

Agroecosystem Living Labs: Methodological Proposal for Impact Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION AND OBJETIVES

This proposal is based on the impact evaluation methodology designed by the Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA) of Argentina, for a variety of ALL (Agroecosystem Living Labs) -type experiences that are part of its intervention strategy.

INTA has the particularity of integrating research and extension in the same institution and in the last years has promoted co-innovation processes, an approach closely related to ALL. For example, its strategy to promote innovation through Regional Projects with Territorial Focus (PReTs), Territorial Innovation Platforms (PITs) and territorial observatories, the multidimensional approach implemented in programs such as ProHuerta, Science and Technology Against Hunger, innovation processes in short marketing circuits, co-innovation on agroecology, and participatory evaluation.

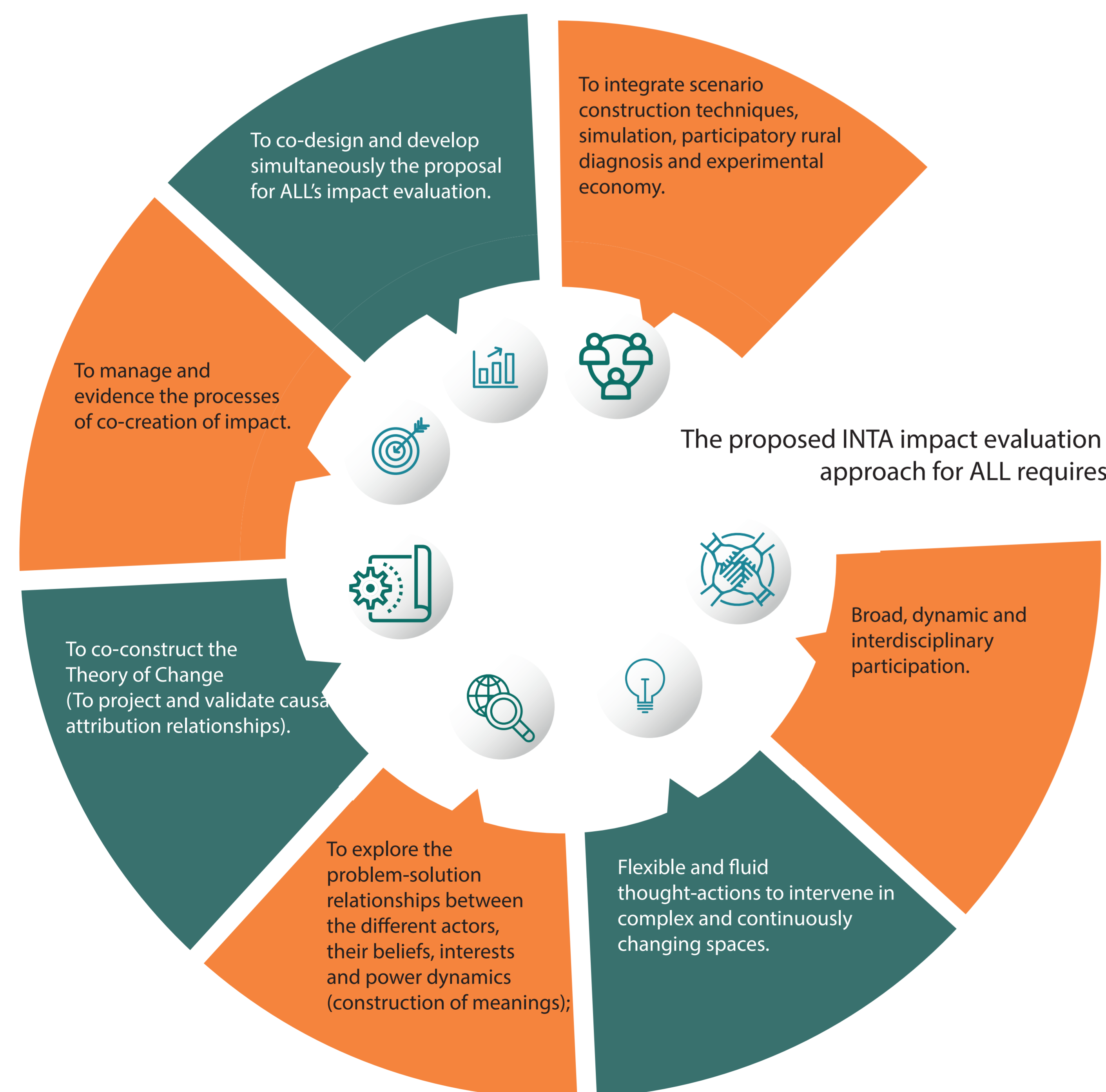
These approaches are more complex than linear models of innovation. Therefore, they require specific methods for impact evaluation. Specifically, INTA has been working on two projects:

- "Design and Implementation of an INTA Impact Measurement System on the Argentine Agricultural, Agrifood and Bio-Agroindustrial Sector.
- "Comprehensive system for monitoring results and impact as a contribution to the public policy to fight hunger".

This paper presents the reflections and practical experience in impact evaluation methodological designs that arise from these projects.

