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Paper[1]

"Social impact assessment (SIA) in projects financed with the resources of art. 72 of the Third Sector Code: a potential vehicle for transforming institutional culture?"

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Summary: 1. Context: social impact assessment and the third sector in Italy (Polidori) - 2. The research project: methodology, phases, and tools (Fonović, Polidori) - 3. The results of the exploratory phase (Fonović, Polidori) – 4. Three black holes. The results of the exploratory phase require further investigation (Fonović, Polidori) – 5. Conclusive reflections (Polidori) – Bibliography and useful references - Regulatory references.

The views expressed in this work are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of their respective bodies.

[1] Track 45 - Social Impacts evaluation measurement: what opportunities for data aggregation and knowledge of the social economy and communities.
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Abstract

In Italy, the debate on SVI has intensified with the Third Sector Reform (Law 106/2016 and subsequent implementing decrees) which elevates it as "a qualitative and quantitative assessment, in the short, medium and long term, of the effects of the activities carried out on the reference community with respect to the identified objective" which must be based on social value and function "[...] as an expression of participation, solidarity and pluralism [...]" (art. 2 L. 106/2016, VIS MLPS Guidelines of 2019).

In this context, the inclusion in Notice 1/2018 of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies (addressed to certain types of Third Sector organizations) of the "ex post impact assessment of initiatives or projects" is to "evaluate the results achieved at the end of the activities and the impacts produced two years after the conclusion of the project" (art. 72 of the Third sector code (CTS)). Evaluation – not compulsory, but optional, with an ad hoc reward in the selection of project proposals – was to be carried out by a third party delegated by the Third Sector, with proven experience in the VIS sector. Hence our interest - "exploratory" - in having cognitive and informative knowledge of the actual outcome of the approximately 51 projects financed in 2018 that included impact assessment.

We have performed an ex-ante analysis of evaluative intentions as inserted in the project proposal and an ex-post analysis of publicly available materials after the conclusion of the projects. We have mapped the actors of evaluations, the methodologies proposed and the public evidence of the evaluations. This prompted us to formulate further research questions as to the potential of evaluation as a vehicle for transformative cultural change in both the ETS and public administrations.

The paper presents the design of the research whose goal is to analyze the social impact assessments (SIA) realized in the framework of projects financed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLPS) in 2018 to third sector entities (ETS). This is an innovative and isolated example of public policy that has never been studied so far. The study aims to map the methodologies applied; the relationships between the actors in the evaluation field—client ETSs, evaluation bodies involved, and the indirect client, MLPS; and the organizational learning generated in ETS by the experimentation of the evaluation practice. . The objective is to understand how the evaluation capacity of ETS is being constructed and to identify enabling factors and barriers in this process. Ex-ante analysis of project proposals revealed that 80% of financed entities included SIA in the project design, but only 24% of these are configured as evaluation of social impacts properly intended. The initial exploration disclosed some major fragilities with regard to the administrative process, the approach of evaluation bodies, and the stakeholders' involvement.

Preliminary findings reveal that while 80% of funded projects declared an intention to conduct SIA, only 24% align with the definition provided by MLPS Guidelines, highlighting methodological fragilities and limited stakeholder involvement. These insights raise questions about the transformative potential of SIA as a cultural process within ETS and public administrations.

Keywords: third sector, public administration, cultural processes, learning, change, social economy

1. Context: social impact assessment and the third sector in Italy

In previous EU documents and in the recent Recommendation on the development of framework conditions for the social economy (2023), the European Commission calls on Member States to support the adoption by social economy actors of processes for managing and measuring social impact, in order to assess the impact of specific projects or organizations. Although a conceptual distinction exists between "measurement" — understood as the collection of quantitative data and indicators — and "evaluation," which is a broader and more reflective process aimed at interpreting results in light of specific criteria, objectives, and contexts, this differentiation is not made in these documents, nor in the 2019 Guidelines of the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies or other EU texts referenced in Box 1, where the terms are often used interchangeably.

As Nicoletta Stame points out, evaluation goes beyond measurement: it involves value judgments and the adoption of pluralist methodological approaches capable of capturing the complexity of social phenomena and the diversity of perspectives among the actors involved (Stame, 2007; 2016).

BOX 1
Evaluation and Measurement of Social Impact in the Social Economy: European Developments

In recent years, the European Union has recognized the strategic value of measuring and evaluating social impact for the growth and sustainability of the social economy. From the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in 2013[2] to the Social Economy Action Plan (2021–2030) and the Recommendation of 27 November 2023 (C/2023/1344), the European Commission has encouraged Member States to promote the adoption of tools and processes for the management and evaluation of social impact by social economy entities. In these documents, as well as in the 2019 Guidelines of the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, no conceptual distinction is made between "measurement" and "evaluation" of social impact; the terms are often used interchangeably. The Action Plan highlights the need to develop simple, standardized methodologies, co-designed with stakeholders, and to strengthen the skills of social economy actors through mapping existing practices and dedicated training initiatives. The 2023 Recommendation reiterates that measuring social impact is essential to enhancing the contribution of the social economy to inclusion, innovation, and sustainable development, while also facilitating access to funding, transparency, and accountability to the community.

In Italy, the debate on VIS has intensified with the Third Sector Reform[3] , which defines it as *"a qualitative and quantitative assessment, in the short, medium, and long term, of the effects of activities carried out on the community of reference with respect to the identified objective."* It must be based on social value and function *"[...][4] as an expression of participation, solidarity, and pluralism [...]"*[5] . For the legislator, local public authorities are called upon to enhance the role and social function

[2] Cr. https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/resources/docs/ces1960-2013_00_00_tra_ac_en.pdf (final consultation 23/09/2025).
[3] Law 106/2016 and subsequent implementing decrees. The reference to impact assessment in the enabling law is included in Article 7, paragraph 3, which concerns the MLPS's 'Supervision, monitoring, and control' activities.
[4] Art. 7, paragraph 3, Law 106/2016 and MLPS VIS Guidelines of 2019.
[5] Art. 2, paragraph 1, letter a) and MLPS VIS Guidelines of 2019.

of ETS[6] in the planning phase[7] of activities of general interest listed in Article 5 of the CTS[8] and, at the same time, to identify *"criteria and methods for the awarding of services of general interest, based on compliance with quality standards and the social impact of the service [..], as well as criteria and methods for verifying the results in terms of quality and effectiveness of* performance"[9] . The above highlights that, for the legislator, social impact assessment (SIA) is aimed at assessing "*the activities and not the entire organization of ETS"* (Venturi 2019)[10] .

