefore assessors should worry about the unintentional effects that the assessment might generate in the field (Benjamin *et al.*, 2023). With regard to SIA, a reflexive approach is needed to address many considerations. Indeed, to gain its legitimacy, the assessment process has to be aligned with the social mission of the SE and not detrimental to social work. Additionally, asking beneficiaries intrusive questions (even if they relate to a key effect that the SE wants to generate), and/or at inappropriate times, or putting too much pressure on them to answer the questionnaire raise ethical concerns. Consequently, while the assessment results can ultimately help improve the work of the SE, it is critical to also consider the effects of the assessment process itself. Undesired effects can be counterproductive and ultimately be costly for the SE.

The performative effects of the assessment should be addressed through feedback loops between the SE stakeholders and researchers during the process. Questions should be asked such as to what extent does the process interfere with day-to-day work, how do beneficiaries perceive the process, or how can the assessment process be empowering. This reflexivity can minimize the risk of undesired effects of the assessment and ensure continued alignment with its goals. In the case of SoliBel, we organized focus groups with beneficiaries and social workers to develop the tools and procedures for data collection and to interpret the results. We also continuously interacted with them throughout the process to adjust it based on their feedback.

5. General discussion

Our findings are summarized in Figure 1, representing what we could call a model of *'formally-driven' SIA bricolage*. To the best of our knowledge, such an integrative model, emerging from in-depth field experience, is new. Indeed, literature exists on each consideration and each principle that our analysis revealed—and we referred to it—but there was no integrated view and classification of co-occurring considerations and principles for navigating between them. Integrating them raises awareness of the ins and outs of SIA. It opens up the box of (formal) SIA processes—not only the results they produce—to uncover which considerations are at play simultaneously and how to overcome their tensions with formality.

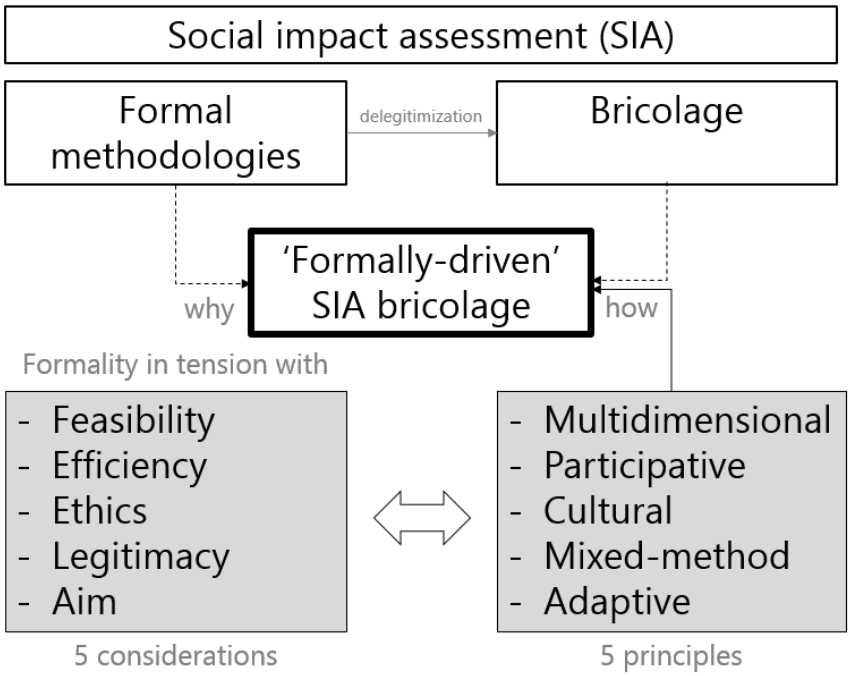

Figure 1 – The 'formally-driven' SIA bricolage model (source: elaborated by the authors)

This new model of *'formally-driven' SIA bricolage* differs from the bricolage discussed by Molecke and Pinkse (2017). More precisely, it differs in terms of *material* bricolage since it includes ad hoc data collected according to a formal methodology and it differs in terms of *ideational* bricolage since it is not based on a critique and delegitimization of formal methodologies. On the contrary, SEs engaging in *'formally-driven' SIA bricolage* support formal methodologies—even though these might need to be legitimized for some internal stakeholders, as our analysis revealed—but the model includes additional considerations that must be taken into account to 'make it work'. Although guided by the considerations of formality, SEs cannot follow a formal methodology to the letter and the assessment process must be flexible to deal with other considerations. It is therefore more a process of

(re)complexification and relativization towards the formality of formal methodologies than a process of delegitimization.

