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Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas

Università degli Studi di Padova | TESAF

Co-constructing a new framework for evaluating social innovation in marginalised rural areas

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Horizon 2020
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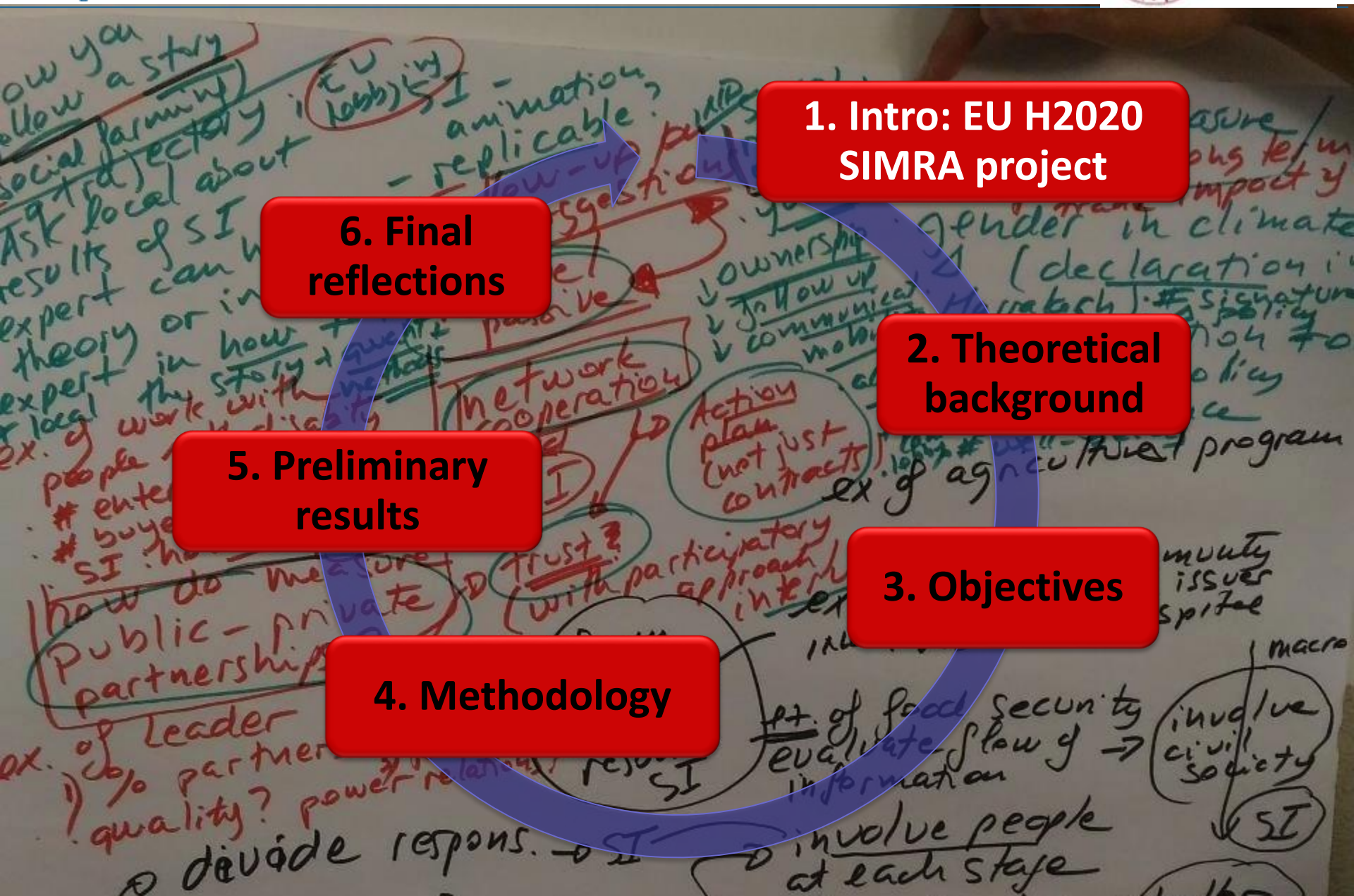
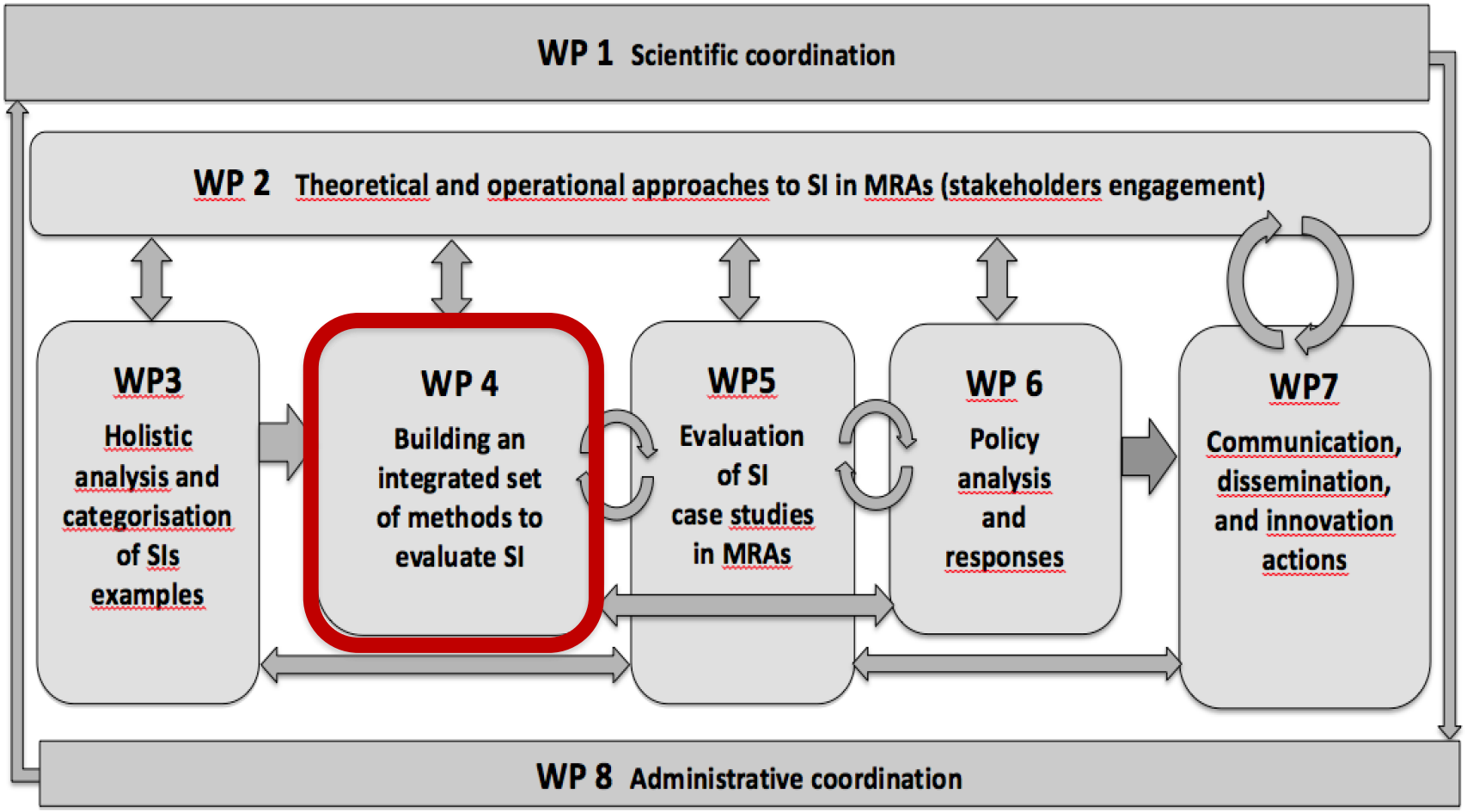