This assessment must therefore succeed, within the ecological-integral-civil framework of the third sector, in: - generating transformative cultural changes in ETS and public administrations; - accounting for this change (Taplin Clark 2012) *"transforming perspectives of meaning"* (Cappa, Del Nigro 2016) of the value generated/produced by the ETS themselves in communities (Polidori, Bartoli 2020).

The MLPS's "Guidelines for the implementation of systems for assessing the social impact of activities carried out by ETS"[11] (Ministerial Decree of July 23, 2019)[12] are a "soft law" instrument[13] and the legislator indicates both its experimental nature and its "promotional" function, as well as its role as a "facilitation tool" for the development of a "concrete implementation of VIS" in ETS and public administrations, to be made operational in the transition from the "accountability" phase to the "social value accountability" phase (Fig. 1), within the learning process.

The figure 1, taken from Venturi (2022), is not included in the MLPS 2019 Guidelines, but it interprets and visualizes their promotional and experimental spirit. It represents an operational aspiration: the graphic illustration suggests the path that Third Sector Entities (ETS) and public administrations are encouraged to undertake, moving from accountability based on responsibility, transparency, and compliance, toward a social impact assessment grounded in transformative intentionality, social added value, and measurability. In this sense, the figure does not depict a consolidated practice, but rather expresses the developmental direction envisioned by the Guidelines, in line with their nature as a soft law and facilitation tool.

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[6] Third sector entities (Article 4, paragraph 1, Legislative Decree No. 117/2017 and subsequent amendments and additions).

[7] VIS also linked to shared administration tools, as discussed by P. Venturi in the course "Social Impact," IFITEL (Venturi 2022).

[8] Third Sector Code (Legislative Decree No. 117/2017 and subsequent amendments).

[9] Art. 4, paragraph 1, letter b) and VIS MLPS Guidelines of 2019. Among other things, VIS requires third sector entities with a budget exceeding €1 million to prepare a social report for the purposes of social impact assessment (VIS).

[10] The relevant articles of Law 106/2016 do not refer to social impact measurement, but to assessment, while the Guidelines refer to both.

[11] Ministry of Labor and Social Policies.

[12] The SIA in the MLPS Guidelines is based on the following principles: - intentionality (the assessment system must be linked to the assessment of the organization's strategic objectives); - relevance (inclusion of all information useful for demonstrating the general interest pursued and the community dimension of the activity carried out); - reliability (accurate, truthful, and fair information, with specific indication of data sources); - measurability (the activities being evaluated that can be traced back to quantitative parameters must be appropriately measured). To this end, ETSs must provide for an evaluation system that identifies: a) the value dimensions that the activities pursue; b) indices and indicators consistent with the activities being evaluated (comparability: reporting of data that allows for comparability over time; transparency and communication: public reporting of the impact assessment and the participatory process of stakeholders). The social impact assessment system – including in the VIS – aims to highlight and raise awareness of the social added value generated; the social changes produced thanks to the project's activities; and the sustainability of social action. Volunteer Service Centers and national association networks are called upon to provide support to ETSs, including for the VIS.

[13] These guidelines are not directly binding, i.e., they are not mandatory for ETS.

Fig. 1 Modeling of the cultural process under observation



Source: Venturi 2022

Figure 1, adapted from Venturi (2022), illustrates a cultural model of the evolution of the evaluation approach within the Third Sector. Although not included in the 2019 MLPS Guidelines, it captures their promotional and experimental spirit, suggesting a transformative path that third sector organizations and public administrations are encouraged to undertake. Within this framework, Matrix 1 provides an analytical systematization of the foundational principles identified by the Guidelines and their corresponding operational applications, translating into methodological and practical terms the aspiration graphically represented by the figure. While the figure expresses an evolutionary tension and a cultural vision, the VIS matrix serves as its technical complement, supporting both the design and the concrete evaluation of interventions.

Matrix 1. Foundational Principles of Social Impact Assessment (VIS) and Related Operational Applications according to the MLPS Guidelines 2019

Principle	Scientific Rationale	Methodological Implications	Practical Outcomes
Intentionality	Ensures consistency between evaluation and the organization's mission/strategy.	Ex-ante definition of measurable objectives aligned with the mission.	Alignment of activities and evaluation metrics with institutional goals.
Relevance	Ensures that the assessment reflects general interest and social dimension.	Selection of indicators that effectively represent collective and community needs.	Greater social legitimacy and transparency towards stakeholders.
Reliability	Foundation of the scientific validity of the assessment.	Use of certified data sources, triangulation of information, verification of evidence.	Credibility of results and possibility of external audits.
Measurability	Enables quantification of effects and replicability of analyses.	Explicit quantitative indicators (physical/monetary), definition of baseline and targets.	Comparability of results, benchmarking, and continuous improvement.

Comparability	Allows longitudinal analyses and comparisons across projects/periods.	Standardization of metrics and data collection processes.	Evaluation of evolution over time and across different contexts.
Transparency and Communication	Promotes accountability and stakeholder participation.	Public dissemination of results, active involvement of stakeholders.	Strengthening trust, collective learning, and improvement of organizational practices.

Source: VIS Guidelines – Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2019). Elaboration: Polidori, September

1.1. Policy update 2025: institutionalising VIS under Article 72

In September 2025, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies adopted Notice n. 2/2025 under Article 72 of the Third Sector Code, which—unlike the 2018 call—requires applicants to submit an ex-ante "Social Impact Monitoring and Assessment Plan (VIS) – Model F"[14] generated through the dedicated digital platform Impact Call (*mlps.openimpact.it*) and uploaded as part of the application package. This procedural change operationalises the 2019 ministerial Guidelines on VIS—which define impact assessment as a qualitative and quantitative appraisal of effects in the short, medium and long term—by standardising how projects formulate their theory of change, indicators and monitoring arrangements at the design stage. In contrast, Notice n. 1/2018 framed VIS as an optional, ex post exercise (to be conducted by an independent third party two years after project completion), for which proposals could obtain an additional score, thereby positioning impact assessment primarily as a post-hoc verification of results rather than an integral component of project design. The 2025 institutionalisation of an ex-ante VIS plan thus marks a shift from *rewarding* isolated practices to *mainstreaming* planning and comparability of impact evidence across projects, while preserving the soft-law nature of the ministerial Guidelines. This paper's 2018-based evidence offers a baseline against which future research may appraise whether the 2025 turn effectively strengthens evaluative capacity and stakeholder participation within ETS and public administrations (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of VIS requirements: Notice 1/2018 vs Notice 2/2025