As explained, the concept of bricolage has been widely used in the literature to characterize entrepreneurial dynamics whose central principle is making do with what is at hand (Baker and Nelson, 2005; Lévi-Strauss, 1962). It has also been used in the specific context of social entrepreneurship, where Di Domenico and her colleagues (2010) propose a framework of *social bricolage*, identifying three core principles specific to this entrepreneurship: stakeholder participation, creation of social value, and persuasion. Our work is similar but in the context of SIA, where we propose a model of *'formally-driven' SIA bricolage*, anchored in five core principles that allow navigation between conflicting considerations. We now discuss the parallels that can be drawn between the two.

The *participative* principle that we identified is clearly reflected in the *stakeholder participation*. In both cases, stakeholders have to be active in the process to overcome difficulties and bring additional value. In the entrepreneurial process, they are involved in the creation, management and governance of the SE, to which they bring networks, expertise or support, among other things. In the assessment process, their participation solves considerations of ethics, legitimacy, efficiency and feasibility.

The *adaptive* principle that we identified can be understood as a way to ensure the *social value* of the assessment process—i.e. staying reflexive about the effects of the process itself. Creating social value is a defining characteristic of SEs and the entrepreneurial process must focus on that. The same is true for the assessment process. For example, if it generates negative effects on the beneficiaries, this runs counter to the SE objective of social value creation. Thus, adopting a reflexive posture aims to ensure that the assessment process is in line with the mission and values of the SE.

Lastly, the *cultural* principle we identified is linked to *persuasion*, in the sense that all the stakeholders need to be persuaded of the relevance of the assessment. In the entrepreneurial process, persuasion is necessary to reinforce the legitimacy of the enterprise and to convince stakeholders to invest resources in the business case for social value creation. In the assessment process, developing an evaluation culture aims to reinforce the legitimacy of the assessment and to convince the stakeholders to be part of it. The difference is that, in the entrepreneurial process, persuasion is directed towards external stakeholders who can provide support and resources, and in the assessment process, persuasion is primarily directed towards internal stakeholders, so as to be able to carry out the assessment successfully. In a second stage, the SIA results can be used to convince additional funders to invest in the SE. In both cases, this dimension is directly linked with the stakeholder participation dimension.

The last two principles that we identified—i.e. *multidimensional* and *mixed-method*—do not directly align with the framework of *social bricolage* and would seem more specific to SIA bricolage. This is not surprising, as these principles have a strong methodological dimension that is specific to the assessment activity.

6. Conclusion

This paper is based on an in-depth case study of an SE that followed a formal, RCT-inspired, SIA methodology. Using an inductive approach, we identified five considerations (feasibility, efficiency, ethics, legitimacy, aim) that arise and conflict with the primary considerations of formality in formal methodologies, pushing SEs to resort to bricolage mechanisms. We then identified five core principles (multidimensional, participative, cultural, mixed-method, and adaptive) that allow navigation between those conflicting considerations. We used our findings to elaborate a model of '*formally-driven' SIA bricolage.*

Our contribution to the field of SIA is methodological, theoretical, and practical. Methodologically, our findings are the product of an extensive case study and long-term immersion in an SE that benefited from dedicated resources that SEs often lack for conducting SIA. In this way, we bridge the gap between theory and practice that some authors indicate is missing in SIA research (Grieco, 2018; Rawhouser *et al.*, 2019). Theoretically, we question the distinction between formality and bricolage in the practice of SIA. Expanding on the work of Molecke and Pinkse (2017), we suggest that even when legitimizing and following a formal methodology with ad hoc data collection, SEs might resort to bricolage because conflicting considerations are involved. We develop a model of 'formally-driven' SIA bricolage that articulates five principles to navigate between those conflicting considerations, partially echoing the constructs of the social bricolage framework developed by Di Domenico et al. (2010) in the social entrepreneurship context. In practical term, our bricolage model can help practitioners from SEs, and funders that require them to conduct SIA, to better grasp all the ins and outs of the SIA process. The model can serve as a framework when designing an SIA to make sure that multiple considerations are taken into account and to encourage the application of the core principles in a systematic way.

While contributing to the literature on SIA and bricolage, we acknowledge that our model is an initial proposition that we expect will be refined and expanded on in the future. In fact, several limitations of our analysis open up avenues for future work. First, our findings are based on a single case study within a collaborative research framework, which allows in-depth insights but limits the transferability of the findings. Our model could be compared with other cases where SEs engaged in a formal SIA. Table 1 and Table 2 could be enriched from those cases. Second, while we mainly

illustrated the tensions between the considerations of formality and other types of considerations, those other types of considerations might conflict among themselves as well (for example, practices to address ethical concerns could increase the cost of the assessment). Better characterization of the relationships between the considerations could improve our understanding of the complexity involved in the SIA process. Third, by testing our model on a bigger sample of SEs conducting SIA, we could also add a sense of 'intensity'. Indeed, we could better understand the predominance of each consideration, and the relative importance of each principle of the bricolage process, and in which contexts this varies. All in all, we hope our model of '*formally-driven' SIA bricolage* will inspire further research on the complex task of assessing social impact.