Objective

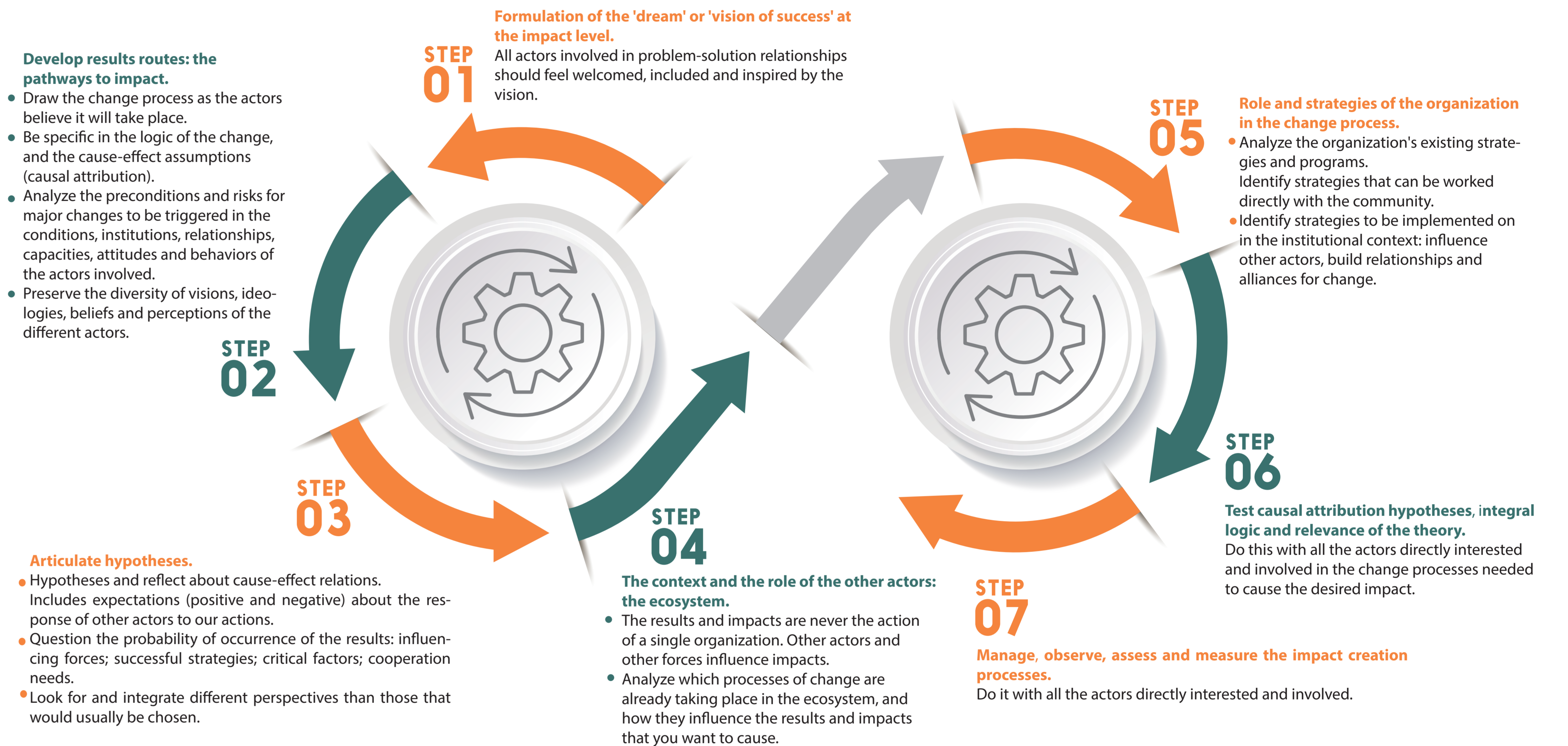
The objective of this paper is to propose a methodological framework for impact evaluation of the Agroecosystem Living Labs



The approach emphasizes standardization and iteration of participatory methods in combination with more conventional statistical approaches. This increases the degree of reliability of the information, leaving enough field of action for an open and flexible inquiry.

Managing and evidencing impact of ALL (a) encourage scientific activities to cause the transformation of the reality for which they were designed and (b) strength communities to address the most complex they face.

METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL



The proposed approach emphasizes standardization and iteration of participatory methods in combination with more conventional statistical approaches. This contributes to increasing the degree of reliability of the information, leaving enough field of action for an open and flexible inquiry.

FINDINGS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Do we have a good plan?

- Thinking about the impact evaluation from the beginning is required to focus and guarantee the success of the ALL.
- As part of the process, it is necessary to build a community of ideas, a learning community and a community of practice: build a shared frame of reference and capabilities that can be brought into play.
- It is important to be open to the plurality of approaches and scenarios to move flexibly according to the situations and circumstances of each moment.
- Impact evaluation technologies are not neutral, they depend on the intention of those who use them.
- There is increasing evidence that shows that the reality does not usually work as we assume. It is crucial to know if we are planning and executing the appropriate action routes to cause the desired impacts. Impact evaluation is not an end in itself, it is a management tool.
- The continuity of networking and its institutionalization in observatories is a key issue, since learning is limited to the referents that participate, being generally non-transferable.
- Managing and evidencing impact of ALL (a) encourage scientific activities to cause the transformation of the reality for which they were designed and (b) form communities to address the most complex challenges facing agroecosystems.
- The challenges and reflections raised here are expected to be significant for the co-design and evaluation of ALL and to deepen the construction of situated problem-solution relationships, considering impact evaluation and social experimentation as a public management tool.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



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