Horizon2020 SIMRA project

- 4-years **Research and Innovation Action (RIA)** project
- **26 partners,** coordinator: The James Hutton Institute, UK
- **Objective**: **to fill the significant knowledge gap in understanding and enhancing Social Innovation in Marginalized Rural Areas**.
- **Focus on:**

- agriculture, forestry and rural development
  - Marginalized Rural Areas (MRAs)
  - Mediterranean region (including non-EU)
  - **Case studies**
  - **Innovation Actions**

Horizon2020 SIMRA project: WPs



Many definitions for social innovation: a few examples

- "Those changes in agendas, agency and institutions that lead to a better **inclusion of excluded groups** and individuals in various spheres of society at various spatial scales" (Moulaert et al., 2005, 1978)

- "Innovative activities and services that are **motivated by the goal of meeting a social need** and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organisations whose primary purposes are social" (Mulgan, 2007, p. 8)

- SI as **the capacity to create and implement new ideas that are likely to deliver value** (thus meeting individual economic interests), **contemporarily responding to social demands** (thus meeting societal needs), that are traditionally not addressed by markets or existing institutions (e.g. BEPA, 2011; Anderson et al., 2015).

1. Intro: What do we mean by Social Innovation?

SI as a key issue for Europe: so far focused on urban contexts and problems

https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/policy/social_en

1. Intro: What do we mean by Social Innovation?

SIMRA SI: the overall definition

- Several definitions in literature: another "fuzzy" word - risk of misleading
- Needed to focus the attention on marginalized rural areas
- Solution: one overall definition + one explicatory text + one glossary (see D2.1)

"The reconfiguring of social practices, in response to societal challenges, which seeks to enhance outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily includes the engagement of civil society actors".

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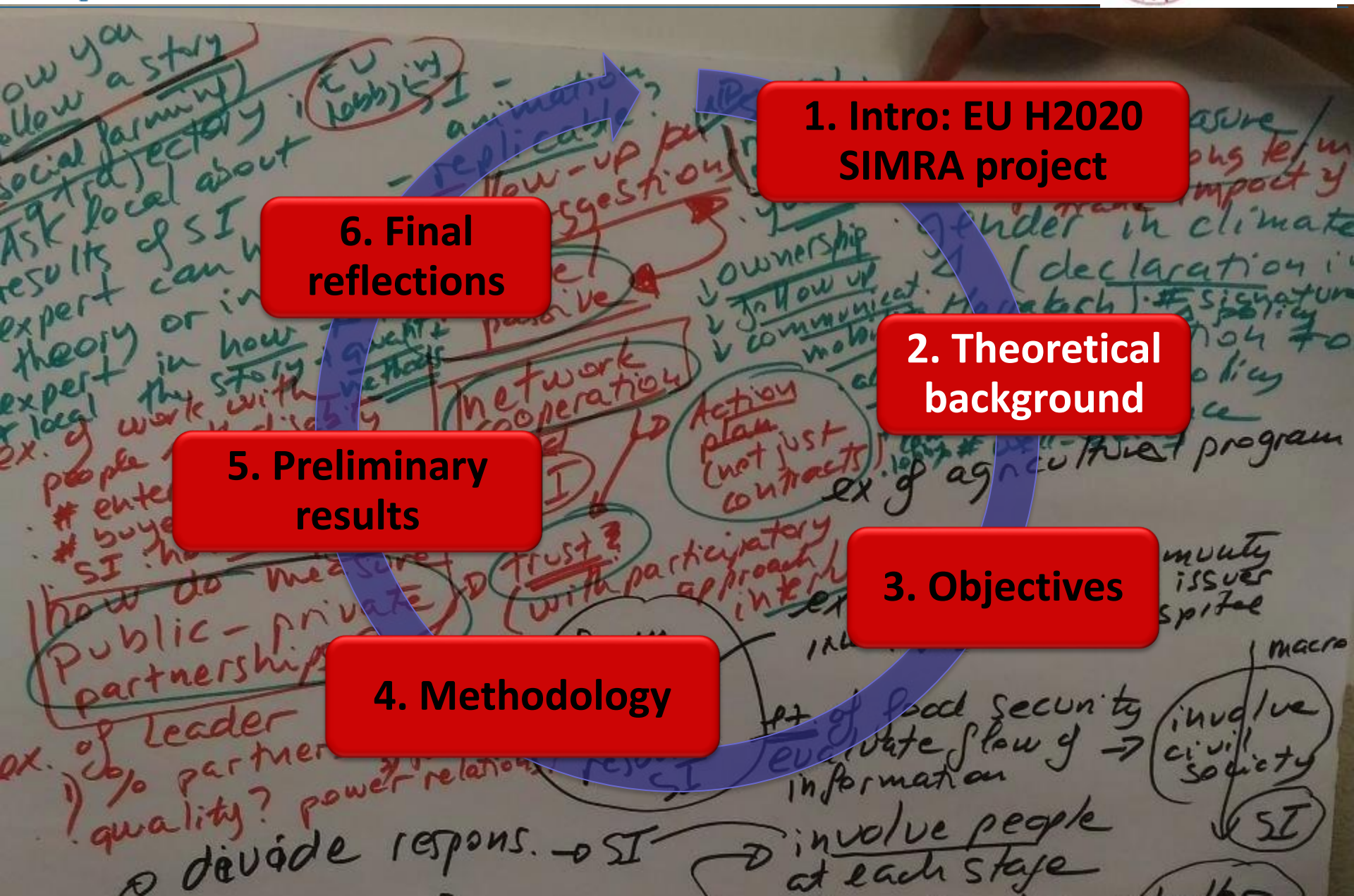