VIS profile	Notice 1/2018	Notice 2/2025
Existence of a VIS obligation	Not mandatory. Notice 2018 states that, "where envisaged", the ex post impact assessment must be entrusted to an independent third party with proven experience (therefore optional, not required for all projects).	Mandatory at the ex-ante stage: the application must include the Model F – Social Impact Monitoring and Assessment Plan (VIS) generated via the Ministry's workflow and uploaded with the other forms.
Platform/tool	No dedicated ministerial platform. Any (optional) assessment could be carried out by the applicant or outsourced to a third party, using methods chosen by the proponent/commissioning body.	Binding use of "Impact Call (Open Impact)" to compile Model F and generate the VIS report to be uploaded with the application (as per MLPS instructions).
Method required (ToC, SROI, etc.)	No prescribed method; Notice 2018 does not mandate specific frameworks (e.g., ToC/SROI).	No prescribed method; Notice 2025 does not impose ToC or SROI. It does require a monitoring & VIS plan with indicators compiled through Impact Call; methodological

[14] As of this date, the Ministry's website does **not** provide a downloadable *Model F* template. The VIS plan must be created within the Impact Call application (mlps.openimpact.it), which then generates the summary report to be uploaded with the application (see the MLPS call page for Notice n. 2/2025 and sector briefings).

		choices remain with the proponent, in line with the 2019 VIS Guidelines.
Weight in selection/evaluation	VIS is not a standard scoring criterion; it appears only as a possible ex post activity entrusted to a third party (thus outside the regular scoring grid).	The quality of the VIS plan submitted (Model F/Impact Call) is assessed as part of proposal evaluation, as outlined on the MLPS page and sector briefings. [

Source: Polidori's elaboration, September 2025

Open Impact[15] is an innovative start-up and academic spin-off of the University of Milano-Bicocca, specialized in the measurement, evaluation, and management of social, environmental, and economic impact. It collaborates with public institutions, Third Sector organizations, and businesses to design digital and methodological solutions aimed at generating social value. From a methodological standpoint, the Open Impact team adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. The choice of methods—ranging from theory-based approaches such as the Theory of Change to quantitative tools like cost-benefit analysis or quasi-experimental designs—is guided by the specific evaluation questions and the availability of data.

A key component of Open Impact's operational model is its proprietary digital platform, developed in 2019 as part of its academic spin-off initiative. The platform is designed to invert the traditional top-down logic of impact assessment by aggregating bottom-up data from existing evaluations worldwide. It draws on validated sources from internationally recognized repositories such as Social Value, Social Finance UK, Issuelab, and the New Economic Foundation. To date, the platform has incorporated data from over 300 externally reviewed reports, analyzing more than 4,000 distinct impacts, with the database continuously expanding.

The impact assessment process is structured into four main phases. The first phase involves the co-design of the impact model, which includes the participatory construction of the Theory of Change and the definition of data collection strategies. This step helps organizations identify the intended impacts and organize them into a coherent framework, specifying outcome areas, types (hard or soft), cashability, and relevant indicators. These indicators are aligned with international standards such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Italian BES (Fair and Sustainable Wellbeing) framework. Financial proxies are also defined to translate social change into measurable economic value, and tailored monitoring tools (e.g., stakeholder questionnaires) are developed.

The second phase focuses on data collection and analysis, coordinated by the implementing organizations. Data gathered through questionnaires are systematized into a database and analyzed to inform the impact report. In the third phase, a quali-quantitative report is produced, combining textual analysis with digital outputs such as dashboards and data visualizations using tools like PowerBI and Infogram. Finally, where applicable, the fourth phase involves calculating the Social Return on Investment (SROI), a framework that monetizes social and environmental outcomes by linking them to financial proxies. This allows for a comprehensive valuation of the benefits generated, even when they lack direct monetary metrics.

This methodology has been applied in various contexts, including the national network fio.PSD for the evaluation of interventions addressing severe marginalization[16], the CNCA for harm reduction programs[17], ART-ER and the Emilia-Romagna Region for urban regeneration projects[18]. These

[15] Open Impact - https://openimpact.it/en/impact-database (final consultation 23/09/2025).
[16] fio.PSD – Impact Report 2025, Open Impact methodology (PDF) (final consultation 23/09/2025).
[17] CNCA – Open Impact Case Study (final consultation 23/09/2025).
[18] ART-ER – Open Impact Case Study (final consultation 23/09/2025).

applications demonstrate the adaptability and robustness of Open Impact's approach across diverse policy areas and stakeholder environments.

A distinctive feature of Open Impact's approach is the attention paid to the "civic" dimension of impact assessment and its generative value. Unlike purely administrative or compliance-driven evaluations, the civic approach emphasizes the participatory and transformative potential of impact assessment processes. This means not only measuring outcomes for accountability or reporting purposes, but also fostering the active involvement of stakeholders and communities in defining, monitoring, and interpreting social change. In this perspective, impact assessment becomes a tool for collective learning and empowerment, capable of generating new relationships, shared knowledge, and innovative practices—thus producing value that extends beyond the immediate results of individual projects. The generative dimension refers precisely to this capacity to activate processes of social innovation, strengthen networks, and promote sustainable change, making impact assessment itself a lever for civic engagement and community development.

This methodology has been applied in various contexts, including the national network fio.PSD for the evaluation of interventions addressing severe marginalization, the CNCA for harm reduction programs, ART-ER and the Emilia-Romagna Region for urban regeneration projects, and the Umbria Region for home care services. These applications demonstrate the adaptability and robustness of Open Impact's approach across diverse policy areas and stakeholder environments.

2. The research project: methodology, phases, and tools

Prior to the issuance of the aforementioned guidelines, the MLPS[19] included in Notice 1/2018 (Art. 72 of the CTS)[20] the "*ex-post impact assessment of initiatives or projects*" aimed at "*assessing the results achieved at the end of the activities and the impacts produced two years after the conclusion of the project*." This assessment (which is not mandatory but optional, with an *ad hoc* reward in the selection of project proposals) is to be carried out 24 months after the end of the project by a third party delegated by the Third Sector Entity (ETS) to which the funding is granted, with proven experience in the field of such assessment.

There are no *ex-post* evaluative analyses or public data on this action, which makes it a privileged field of study for identifying incentives and barriers—formal, substantial, and cultural—for the prospects of VIS in ETS and also in public institutions.

The idea for the research, which had been under consideration for some time, was further stimulated by the 25th AIV National Congress. This paper systematizes the initial results of the research presented at that event[21] .

