Assessing social impact through theory of change in voluntourism

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Abstract

In recent years, voluntourism has been growing, catching the attention of academic research. Academic interest focused on investigating the specificity of this phenomenon, its definition and its impact, but more need to be done on assessing impact from host communities and stakeholders' point of view, being able to identify reliable indicators that could be generally relevant and applicable.

The paper aims at identifying a set of the most relevant indicators for assessing the social and economic impact on host communities and stakeholders in the voluntourism sector in the light of the Theory of Change.

In order to achieve the expected results, a literature review has been carried out on three main topics: Voluntourism, Theory of change and Social Impact Assessment. To the extent of recognizing the proper indicators, a specific case study of a hybrid enterprise working in Italy will be selected for its peculiarities, in order to carry out in-depth interviews to its stakeholders and therefore reach the aforementioned goal of this paper.

Keywords
voluntourism, theory of change, social impact assessment

1. Introduction

Voluntourism has grown rapidly in the past years, gaining interest in academic research. Debate is still ongoing on what should be the right and comprehensive definition of it. Moreover, also its origins could be under debate. The aim of this work is not to find and provide a unique definition of voluntourism, but rather to give an outlook of this phenomenon, its pros and cons, in the light of its dimensional growth. The positive impact of this niche of tourism was initially taken for granted, but it still poses several questions to be faced, especially when it comes to its impact and consequences. What is missing is a comprehensive approach able to recognize and evaluate the phenomenon in its several aspects that result intertwined. This is true especially from a managerial point of view, seen the multiplication of commercial entities operating within the sector. According to this, is still voluntourism able to have a positive impact? Has the entry of commercial entities in the market distorted voluntourism and its goals? In other words, what kind of impact do these commercial organizations have? What are the aspects that we have to take into account? These questions are not new, but which are the answers that can be given from a managerial point of view? To start responding, a first set of indicators is necessary to understand the impact of those organizations on their stakeholders, viewed as *first community of relevance*. As suggested by what has been found in literature, in order to find the relevant indicators, the theory of change was identified as the starting point of the measurement process. Thus, it was applied and conjugated with the Social Impact Assessment, which will presented as well. This was necessary in the light of the limits that the theory of change highlighted to properly face the complexity of the phenomenon. It needs to be split in the different elements that compose the value chain of this niche of tourism. The use of the single case methodology and the steps suggested by the social impact assessment will help in doing so. Thus, we will proceed to the presentation of the three topics, to then illustrate methodology, results and discussion, conclusions.

2. Literature overview on voluntourism

In literature, there is interest and space for voluntourism, volunteerism, and volunteer tourism.

"Volunteer tourism is a term that has been used to describe a wide range of tourist behaviors and tourism products and services and is now one of the fastest-growing forms of alternative tourism" (Lyons & Wearing, 2008).

In this paper, we will refer to and use just the first one as comprehensive of the others.