Why do we evaluate?

- Need evidence on what works
  - Limited budget and bad policies could hurt
- Improve policy/programme implementation
  - Design (eligibility, benefits)
  - Operations (efficiency and targeting)
- New knowledge on SI is key to sustainability and resilience

Evaluation and impact evaluation

- **Evaluation** is a **periodic, objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy**, which asks specific questions regarding implementation, management and results.

- **Impact evaluation** is an **assessment of the causal effect of a project, programme or policy** on beneficiaries. It answers the questions:
  - "What was the effect of the program on outcomes?"
  - "How much better off are the beneficiaries because of the program/policy?"
  - "How would outcomes change if changed program design?"

In our case, the project to be evaluated can be a social innovation initiative in a natural environment, which takes advantage of landscape benefits for a certain social need (e.g. a group of person with mental health problems).

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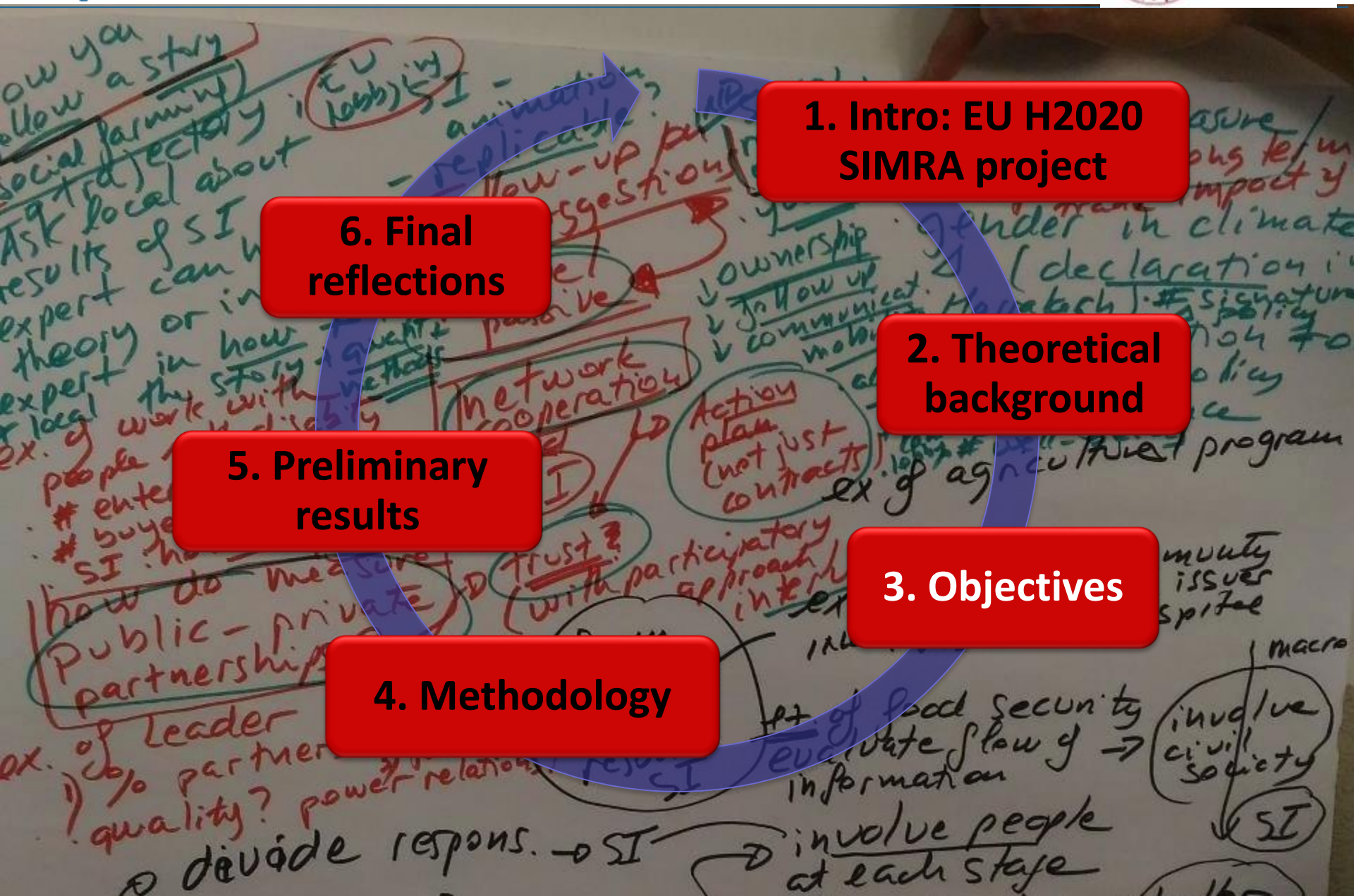

Our objectives in relation to this conference

1. Consult with stakeholders on **useful approaches** and **expected outputs** from an assessment

2. Identify whether and how **existing methods**, approaches and tools **can be used or adapted to evaluate SI** in MRAs.