[19] Guidelines that were being developed in 2018 by an *ad hoc* working group/round table set up within the National Council of the Third Sector and operating within the Directorate-General for the Third Sector and Corporate Social Responsibility (Polidori, Bartoli 2020). See also https://www.vita.it/la-ratio-delle-linee-guida-del-governo-sulla-valutazione-di-impatto-sociale/

[20] Notice addressed to certain types of Third Sector Entities: voluntary organizations (ODV), social promotion associations (APS), and Third Sector foundations (FTS), registered in the Single National Register of the Third Sector (RUNTS); pending the activation of this register by the MLPS in 2018, registrations in the respective regional registers (ODV, APS) or in the register of non-profit organizations (FTS) were valid.

[21] Long abstract *"Social impact assessment (SIA) in projects/initiatives financed with resources under Article 72 of the Third Sector Code: a generative model of social innovation or a model yet to be defined?"* presented in Panel 9 *"Clients, evaluators, and stakeholders: focus on impact assessment,"* XXV AIV National Congress, "*Ask me to evaluate. The relationship between evaluator and client between planning, implementation, and evaluation,"* Rome, September 20-22, 2023.

The research in question is exploratory and cognitive in nature and focuses on projects of national importance[22] under Notice 1/2018 (unit of analysis) that have chosen/declared to carry out an *ex-post* impact assessment (VIS) two years after the end of the activities.

The research will last 28 months (July 2023 – July 2026), with modular results.

The question we ask ourselves is whether this was a public policy that produced and generated significant social and cultural innovation, or whether it was a short-lived initiative that did not make a significant contribution to the profiling of an evaluation model in the third sector. And if it was fruitful, in what direction did it steer the evaluation culture of the third sector?

The research has two objectives. The first is to learn about and understand in detail, limiting the scope of the investigation to the experimental action of the MLPS described above and using empirical evidence such as practices, experiences, and achievements of evaluation in the third sector, verifying whether or not these follow the statements required in Notice 1/2018 and in the subsequent MLPS Guidelines. The second, taking a perspective of studying cultural processes, consists of identifying the main functions of VIS actors in the third sector, weighing their influence and the direction taken in the initiative under consideration.

Research questions (in progress):

- How is VIS defined by evaluators and ETSs in projects and more generally?
- Is it really social impact assessment/SIA or ex post or final assessment?
- Was the client/ETS involved by the evaluator in the evaluation process? And when, at what stage of the project: during drafting, after approval, or?
- What effect has the 'public policy on VIS' had on ETSs?
- Did the evaluation have a learning/training function in ETSs or was it simply an administrative requirement?
- Did the VIS influence the subsequent activities of the ETS?

The research consists of three phases:

1. Exploratory phase: Initial analysis of project files and setting up the research framework
2. Administration of the questionnaire to ETS and EVAL and analysis of the results
3. Action research: participatory sharing of results with ETS

In the first phase, the work focused on studying the literature and reference documents.

Definitional tables were also drawn up on evaluation and its phases, measurement and social impact, social innovation, as well as an initial theoretical framework on the *ex post* effects of public policies (desk analysis).

The questionnaire was developed and the projects were surveyed and acquired, followed by the creation and implementation of the reading grid (Table 2) for the project proposals, aimed at systematizing what was stated in the "project sheet" by the ETS both on the VIS and on the delegated third parties, the evaluators (defined by us for this research as evaluation bodies (EVAL)). Subsequently, the contents expressed therein were analyzed.

[22] The national relevance of projects is determined by the territorial criterion, i.e., activities must take place in at least 10 regions (autonomous provinces are treated as regions). Public funding is €250,000.00 (minimum) and €900,000.00 (maximum). The remaining portion of the total cost of the project (co-financing) for ODVs and APSs is at least 20%, while for FTSs it is 50%.

Table 2. Reading grid for project sheets

Subject	*Coding*
Evaluation indicated – field 3A of Annex D	Yes / No
Description of evaluation – field 3B of Annex D	Yes / No
Type of assessment	Yes-VIS / no-VIS / maybe-VIS
Indication of theory/methodology	Text
Presence of the term "change"	Yes / No
Presence of the terms "value chain" and/or "social value"	Yes / No
Indication of community involvement / beneficiaries / stakeholders	Yes / No
Creation of a model	Yes / No
Reference to Legislative Decree 106/2016 and/or MLPS VIS Guidelines	Yes / No
Information on the third party delegated to act as evaluator	Yes identified / Yes but not identified / No

Source: Authors' elaboration

Also at this stage, the processing of the information/content in the grid was also used to prepare the two types of exploratory questionnaires for the client (ETS) and the evaluators (EVAL) (Table 3).

Table 3. Contents of the semi-structured questionnaire for the ex-ante exanalysis of VIS projects Notice 1/2018 – by recipient (ETS recipient and EVAL recipient)

Questionnaire content	*ETS*	*EVAL*
Method of selection and identification of the third party delegated to carry out the ex post/impact assessment (indicating the presence/absence of previous relationships, the type of relationship and any costs/expenses).	Yes	No
Significant previous experience in impact assessment or ex post evaluation in general. Use of the VIS Guidelines (taken into account).	Yes	Yes
Experience in evaluation and/or ex post evaluation in/with the third sector.	No	Yes
Theory/Methodology/Tools identified; by whom indicated and how agreed.	Yes	No
Involvement of the ETS in identifying the methodological choice methodological choice, with an indication of the methods of involvement and at what stage of the project cycle, including the drafting stage.	Yes	Yes
Involvement of any partners and/or networks in the evaluation process, with an indication of the methods used.	No	Yes
Involvement of local areas in the evaluation process, with an indication of the method of involvement.	No	Yes
Description of the relationship between the evaluator and the ETS, indication of critical issues, positive aspects, and suggestions for improvement.	Yes	Yes
Description of any relationship with MLPS with an indication of critical issues, positive aspects, and proposals for		

for improvement.	Yes	Yes
Indication of the impacts generated by the project (added value added value, changes, sustainability).	No	Yes
Impact of the assessment process on ETS activities of the ETS.	Yes	Yes
Use of the evaluation model in the final report specifying the reasons for the (lack of) choice.	Yes	No

Source: Authors' calculations

The second phase (September 2023 – April 2024) involves the analysis of data from questionnaires administered to ETS and the material collected. Subsequently, the questionnaires for evaluation bodies (EVAL) will be adapted and the results will be summarized.

In the third phase of the research, two types of interviews will be conducted: 1) with operational representatives, to clarify and supplement the questions in the questionnaires and any suggestions and/or other informative indications to be explored; 2) in-depth interviews with privileged witnesses, to record their views on the process as a whole (second phase), i.e., with the progressive affirmation of VIS through the lens of a cultural process. Our working hypothesis is to study this group of ETS as the 'elite'[23] of the third sector on the subject of VIS.