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Appendix 1 – More details about the co-constructed questionnaire in the homeless shelter

The co-constructed questionnaire consists in two parts: one part was developed for the beneficiaries and one for the social workers.

The beneficiaries' part of the questionnaire included questions on the following dimensions:

(1) Physical and mental health. For physical health, we used an indicator on general health from the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) (Pejtersen *et al.*, 2010; Dupret *et al.*, 2012), that asks the respondent how he would describe his health status (on a scale from "very poor" to "very good"). Studies have shown that people generally rate their health status correctly (Wu *et al.*, 2013) and this indicator had already been used in homeless studies (e.g. Wojtusik and White, 1998). For mental health, we also used an indicator from the COPSOQ questionnaire, approaching the mental health dimension by combining questions related to trouble sleeping, stress and depression.

(2) Life skills. We used the concept of life mastery (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978) – which is a psychological scale determining the extent to which the respondent believes he can influence the course of his life.

(3) Two types of social network: family and friends. We used items from the "family and social relationship" section of the Addiction Severity Index (McLellan *et al.*, 1992). The questions were: "How many friends/family members can you count on?" Similar indicators have been used in other studies on homelessness (e.g. Wagener *et al.*, 2022).

(4) Access to services (housing, psychological assistance, employment): this we call "assistance network". We used items specially developed for that particular questionnaire, i.e. we asked the beneficiaries to indicate how many housing / employment / psychological services they knew.

The social workers' part of the questionnaire included questions related to the beneficiaries' autonomy skills (complementing the 'Life skills' dimension (2) listed in the beneficiaries' questionnaire) and two aspects that were considered too sensitive to ask to the beneficiaries directly: hygiene and addiction (complementing the 'Physical and mental health' dimension (1) listed in the beneficiaries' questionnaire). More specifically, it approached the aspect of the beneficiaries' autonomy through one question (created for the questionnaire), asking social workers to estimate the level of autonomy of the beneficiaries in daily life. The hygiene aspect was evaluated through four items developed by Blankertz & Cnaan (1994): shower/bath, change clothes, clean personal area and take mental health medication. Social workers were also asked to estimate the frequency of substance use (alcohol and cannabis) of the beneficiaries[1].

Housing and income information was not included in the questionnaires since, together with other sociodemographic data, the shelter already records those data for all the beneficiaries in a database called AMAstat[2].

[1] We tried to gather information from the beneficiaries using the 4 items of the CAGE questionnaire (Mayfield *et al.*, 1974) but the majority of the beneficiaries chose to skip that section.

[2] AMAstat is a database used in many shelters and managed by the AMA federation (*Fédération des maison d'accueil et des services d'aide aux sans-abri*). For each stay, AMAstat records the start and end date of the stay and several items of information about the beneficiary (age, education level, income at entry and exit, nationality, where the beneficiary spent the night before coming to the shelter, where he went when he left the shelter, if departure was arranged with the shelter or whether the decision was made unilaterally, etc.).

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Appendix 2 – More details on the qualitative data collected

The table below chronologically lists all the qualitative data collected during the SIA process.

Qualitative data collection	Period of time	Data format
Participant observation, participations in numerous meetings	January 2016 to December 2022	Field journal
Internal and external documentation (meeting minutes, strategic notes, activity reports, etc.)	January 2016 to December 2022	Written documents
1 workshop with social workers and the shelter director	March 2016	Written summary
1 focus group with 5 beneficiaries	November 2016	Transcript
1 focus group with 4 social workers and the shelter director	November 2016	Transcript
1 focus group with 5 social workers and the shelter director	December 2016	Transcript
Launching of the quantitative data collection with questionnaire (December 2016)		
1 focus group with 4 social workers	February 2017	Transcript
1 focus group with 5 beneficiaries	March 2017	Transcript
5 individual interviews with social workers	March/April 2017	Transcript
7 individual interviews with social workers	February/May 2019	6 transcripts + 1 written summary (refusal to be recorded)
4 short individual interviews with beneficiaries	May 2019	Written summaries
End of the quantitative data collection with questionnaire (April 2019)		
1 focus group with 3 social workers, on the theme of 'good exit' from the shelter	March 2020	Transcript/written summary (due to some technical issues during recording)
1 focus group with 6 social workers, on the theme of addiction	June 2020	Transcript
1 focus group with 5 social workers, on the theme of recurrence	June 2020	Transcript
1 focus group with 5 social workers, on the theme of health	June 2020	Transcript
1 focus group with 4 social workers, on the theme of activity	September 2020	Transcript
1 focus group with 5 social workers, on the theme of autonomy	September 2020	Transcript
1 focus group with 8 beneficiaries, on the assessment results	July 2021	Written summary

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