According to Benson (2011), the book by S. Wearing (2001) was the catalyst of the following literature. In his book "Volunteer Tourism – Experience that make a difference" (2001), Wearing defines voluntourists as those who "volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that may involve the aiding or alleviating of the material poverty of some groups of society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment". On these bases, "voluntourism is seen as a form of alternative tourism, capable of benefiting the volunteer and the host communities, having the potential to elevate both the giver and the receiver" (Wearing, 2003). Following Wearing's attempt to define the topic, other definitions came out, such McGehee and Santos (2005) or Brown (2005). The list could be longer, but much of the definitions take into account two elements: leisure time and work (volunteering) for the benefit of others. International voluntourism generally engage volunteers from high-income countries visiting low or middle-income countries to give assistance in service-related development activities. These experiences may vary in forms, duration and objectives. Usually, “a common and potential goal of the short-term volunteerism is often seen as filling gaps in local services in the short-term, while building sustainable systems to promote self-sufficient communities in the long term” (Loiseau et al 2016 a). In the light of this, much of the initial research focused on analyzing the phenomenon, unquestioning negative consequences. Since then, much has changed: the growth of this sector has attracted several commercial organizations, and this dimensional growth possibly led to a change of voluntourism in itself, paving the way for a shift of the market, moving in the opposite direction identified by Wearing (2001), precisely from a commodified market to a decommodified one, with the risk of converting cultural value to commercial value (Shepherd, 2002). Because of these changes, as highlighted by Wearing & McGehee (2013), new critical studies emerged. New kind of potential threat were consequently analyzed, e.g. looking at volunteer tourism as a new form of colonialism (Simpson, 2004), or to the potential damages to the host community (Palacios, 2010). Mustonen (2007) inquiry is still valid: “can volunteer tourism reasonably expect to make a significant difference to the lives of the communities it claims to assist?” To answer, we need to take into account that “one of the more problematic aspects of talking about volunteer tourism is that most of the literature and criticism of volunteer tourism comes from research on the experience of the volunteer rather than on the host community” (Mdee and Emmott, 2008). This was also highlighted by Sin (2014), who affirms that “the lack of research and assessment of volunteer tourism in host-communities places much uncertainty on whether promised benefits are indeed realized”. A research capable of investigating the impacts of tourism in a host community is consequently needed, bearing in mind that this can be extremely difficult in identifying and measuring the several aspects intertwined. Literature suggests the use of indicators to do so, but there is still little consensus on the most appropriate methods of developing these, able of recognizing the heterogeneous nature of stakeholders (Lupoli et al. 2014). Seen the complexity of the phenomenon, Loiseau et al. (2016 a) propose that “the application of a Theory of Change Framework”. And it will be now introduced.

3. Theory of Change: definitions, process and limits

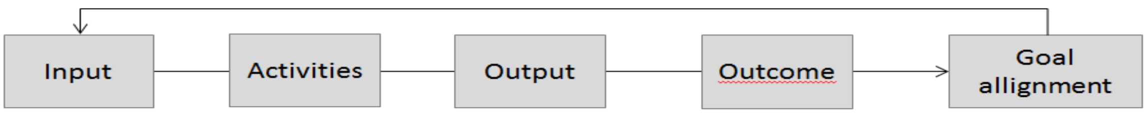
According to Actokwoledge (2013), Theory of Change (ToC) originated as an evaluation tool. Valters (2014), Vogel (2012) and James (2011) consider Theory of change coming from both evaluation and social change traditions, while Ellis et al. (2011) and Stein & Valters (2012) point out that the idea of the ToC approach emerged in the United States in the 1990s, in the context of improving evaluation theory and practice in the field of Community Comprehensive Initiatives (CCIs), since it was struggling to find evaluation strategies and methodologies to analyze the results in the light of the complexity of the changes addressed. D. Reeler (2005) affirms that a good Theory of Change helps us to handle complexity adequately without falling into over-simplification. Therefore, a theory of change can be a helpful tool for developing solutions to complex social problems (Anderson n.d.), since “sustainable change in the ‘well-being’ of people and communities is complex and depends on many different factors […]. A plausible theory of change helps organizations understand how their work and their relationships are contributing to complex, long term social change, helping organizations understand their own work in relation to the activity ecosystem” (Keystone 2008). Said in these words, apparently what a theory of change is seems pretty clear. Although there is no consensus on how to define it (Stein and Valters 2012; Vogel 2012). In fact, Weiss (2007) admits that the topic gained attention since its first appearance, but it also gained confusion: it can be considered both a process and a product (ActKnowledge 2013; Vogel 2012), and can be both a planning and issue framing tool and a monitoring and evaluation tool (Actknowledge 2012). ActKnowledge in 2013 provided a clear definition in its technical papers, which is the following: “At its heart, Theory of Change spells out initiative or program logic. It defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify changes that need to happen earlier (preconditions) […]”. We will refer to this one, but other definitions were provided by academic such Vogel (2012), James (2011) or Ellis (2011), and several practitioners’ such Grantcraft (n.a.), Keystone (2008) and Davies (2012). The different kind of definitions found reflect the possibility of drawing different typologies of Theories of Change. Connell and Kubisch start with the acknowledgment that the ToC articulation process is not a straightforward one (Mackenzie & Blamey 2005). In all these cases, usually, a Theory of Change structures a pathway depicted by vertical chains of outcomes connected to one another by arrows, proceeding from early outcomes at the bottom to longer-term outcomes at the top, representing a causal logic. For the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2004) outcomes can be “mapped” in a linear or causal sequence (though change is typically more complex than a simple cause-and-effect relationship). Outcomes may occur independently from each other or be highly interrelated. They may result from a single strategy or multiple ones, and may lead to common goals or separate ones. It is also important to discern intended outcomes and actual outcomes, since only the former will be reported within the Theory of Change. Generally, outcome(s) should be given one or more indicators of success, which could involve quantitative measures or qualitative information. The result of the process should then undergo under a quality review able to answer three basic questions: “Is your theory 1) plausible, 2) “doable” (or feasible), and 3) testable?” (ActKnowledge, 2012). Other control criteria, not really different where also suggested by Kubisch (1997), Clark (2004), Keystone (2008), Ellis et al. (2011) and R. Davies (2012). These are necessary to face the possible limits that the theory of change can present. In fact, some of the potential limits could concern the quality of the assumptions, others the fact that it can also encourage linear, mechanistic and teleological thinking (Valters 2014). Such linearity may miss or mask some of the very complex interactions within and between projects or across target groups or areas (Mackenzie & Blamey 2005). In order to avoid the intrinsic limits mentioned above, Theory of change can be integrated to other tools or concept (Vogel 2012; Corlazzoli & White 2013), such the Social Impact Assessment. Therefore, we will now introduce the concept of social impact assessment and its conjugations.