The third phase takes the form of a participatory evaluation of VIS. Based on the results of the second phase of the research, it will involve the actors involved and other stakeholders in reflection—critical, self-critical, etc.—on the cultural process underway with regard to the affirmation of VIS in the third sector. This will take place through discussion seminars and/or focus groups (in person/online) with the aim of exposing the difficulties and barriers to developing the potential of VIS as a tool that promotes transformative learning (Engeström 2016). In this phase, we will engage with these ETSs based on the results of the second phase. This will allow us, on the one hand, to better understand their potential as (potential) social innovators who draw on organizational and institutional learning from the results of VIS. On the other hand, it will help us formulate practical guidelines and policy reflections to promote and develop VIS in ETS and public policies. The research report will be published in one of INAPP's editorial formats.

3. The results of the exploratory phase

The exploratory phase of the research starts from the operational definition of the actors in the evaluation field, of which there are three. The 'clients' are third sector entities (ETS) that have been authorized to submit proposals to the call for proposals issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, Notice 1/2018 - voluntary organizations (ODV), social promotion associations (APS), and third sector foundations (FTS). We can properly define them as clients because the use of social impact assessment in the projects for which they were admitted to funding was their choice: during the drafting of the project proposal, they decided to invest in this cross-cutting action as an integral part of the project. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policies - Directorate-General for the Third Sector and Corporate Social Responsibility (MLPS) is considered an 'indirect client' because it is the funder and, by introducing a significant reward into the evaluation of project proposals for the definition of the merit ranking for admission to funding, it exerts innovative and proactive political and cultural pressure in favor of promoting social impact assessment in the third sector. The results of this initiative and whether, and in what direction, this method of inducing evaluation practice has exerted a generative push for the strengthening of the evaluation culture is the subject of our study. The third actor is the

[23] The theoretical framework for this research perspective is expected to be finalized in 2024.

evaluation bodies (EVAL) defined in Notice 1/2018 as "third parties with proven experience," chosen individually by the individual ETS project coordinators. They are technical experts, bearers of knowledge and methodology, and as such exert a strong influence on the construction of the evaluation culture in ETS, with cultural impacts that extend far beyond the single evaluation exercise. The research design was constructed with the aim not of 'evaluating evaluations' but of understanding how interactions between actors in the field of evaluation build, through evaluation practices, a more informed clientele for ETS.

3.1. VIS in funded projects

There were 51 projects of national importance funded under the aforementioned Notice 1/2018, of which 45 were APS, 3 were ODV, and 3 were TS Foundations.

In 41 projects – for which we have the project sheet and financial plan – field D of the project outline indicates that the VIS will be carried out two years after the end of the activities (Table 4).

Table 4. Type of ETS funded with VIS declarations in the project sheets in response to Notice 1/2018

	ODV	APS	FTS	Total
Projects by ETS type	3	45	3	51
VIS-SI - declaration implementation in Annex D	**3**	**36**	**2**	**41**
Appendix D not available	0	7	1	41
VIS – implementation not declared	0	2	0	2

Source: Notice 1/2018 MLPS, project sheets

Although we still do not have information on the presence or absence of VIS in eight projects[24] , its declared inclusion (in fact, we will see that it was often a final, ex post evaluation, etc.) in 41 projects highlights the interest or at least an initial approach to ex post impact assessment .

Ex-post impact assessment was not mandatory but optional; therefore, the fact that almost all of the funded projects include it 'in declarative form' seems to testify to the proponents' interest in experimenting with it.

Alternatively, their interest may be related to the bonus points awarded by the external commission of the MLPS[25] .

In this article, we present the descriptive results of the exploratory phase, which focused on the analysis of the relevant fields in Annex D of the project sheet, specifically field 3.5 - 'Impact assessment' and field 9 - 'Assignment of specific activities to third parties (delegates) of projects that have indicated their intention to carry out the VIS' of the 41 project sheets that contain the declaration of the implementation of the VIS within the scope of the funded project activities.

3.2 Consistency with the VIS declaration

An initial level of qualitative analysis focused on the description of the *ex post* impact assessment declared in the project sheet.

From the descriptions given in the project proposal, only a small proportion of the projects (9 out of 41 projects) appear to be *ex post* impact assessments and therefore properly VIS (yes-VIS),

[24] We are currently gathering references for the eight ETSs in question in order to proceed with the request for the relevant documentation.

[25] MLPS was contacted at the start of the research project with a request to make itself available for an interview, but during the exploratory phase it was not possible to establish contact.

while more than half of the projects seem to be limited to a simple final or ex post assessment (non-VIS). For the remaining 7 projects, it is not possible to reach a clear conclusion, as the descriptions are unclear (Table 5).

Table 5. Qualitative consistency of project proposals between what was stated and what was ascertained

Type	*Code*	*No*
Project proposals that are classified as evaluation impact properly understood	yes-VIS	10
Project proposals that are classified as "simple" final or ex post evaluation	no-VIS	25
Project proposals of dubious configuration or unclear	meybe-VIS	6
Total		**41**

Source: Notice 1/2018 MLPS, project sheets

As we saw in the previous paragraph, the description of VIS – properly understood – is present in only 9 projects in which a reference theory and/or methodologies are identified. Theories and methodologies are also expressed in 22 projects (Table 6), of which 7 with final or ex post evaluation (non-VIS) and 2 with evaluations of dubious configuration (maybe-VIS). The classification was carried out by analyzing the descriptions in fields 3A and 3B of Annex D in comparison with the elements of the VIS definition as summarized in the MLPS guidelines and consolidated in the scientific literature.

Table 6. VIS as proposed in the project sheets: Presence of descriptions of theory and methodology (T/M) in Annex D

T/M described: YES; T/M not described: NO; T/M description unclear:?

Type of assessment	*YES*	*NO*	*?*	*Subtotals*
yes-VIS	9	0	0	9
no-VIS	7	18	0	25
maybe-VIS	2	4	1	7
Totals	**22**	**22**	**1**	**41**

Source: Notice 1/2018 MLPS, project sheets

The methodologies indicated in the project sheet (field 3.5 of Annex D) are diverse (Table 7), but the only multiple occurrences are indicative of the situation in the field of evaluation. In the impact assessments proper (yes-VIS), we find the traditional *hard* methodologies several times*:* SROI - Social Return on Investment (which two projects propose to use) and counterfactual methodologies (two projects). In the ex post assessments (non-VIS), we find a preponderance of participatory methodologies (mentioned in three out of seven projects).