4. Social Impact Assessment

Mentioning Nigri and Michelini (2017), Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is an interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary social science that incorporates various fields and is regarded as a technique for predicting social impacts as part of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) or as a stand-alone process. Thus, the good practice of SIA accepts that social, economic and biophysical impacts are inherently and inextricably interconnected (Vanclay, 2003). The interdisciplinarity finds confirmation in a series of definitions that have been produced by practitioners and scholars (e.g. SIAA, 2013), all based on the concept of social impact. This was first defined by The US Interorganizational Committee on Guidelines and Principles for Social Impact Assessment in 1994 as: “the consequences to human populations of any public or private actions — that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society”. “The term also includes cultural impacts involving changes to the norms, values, and beliefs that guide and rationalize their cognition of themselves and their society” (Lockie, 2012). Other definition are provided by Epstein and Yuthas (2014), Emerson et al. (2000), but we will refer to Clark et al. (2004), to which the concept of social impact refers to the portion of the total outcome that occurred due to an organization's activities. It exactly referring to that portion that Clark et al., (2004) had introduced the concept of impact value chain. As suggested by Hehenberger et al. (2013), to fully understand the concept of impact, what is needed is a shift from the output perspective to the outcome perspective. To reach this and estimate the specific contribution of a social enterprise the definition of a theory of change is the starting point of each measurement process (Grieco, 2015). This because the relationship between business and community is becoming increasingly important, especially with the current blurring of the boundaries between profit and not-for-profit sectors and models and the growing number of hybrid organizations such as social enterprises (Grieco et al., 2014). As Porter (2012) affirms framework for measurement that focuses on the interaction between business and social results is among the most important tools to drive shared value in practice. Measurement approaches that link social and business results are vital to unlocking shared value for companies and scalable solutions to social problems (Porter et al., 2011). As highlighted by Grieco et al. (2014), the existing models are tailored to the requirements of different types of organizations, which vary in their size, activities, and objectives. Social enterprises have many different stakeholders to account to, and each of them may be interested in a different kind of impact. Much like any business strategy, shared value strategies are unique and tailored to an individual company (Porter et al., 2011). For these reasons, there is no single model that suits all organizations wanting to assess their impact.

Nevertheless, "the field of impact assessment is expanding, and impact assessment is becoming much more integrated with project development, corporate social responsibility and social performance" (Vanclay, 2015). In the light of this, stakeholder engagement becomes essential, since corporate sustainability depends upon the sustainability of its stakeholder relationship (Perrini et al., 2007). To analyze the qualitative and quantitative nature of this relationship, that is fundamental for the own survival of the enterprise, there are several different kind of Social Impact Assessment that can be developed, although with some skepticism, according to some author. On this point Vanclay (2004) is pretty clear stating that "Social impacts cannot be precisely defined, and they can not be quantitatively valued. They are not consistent across the community. The great potential of SIA, therefore, is not in decision-making, but in *process management*". Seen in this way, a holistic evaluation will always suffer of its own Achilles' heel. But what if we take into consideration single portion of it? We will thus take into consideration the above-mentioned Clark, Rosenzweig, Long, and Olsen (2004) contribution in introducing the concept of impact value chain: in this case, social impact represents the portion of the total outcome achieved due to an organization's activities, above and beyond what would have happened anyway (Grieco, 2015).

Figure 1. The impact value chain



Source: Clark et Al., 2004

This description seems to fit well when it comes to try to address properly the research for substantial indicators aimed at evaluating the above-mentioned relationship among partners, as first element of the impact on host communities of a hybrid enterprise, which is working within the voluntourism sector, that has to be assessed.

5. Methodology

In order to reach the goal of this paper in identifying a set of indicators to assess the social and economic impact on host communities and stakeholders in the voluntourism sector, the *single case study* methodology has been used, since it has grown in reputation as an effective methodology to investigate and understand complex issues in real world settings (Harrison et al., 2017). In fact, the case study is used in many situations, including organizational and management studies (Yin, 2014), being preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2014). The case studies presents a number of advantages in using: the examination of data is most often conducted within the context of its use (Yin, 2014), being in contrast with experiment, which deliberately isolates a phenomenon from its context, focusing on a limited number of variables (Zaidah, 2003). The fundamental goal of case study research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue, within its context with a view to understand the issue from the perspective of participants (Yin, 2014). Cases are selected based on interests in themselves or can facilitate the understanding of something else; it is instrumental in providing insight on an issue (Stake, 2006). In fact, by including both quantitative and qualitative data, case study helps explain both the process and outcome of a phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the cases under investigation (Tellis, 1997). This makes also possible a generalization of results, since they stem on theory rather than on populations (Yin, 2014). The present research has been developed taking into account the above-mentioned characteristics of the single case studies, in order to try to provide a plausible response to our inquiry. In the light of Eisenhardt's (1989) framework, the research process has been structured in seven steps: selecting cases, crafting instruments and protocols, entering the field, analyzing data, shaping hypothesis, enfolding literature and reaching closure.

First, the case study. The International Napoli Network – INN was chosen because of its peculiarity of receiving volunteers in a first world country (instead of sending or receiving them a third world one as generally happens), and due to the availability of internal data made available by the organization. In the second step (crafting instruments and protocols) information on the chosen case studies are gathered using:

- Interviews with high-level managers or founders of the organization;
- Multiple sources of secondary information (e.g. corporate documents, websites and press releases, which provide more accurate and unbiased information).

The phase of shaping hypotheses has been an iterative process (Voss et al., 2017) to verify if "the emergent relationships between constructs fit with the evidence in each case" (Eisenhardt, 1989). Then in the step of entering the field and analyzing data, the process was based on the construction of an array, based on a casual network (Miles and Huberman, 1994) aimed at building a logical chain of evidence (Voss et al., 2017), as suggest by the Theory of Change too. To reaching closure, a qualitative questionnaire was sent to the founders and employees of the enterprise selected. As shown in fig.2 the questionnaires were structured bearing in mind the elements considered within the theory of change and the impact value chain (see fig.1): Outcome, output and activities. Inputs were set at the foundation of the enterprise and therefore were not taken into consideration. Each section had several questions to be answered and instructions to fill it out were provided by the researcher, inviting everyone to answer individually. A week was given to complete it.