The only theory used in project descriptions, both in impact assessments proper (yes-VIS, 5 projects) and in final ex post assessments (non-VIS, in 2 projects) is the Theory of Change (ToC), which is currently the most widely used and well-known theory/method in VIS. Indirect confirmation of this statement can be found in the indication, albeit succinct, of these theories/methodologies in projects (5) that reserve the right to identify the evaluating body at a later stage. The Theory of Change is used to support different methodologies (3) and also as a stand-alone umbrella method (in 2 VIS projects and 2 non-VIS projects) (Table 6). In impact evaluations proper, the Theory of Change serves as a general framework in half (5 out of 10) of the projects that describe the methodological framework in the project fiche.

In non-VIS evaluations, i.e., those that are simple ex-post evaluations, the use of the Theory of Change is the opposite: it is used exclusively as a stand-alone method in 2 out of 7 projects that describe the methodology in the project fiche and is never associated with one of them.

Table 7. Theories/methodologies indicated (T/M) in the project sheets – field 3.5 Annex D

Type	*T/M*	*TOC*	*No. of projects*
yes-VIS			
Counterfactual			2
Actual			1
Most Significant Change (MSC)			1
RCT – Randomized Control Trials		1	1
Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)		1	1
SROI		1	2
Stand-alone theory of change		2	2
Evaluating Human Development (EHD)		1	
Subtotal yes-VIS		**6**	**11**
non-VIS			
Madit / Dialogic science			1
Participatory methodologies			2
Participatory ethno-methodological observation (Arnestein& Hart)			1
Social Network Analysis (SNA)			1
Stand-alone theory of change		2	2
Non-VIS subtotal		**2**	**7**
Possible VIS			
Generative Impact Assessment			1
Subtotal maybe-VIS		**0**	**1**

Source: Notice 1/2018 MLPS, project sheets

Textual analysis of field 3.5 b) with the description of the VIS in the project proposal revealed the presence of some of the "keywords" specific to the VIS, such as "change" and "value chain" or "social value" (Table 8). All yes-VIS projects use one of these terms, while only 16% of non-VIS projects refer to 'change', and none to 'social value' or 'value chain'. This provides substantial confirmation of their configuration as simple ex post evaluation.

Table 8. Presence/absence of keywords related to social impact assessment

Type	*No of projects*	*Change*	*Value*
yes-VIS	9	6	3
non-VIS	25	4	0
maybe-VIS	7	4	3
Total	**41**	**14**	**6**

Source: Notice 1/2018 MLPS, project sheets

However, only two projects refer to the VIS as defined in Delegated Law 106/2016 and in the MLPS Guidelines, one of which is a "non-VIS" assessment.

In reality, only more than two-thirds of the projects that include VIS (26 out of 41) provide a sufficient description of the implementation methods and expected results. Even fewer projects clarify whether and how the ex-post impact assessment on the activities and/or services proposed by the project will be carried out. In half of the projects (22 out of 41), there is no description of the ex-post evaluation at all, and if we also add the projects with a 'dubious' evaluation configuration, we arrive at

well over half of the projects that do not pay attention to planning the evaluation at the time of presentation of the project idea, i.e., that it is an integral part of the project itself.

3.4 Subject of the evaluation

At least one subject of evaluation is defined in two-thirds of the projects with impact evaluation properly understood (yes-VIS), in 40% of non-VIS projects, and in 30% of maybe-VIS projects. This shows a significantly stronger methodological structure in yes-VIS proposals.

Twelve projects provide for evaluation for all evaluation subjects – activities, services, and recipients. Of these, three are yes-VIS projects (one-third), while four projects (including three non-VIS projects) provide for evaluation for recipients (Table 9)

Table 9. Evaluation object as defined in the project sheets

Subject	*Yes-VIS*	*non-VIS*	*maybe-VIS*	*Subtotals*
Activities + Recipients	1	0	0	1
Activities + Project services + Target audience	3	8	1	12
Target audience	1	2	1	4
Interventions	1	0	0	1
Subtotal: Defined object	**6**	**10**	**2**	**18**
Unclear definition	1	1	0	2
Definition missing	3	14	3	20
Total projects	**9**	**25**	**7**	**41**

Source: Notice 1/2018 MLPS, project sheets

The involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process is explicitly mentioned in only three yes-VIS projects and in none of the non-VIS and maybe-VIS projects (Table 10). The fact that even non-VIS projects that declare participatory methodologies do not pay attention to stakeholder involvement, and that yes-VIS projects that declare it do so without describing the methods and/or other useful information, suggests that this aspect should be explored further in the second phase of the research. Firstly, it should be verified whether forms of stakeholder involvement – or involvement of local actors or the community – were part of the evaluation process or not, in order to rule out the possibility that the failure to mention this aspect in the project sheets may be due to constraints or rather imperfections in the design of the proposal submission form.

Table10. Stakeholders involved in the evaluation process

Type	*No of projects*	*Yes*	*No*	*Not clear*
Yes-VIS	9	3	6	0
non-VIS	25	0	23	2
possibly-VIS	7	0	6	1
Total	**41**	**3**	**35**	**3**

Source: Notice 1/2018 MLPS, project sheets

3.5 Evaluation bodies

Of the 41 projects examined, half identify the body, i.e., in administrative terms, the "third party with proven experience," which will be entrusted with the evaluation at the time of submission of the project proposal (EVAL) (Table 11). The evaluation bodies (15) have already been indicated in the

respective project proposals in 19 projects. For the purposes of our research, we have grouped them into five types. The evaluation bodies were first classified by macro-sector, between public, private, and third sector. Within this macro-division, institutions of a particular nature were then grouped together in order to identify the specific organizational nature of the technical actors in the field of evaluation: 'instrumental bodies' derived from universities and 'hybrid bodies', non-profit institutions whose classification as ETS proper is currently being defined.

Table 11. Evaluation bodies (EVAL)

EVAL type	*Number of projects*	*Number of EVAL*
University – Department	3	2
University – Instrumental body	4	3
Third sector entity (ETS)	4	4
Private entity	4	4
Hybrid entity	4	2
Subtotal	**19**	**15**
Not identified in Annex D but to be identified subsequently, indicated in the economic plan	13	0
No reference in Annex D	9	0
Total	**41**	**30**

Source: Notice 1/2018 MLPS, project sheets

The different types of evaluation bodies identified (EVAL) at the time of submission of the project proposal represent all the types of evaluation bodies that have emerged in the field of VIS in Italy in recent years. It should be noted, however, that the EVALs that implement VIS in more than one project (two) are of only two types: a university spin-off in the form of a cooperative/ETS and two bodies defined as 'hybrid': an international consulting firm operating in Italy as a benefit corporation (B-corp ETS) and a participatory foundation.

The nine projects that are configured – at this ex-ante stage – as yes-VIS since the presentation of the project proposal, immediately indicate the evaluation body (of four institutional types, excluding university departments).