Fig. 2 - The qualitative questionnaire

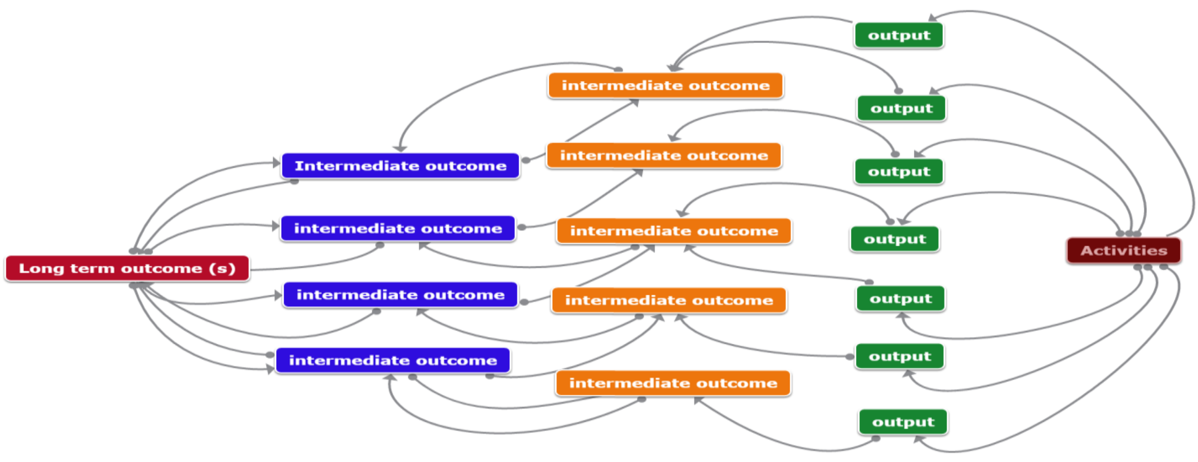
Section 1 - OUTCOME: The ultimate long-term change in stakeholder life
1. What are the changes you want to generate in the long term?
2. Who benefits from this change?
3. What is your mission?
4. What are your main goals?
5. Through which indicators could you measure your outcome?

Section 2 - OUTPUT: direct and tangible results in the short term
1. What are the main results that will help you achieve the desired changes?
2. Through which indicators do you analyze your short-term performance

Section 3 – ACTIVITIES
1. What kind of and how many activities do you carry out?
2. By what criterion are you planning these?
3. How does their assessment occur?

In the end 5, questionnaires were collected (3 from the founders and 2 from managers of the organization). While the single interviews in the first phase lasted almost one hour, a final debate session among respondents was carried out after the delivery of the questionnaires and this lasted 5 hours. The discussion among founding members was developed (methodology was based on some Theory of Change practitioners guides – e.g. Hivos or Annie E. Casey Foundation), in order to highlight outcome, output, activities, rationales and assumptions and therefore use a cognitive *map technique* (as graphic representation of reality as perceived by a given individual (Axelrod, 1976; Vernuccio et al., 2012) to represent and analyze the results (Fig. 3). During the interview, the main concepts were listed and discussed, through a content analysis methodology, aiming at identifying and unifying concept with the same meaning. This was done to therefore construct the visual pattern expected by the cognitive mapping and by the theory of change. Finally, in the last phases to increase the external validity of the results, in the step of enfolding literature the results were analyzed and compared with literature (Yin, 2014).

Fig. 3 – Scheme of cognitive map building



6. Results

6.1 The "International Napoli Network (INN)": origins and activities

The "International Napoli Network (INN)" is a cooperative founded in Naples in 2015, and it was recognized as b-corporation at the end of 2016. Its corporate purpose is carrying out tourist activities for volunteers involved in projects with social impact on the territory, and tourism services linked to the principles of responsible and ethical tourism. Its main focus is voluntourism, offering the opportunity to work on local development projects through volunteer experiences, internships, and training, aimed at supporting, developing, and creating social innovation practices. According to their vision, the INN matches local not-for-profits' demand for innovative ideas to advance positive social change with the supply of those students, professionals, social innovators, entrepreneurs, and retirees who want to go through a formative experience in Italy or make their skills available. Even if the services provided are not directed just to volunteers, at the present moment, its revenues are totally generated by the services provided only to volunteers, reached thanks to an agreement with the International Volunteer HQ – IVHQ, an international player of this sector. Currently the INN runs six programs: Refugees, Teaching English, Environmental, NGOs support (which is split in other subprograms e.g. Healthcare, Homeless), After school care, Special needs. Its peculiarity is represented by the fact, that while generally this kind of organizations send volunteers abroad, especially in third world countries, in this case the selected organization receives volunteers operating in a first world area, to allocate them within local third sector and public activities. Basically, the enterprise works as a kind of intermediary between international organizations and local ones, to fulfill the needs of the latter.