The other 10 projects that indicate the evaluating body at the time of submission of the project proposal (18 out of 41 projects analyzed that claim to carry out the VIS) are classified as non-VIS. Among these, we note the predominance of evaluating bodies indicated on more than one project (3 out of 4) and of private bodies (3 out of 4).

4. Three black holes. The results of the exploratory phase require further investigation

The results of the exploratory phase have allowed us to define the scope of the study, identify the types of actors, test and refine the research tools, consolidate our critical perspective, and focus on the most pressing questions. In this concluding paragraph, we reflect on the three "black holes" revealed by our ex-ante analysis of the assessments proposed in the project phase.

4.1 All that glitters is not gold. It is not enough for an evaluation to be VIS

The results of this first phase allow us to hypothesize a division of our universe into two macro-subsets, with respect to the actual implementation of VIS in projects (yes-VIS and non-VIS).

The information provided in the project proposal forms for the 41 projects examined does not correspond to VIS for all of them (25 were judged to be non-VIS and 7 were of dubious configuration, possibly VIS), as many evaluations are presented as (ordinary) ex post evaluations: the effects of the results achieved by an intervention or activity, comparing them with the expected and pre-established results (specific objectives previously identified and declared); or the achievements of the recently completed project aimed at verifying - through the interventions and activities carried out - the internal efficiency and effectiveness of the ETS. Or it is a final evaluation aimed at knowing, understanding, and explaining the validity and representativeness of the results, with the aim of highlighting in the report, with concise and relevant assessments, the positives and limitations of the results achieved or not achieved.

This leads us to hypothesize—in this initial phase of the work—that the assessments presented as VIS were not included as the result of a discussion between the ETS and the chosen assessor, and therefore, in a reflective-constructive process *prior* to the project cycle. This could lead us to conclude that its inclusion in the project sheet was considered primarily a formal requirement, prompted by the possibility of obtaining the reward during the evaluation phase. However, our goal remains to review the documentation and question all ETSs; the actual classification of processes as yes-VIS and no-VIS will only be possible with ex post analysis. For these same reasons, the initial analysis leads us to believe that the potential for scientific contribution and educational-training investment in the cultural growth of the third sector on the topic of VIS by the evaluating bodies involved may be rather limited.

Gaining an understanding, during the exploratory phase, of what has been proposed as VIS, and by whom, allows us to investigate the relationship between the ETS and the evaluation body with greater insight, and to reveal what organizational learning the evaluation process has promoted. The technical analysis of the evaluation processes thus becomes the primary tool for outlining how evaluation capacity is built within ETSs and for revealing the strategic horizons towards which it tends.

4.2 What happened to the VIS policy? Throw the stone and hide your hand

The critical issues identified do not detract from the merit of the MLPS, which had proposed to ODVs, APSs, and FTSs with this Notice the testing of VIS in projects of national importance. The aim of our research is to verify and, therefore, evaluate the extent to which this may have stimulated (even unconsciously) a cultural process of transformative learning in organizations that have shown interest in VIS, in a 'civil perspective'[26] characterized by *the 'emergentist vision of the Third* Sector' (De Benedictis et al. 2023).

However, the positive inductive action of the MLPS is at the same time a source of counterbalances, originating also from the rules and procedures of State Accounting, which stipulate that expenditure commitments must be made by the end of the calendar year. In order to adequately support the VIS through public funding, it is necessary to put in place enabling administrative rules and procedures – or, at least, ones that are feasible. Right from the design phase: in this case, the timeframe for submitting the project was extremely short (month)[27] . This certainly had a negative impact on the quality of the evaluation proposal, the identification and sharing of the strategic framework, the choice of the evaluation body, and the possibility of co-construction between the ETS and the evaluation body during the design phase. It must be acknowledged that, in such a short period of time, setting up a participatory and shared impact assessment process for both the evaluators and the ETSs involved would have been complex or, at the very least, cumbersome or incomplete. The

[26] The civil perspective of impact is characterized *as "the set of long-term transformations that the actions of relational ecosystems, and the changes influenced by them, contribute to generating for the contexts of reference, i.e., at the level of individuals ('micro'), formalized and informal organizations ('meso'), and systems ('macro')",* in De Benedictis et al., 2023.

[27] Deadline for submission of the project to the MLPS (with the Notice published on the website on November 8, 2018): 1:00 p.m. on December 10, 2018.

time factor is also a burden in the final phase of the project: the VIS was requested 24 months after the end of the project, which effectively doubles the project duration. This frightens ETSs, which have had bad experiences with the public administration, which often delays the closure of projects and, therefore, the payment of the balance of the funding and the release of the guarantee for many months. This misalignment of project management times between the PA and the TS, together with non-enabling administrative procedures, is not conducive to promoting a culture of impact assessment.

In fact, VIS has not been included in subsequent notices, either in the annual notices for projects deriving from the Third Sector Code or in others. So far, the initiative has not been evaluated or promoted in any way. Essentially, it has gone unnoticed in the public sphere: neither other central administrations nor the regions have borrowed the initiative. The third sector itself has not taken it into consideration at all. As a result, the MLPS's driving role in promoting VIS in the third sector has significantly weakened and has effectively disappeared. The Guidelines are mostly a silent guest, not even mentioned in the initial processes and flourishing debates on co-programming and co-design.

Public policy has therefore thrown a stone into the pond, with the inclusion of VIS funding in MLPS Notice 1/2018 – but then hid its hand. The objective of our research on this topic is therefore twofold: to identify the process barriers in this form of public promotion of VIS, from the point of view of all the actors involved – ETS, MLPS, EVAL; and to understand the actual impacts, if any, on the evaluative capacity of the ETS project coordinators.

4.3 The value of relationships. From accountability techniques to the culture of VIS

The third significant shortcoming revealed by the exploratory analysis is what appears to be a lack of attention to the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process. Only one-third of the yes-VIS evaluations and none, clearly, of the non-VIS evaluations explicitly mention – in the brief descriptions of the project proposals that provided the data for the ex-ante analysis – the involvement of significant community stakeholders. This catches our attention because considering oneself strongly interrelated with the territory, and therefore evaluating and assessing oneself from a perspective that integrates processes and visions external to the entity, is a distinctive feature of the third sector and one of the cornerstones of the MLPS Guidelines, which place participation at the top of the list of analysis dimensions: '1. evidence of the process of participation in defining the value dimensions of impact measurement by a set of representative stakeholder classes
internal and external to the entity' (MLPS 2019).

It will therefore be particularly interesting to explore what cultural resources, strategic visions of organizational development, and long-term perspectives have been put in place by the ETSs that have taken up the VIS challenge and the evaluation bodies that have worked on it.