In the first 24 months of activity within the Naples area, the INN has established partnerships with 21 local organizations, and has received 468 volunteers, who spent 1,095 weeks in Naples. The age of the participants goes from 18 to 25, of which 81% are female, and 19% are male. The majority of the volunteers comes from the United States, followed by Canada, UK, Australia, Middle East, China, New Zealand, European Countries, Africa and South America. While 41% of the time has been spent on the Teaching English program, 29% goes to Ngo support, 16% on After School Care and 14% on Environmental. To be mentioned that those who apply to the programs Refugees and Special needs are calculated among those participating in the program NGOs Support. Until today, the INN has assessed the "impact" of just two programs: "Teaching English" in which the volunteers have spent 14,022 hours and given lessons to 3,220 students; and "After school" in which the hours spent are 1,064 with 1,020 kids. The data expressed above are shown below in tabs, provided by the INN administration. The data refers just to quantitative indicators, since qualitative evaluations are carried out via interviews by the INN staff directly with volunteers. Even if these data are not systematized, according to the cooperative staff, these are usually reported to provide positive feedback. In some cases, where problems are highlighted (and this does not occur at the end of the experience), corrective actions are undertaken by the project coordinator and the staff in accordance with the volunteer and the receiving partner in order to find satisfactory solutions for both parties.

Tab. 1 – Volunteer received divided per year, gender and time spent

Year	N. Volunteers received	N. Week spent	Female		Male	
			N	%	N	%
2015	144	545	125	87%	19	13%
2016	204	961	153	75%	51	25%
2017	120	399	103	86%	17	14%
TOT	468	1905	381	81%	87	19%

Tab. 2 – Impact Evaluated by the INN

Estimated impact					
Teaching English	nr hours	n. beneficiaries	After School	nr hours	n. beneficiaries
2015	3.978	1.040	2015	339,5	312
2016	8.046	1.560	2016	423,5	360
2017	1.998	620	2017	301	348
TOT	14.022	3.220	TOT	1064	1020

6.2. A classification of outcomes, outputs and activities

As shown by fig.3, the debate was developed proceeding for blocks of analysis, starting from the long-term outcomes. Respondents' answers were further investigated during the common interview, to better scrutinize the assumptions, theories, rationales, or simply the common sense on which their long term result could rely. Identification of the long-term outcomes were seen in the light of the mission the cooperative gave itself, the intermediate ones were developed in debating, having in mind the set of activities carried out by the enterprise in its daily routine and the chances of multiplying these. This conducted also to an examination of the business model of the enterprise. The long term outcome was split in 3 parts, to realistically refer to what could have been achievable in the short-term, and to better show the connections and relation with intermediate outcomes that were here identified. The main outcome can be therefore expressed with the following statement: "Promotion of volunteering and sustainable tourism throughout the creation of an international network for local associations". Starting from this point, after the splitting, a backward procedure was followed in order to identify and clarify the intermediate outcomes, necessary to reach the long term one. Every outcome is connected to one or two intermediate outcomes to be reached before, thus creating a chain of links that works reciprocally. Proceeding via a process of content analysis and synthesis, two levels of intermediate outcomes were identified being based on mission, activities and instruments available or implemented by the organization. Outcome were derived from the current activities already set by the daily business of the enterprise. Fig. 5 shows it. Once everything was set and clear, the following indicators were identified.

The set of quantitative indicators

1. Economic data of the enterprise
2. n. networks/partnership
3. n. meetings with partners
4. n. programs implemented
5. n. classes offered
6. n. placements opened
7. n. beneficiaries reached
8. n. volunteers
9. n. volunteers accepted/refused by partners
10. n. hours of volunteering
11. value of savings/avoided costs for partners
12. n. best practices introduced
13. use of natural resources and ecological footprint
14. n. action of requalifications implemented
15. value of the assets or goods interested by the action of requalification
16. donations
17. n. people contacted or sensitized

To the quantitative indicators proposed, the complexity of the phenomenon analyzed suggests to add qualitative indicators that could be "imported" by other fields of research such e.g. ecotourism (e.g. in some cases where programs are just oriented to environmental issues) or development studies (e.g. third world countries programs). To bear in mind that probably due to the differences of context, programs or goals and dimension of the enterprise it is the opinion of the researcher that qualitative indicators should be set on the specificity of the situation in which the voluntourism is placed. We would like to suggest to take into consideration some factors, such motivation and engagement of the volunteer, an analysis of the stakeholder and the best practices introduced by the volunteers' provider, development indicators on stakeholders, qualitative assessment of the matching of stakeholders' needs and volunteers' skills, while regarding these last ones it could be useful to refer to customer care indicators to evaluate the quality of the services bought and received.

Fig. 4 Examples of an individual cognitive map elaborated on the basis of ToC

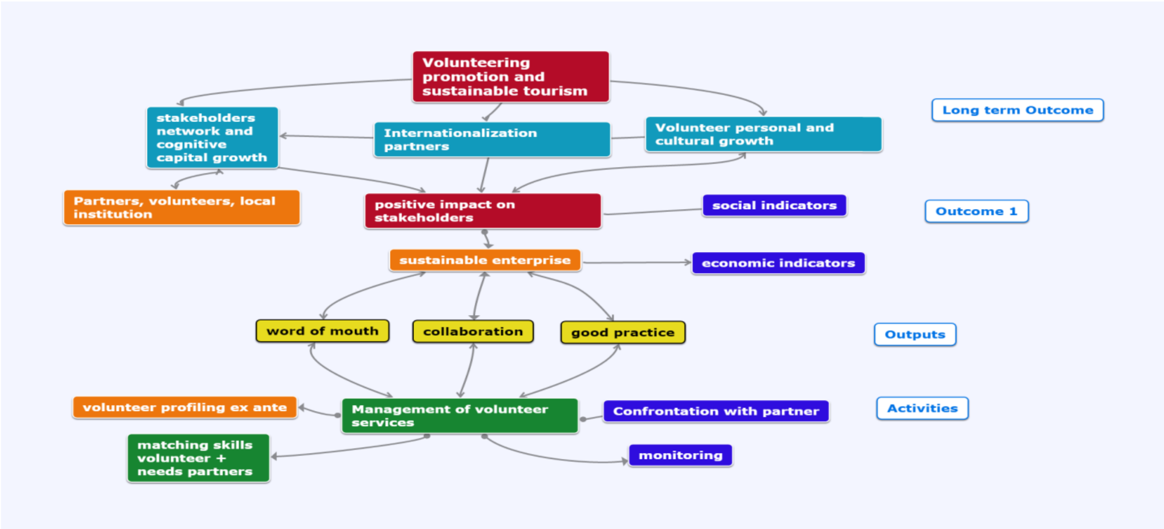
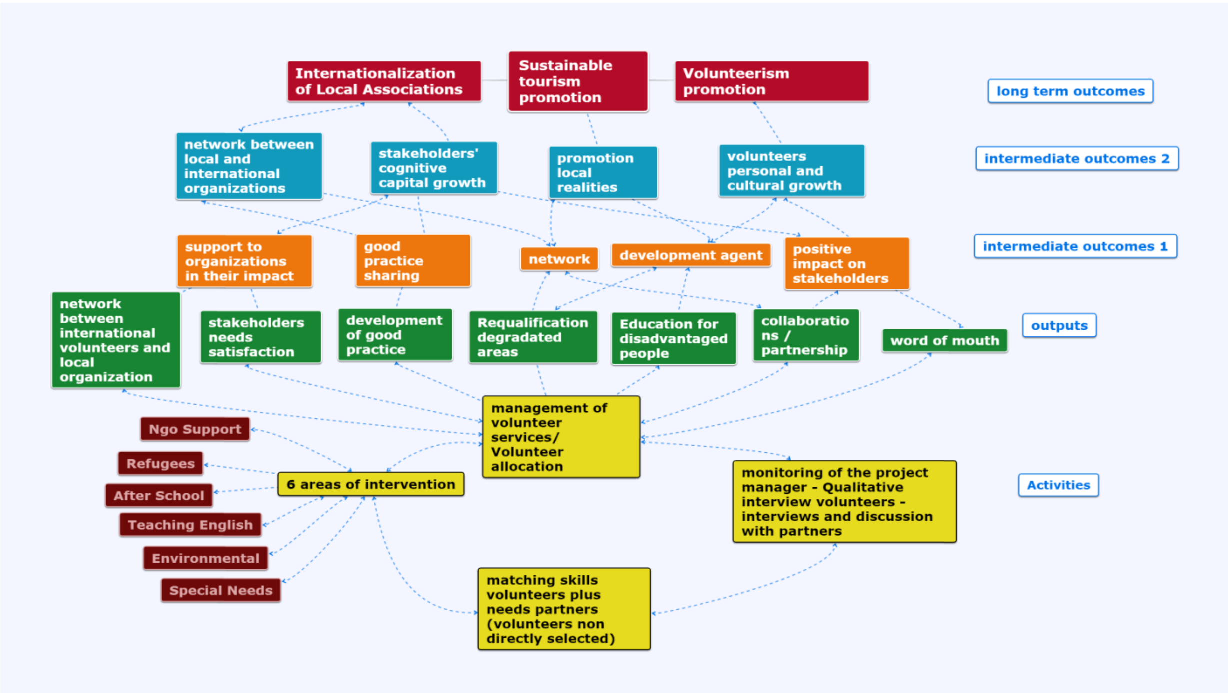