5. **Conclusive reflections: a civic route to impact evaluation as a public-policy lever**

Consistent with the critical issues highlighted in §4—the mismatch between declared SIA/VIS and practice, policy discontinuity after 2018, and weak stakeholder engagement—we propose a civic route to impact evaluation: a transformative, participatory, learning-oriented process that orients decisions and renders the activity–outcome–social-value chain publicly accountable; at the same time, we acknowledge that the 2019 MLPS Guidelines, while offering a promotional/soft-law framework and useful principles (intentionality, measurability, comparability, transparency, participation), also present limitations: they tend to blur measurement and evaluation and do not articulate an explicit transformative vision, risking formalism unless accompanied by enabling timelines and rules (a slippage that mirrors EU texts where “measurement” and “evaluation” are often used interchangeably) (EESC, 2014; MLPS, 2019). Moreover, each ETS has its own VIS, aligned with mission, scale, and scope, which requires proportionality and materiality in metrics (avoiding over-claim) in line with

contingency logics and the SVI Principles (stakeholder involvement, understanding change, materiality, transparency, assurance, responsiveness) (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014; SVI, 2022).

Within this frame, the civil perspective of impact (ecosystemic and contributory across micro/meso/macro levels) and the idea of VIS as a transformative practice suggest co-building the Theory of Change from ecosystem value dimensions, making contribution (beyond attribution) and unintended/negative effects explicit, prioritising material outcomes that matter to communities and policy, and ensuring public transparency/comparability as levers for collective learning and redesign (Venturi, 2019; De Benedictis, Miccolis, Venturi, Zamagni, 2023).

Institutionally, Notice 2/2025 (Art. 72 CTS) institutionalises the ex-ante turn (Model F on Impact Call assessed at application), embedding VIS in the policy cycle and standardising ToC, indicators, and monitoring without imposing a single method, with expected gains in comparability and evidence quality (MLPS, 2019; MLPS, Notice 2/2025).

This trajectory aligns with EU guidance that calls for enabling conditions for the social economy (including socially responsible procurement and impact systems) and reiterates that impact assessment is an ongoing, principles-based process rather than a single method, while Developmental Evaluation indicates that, in complexity, evaluation should support innovation and use over implementation (Council of the EU, 2023; EESC, 2014; Patton, 2010).

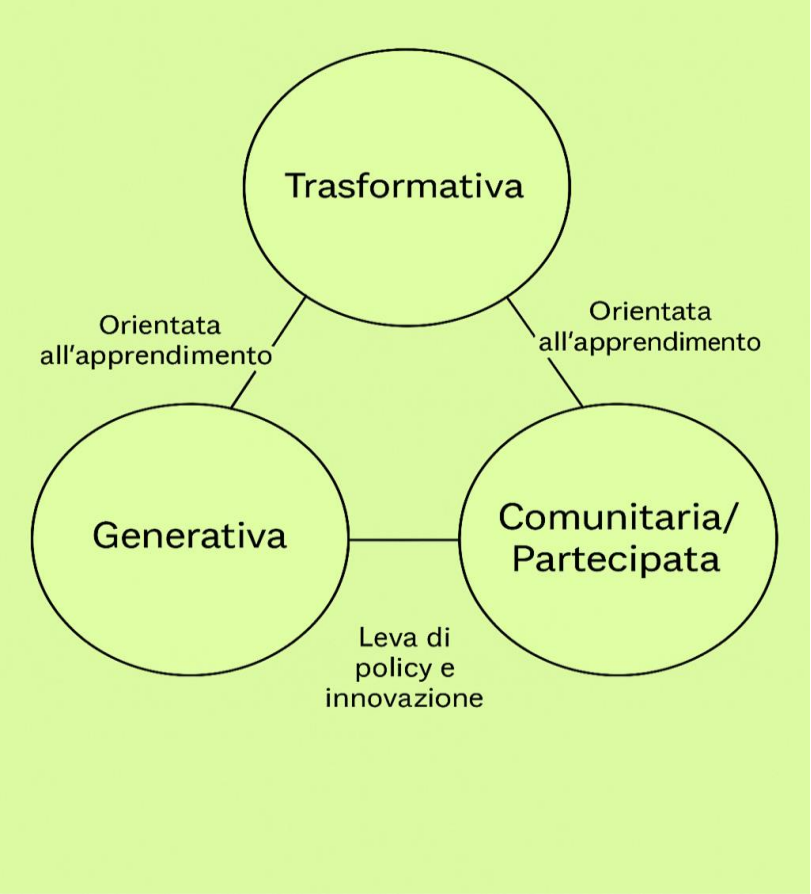
Implications for public policy (and for ETS): a civic VIS becomes a policy lever when planned ex-ante and reviewed ex-post, with public checkpoints, assurance/peer review, and feedback loops enabling adaptation of interventions and governance; for ETS, it means consolidating evaluative capacity and co-production with users and communities, translating evidence into operational and system choices; whether the institutionalisation of ex-ante VIS will truly strengthen capacity and participation—rather than slide into formalism—will depend on how ETS, communities, and administrations centre the civil profile of impact and translate principles into institutional learning and better decisions (MLPS, Notice 2/2025; SVI, 2022; Council of the EU, 2023).

In this sense, the civil perspective on social impact, as outlined by De Benedictis, Zamagni, and Venturi (2023), is grounded in a transformative vision of evaluation: VIS is not merely a measurement tool, but a process aimed at generating deep and lasting change within territorial and organizational contexts. Impact evaluation thus becomes a lever for transforming social ecosystems, orienting decisions and maximizing the capacity of local actors to respond to emerging needs (De Benedictis, Zamagni, Venturi, 2023; see also AICCON).

This framework is further enriched, in our elaboration, by the generative and community-based dimensions: VIS not only measures, but also activates new resources, strengthens capacities, builds social capital, and produces shared value. Moreover, the evaluation process is community-based, as it actively involves all stakeholders—organizations, users, communities, and administrations—in co-constructing objectives, gathering evidence, and interpreting results, thereby ensuring relevance, legitimacy, and public accountability.

In summary, the civil perspective on impact is thus configured as transformative (De Benedictis, Zamagni, Venturi, 2023), generative and community-based (Polidori, 2025 in Representation 1), and today represents a key trajectory for the development of social impact evaluation in Italy.

Representation 1. Civil perspective of impact: transformative-generative-community



Note: Transformative – Learning-oriented – Generative – Community/Participatory – Policy and innovation lever

Source: De Benedictis, Zamagni, Venturi (2023); generative and community-based elaboration: Polidori, September, 2025

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