Fig. 5 Results of the collective process of the theory of change



The analysis of the data showed that respondents demonstrate a great alignment in their responses, highlighting a good level of homogeneity as result of a permanent internal process of debate and exchange of views. To be said that also the small organizational structure allows the "information symmetry" inside. The general discussion was fecund, since all the respondents had familiarity with the main arguments of the research and with the concepts of outcome and output, and the differences between these. Mission and final outcome were pretty clear on the basis of the compilation of the questionnaires, and although some outcomes were initially identified as equivalent, after the discussion it was possible to organize them hierarchically, in the light of what was possible to be practically achieved by the organization, splitting this in three long term outcomes that could be considered as a unique one, and several intermediate outcomes, as shown in fig. 5. While the conversation easily flowed on defining outcomes, activities and outputs, a certain difficulty came up in responding to those questions referred to indicators, since the one used in house are not collected scientifically. Basically, internal processes of social impact assessment were not implemented yet at the organizational level.

7. Discussion and Conclusions (Limits and future research)

The research done on the main three topics (Voluntourism, Theory of change and Social Impact Assessment) of this paper and the use of the case study methodology suggested to limit the research, as first step, to the assessment of indicators aimed at evaluating the impact of the voluntourist provider on its first stakeholders, that in this specific case, are identified as partners by the organization examined. The impact of voluntourism on host-communities is still to be measured properly as highlighted in literature, and different system of measurement have been implemented, taking into account bordering field of research, such ecotourism or development studies (e.g. Lupoli et al, 2014). In this case, what emerged to be priority was the impact assessment, from a managerial point of view, of the enterprise and its services on receiving partners, considered as the *first community of reference* for the enterprise. This was also done to be in line with the application of the single case study, and the necessity of giving an answer to the problem of defining the community of reference as pointed out by Vanclay in 2004. The identification of indicators responded to the necessity of understanding the first impact stimulated by the voluntourist provider with its specificity, leaving apart (for the moment) the analysis of the impact that those receiving organization have on their territory.

The use of the Theory of Change resulted really useful in analyzing the work and the impact of the organization in the voluntourism sector, fixing the first limits that the research should face. In the light of the growth of the sector, the results of this paper suggest that further research should be done in creating a system of indicator able to measure the complexity of the phenomenon in its integrity. Such attempts have already been done, mixing different patterns of analysis or importing such models from other adjacent fields of research, but the specificity of the context or experiences selected to be analyzed can always represent a limit in reliability and repeatability. The choice of using the single case methodology could actually represent a limit of the current research, since some factors could change depending on the surrounding environment, the dimension of the enterprise or the position in the market played by the actor analyzed (receiving, intermediary or sending organization). In order to further test the achieved results, a survey among other organizations working in the same sector could be carried out to assess the external validity and reliability of the results.

In the case presented, hopefully the quantitative indicators found could allow the understanding of the dimensions implicated in such phenomenon from a managerial point of view. This could be identified as a common area among providers and could help in finding an analytical generalization of the use of indicators identified. The goal is to measure the social impact of those organization that works as providers in this specific niche of tourism that conjugates leisure time and volunteering, and consequently their respective values, in the light of a reciprocal growth of all the subjects involved.

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