3. Co-construct **a new framework** for evaluating social innovation in marginalised rural areas

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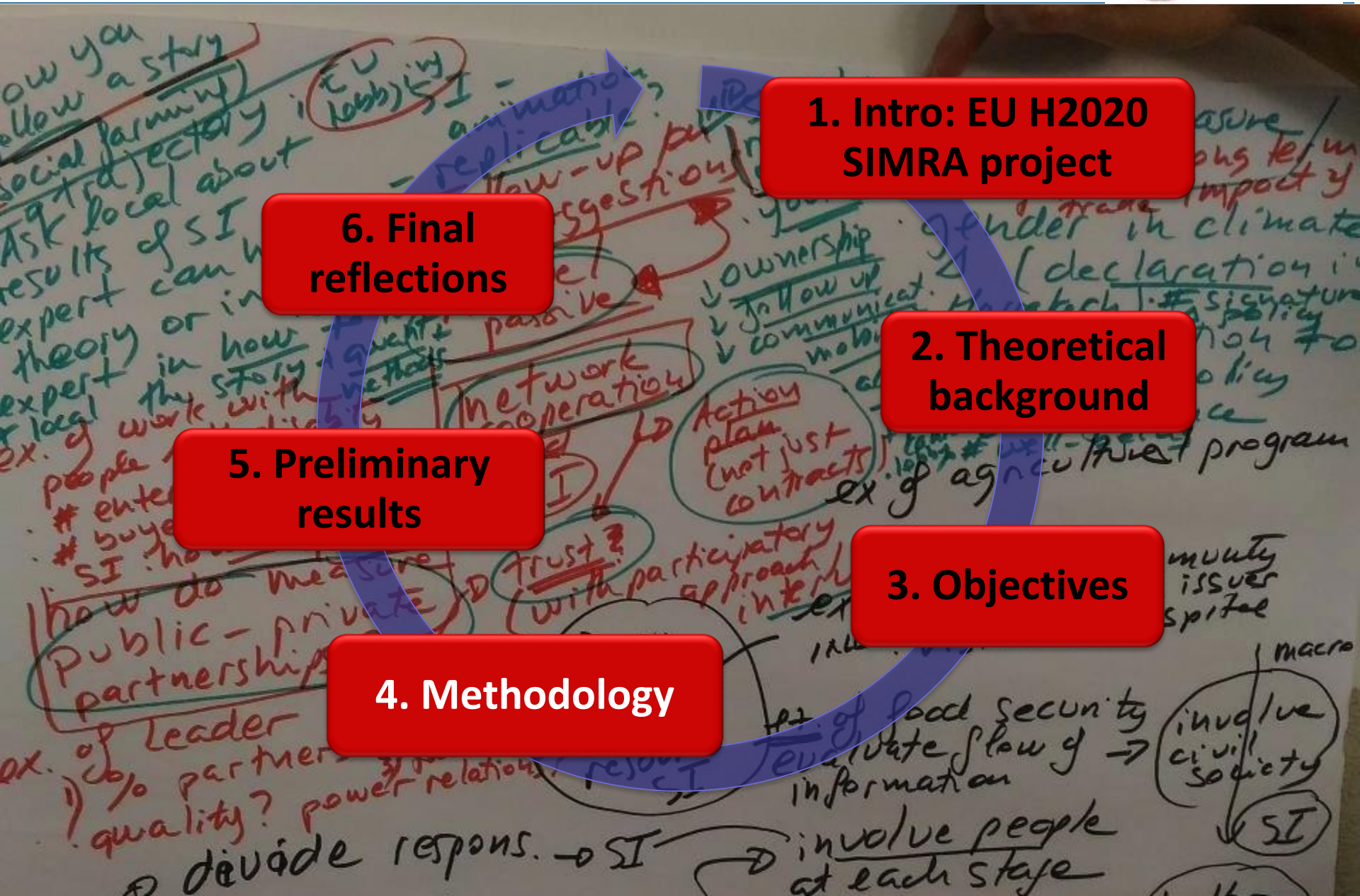

4. Methodology

Step 1: Stakeholders consultation

Step 2: Identification and analysis (based on a standardized approach) of existing methods

4. Methodology

Step 1: Stakeholders consultation

- One online session + one face-to-face session (Bratislava, Slovakia, 28th of October 2016)
- **25 Social Innovation Think Tank (SITT) members:** international and national level stakeholders
- **The World Cafè Tecnique**
- **4 topics, 3 rounds of discussion, 1 facilitator + 1 rapporteur/topic**
    1) qualitative vs. quantitative,
    2) process vs. outcome-oriented,
    3) participatory vs. expert-based,
    4) primary vs. secondary data
    - **Follow up** (written report sent to participants)

4. Methodology

Step 2: Identification and analysis (based on a standardized approach) of existing methods to be used or adapted for assessing SI and its impacts

- coordination + 4 domains of impacts + qualitative methods
  - UNIPD (Italy): coordination
  - ICRE8 (Greece): economic aspects
  - UNIFG (Italy): social aspects
  - EFI (Finland): environmental aspects
  - DLO (The Netherland): governance/institutional aspects
  - BOKU (Austria): policy implications (out of scope of this presentation)

ID	NAME OF ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK / APPROACH / METHOD / TOOL	ABSTRACT SUMMARY OF THE FRAMEWORK / APPROACH / METHOD / TOOL 125 words max	IS THE EVALUATION DESIG Select
407	Institutional analysis	Stakeholder surveys (face to face, telephone). In general, questionnaire surveys gather 'facts' like prices, quantities of goods bought, incomes, revenues and so forth. Surveys are often conducted by a national statistics agency or may be specially designed by an investigator to address a particular question1. One of the main uses of surveys is 'Confronting theory with evidence": theory testing and 'anomaly generation'. Surveys can be applied to the methodological use of measurement. However, measurement is not an easy task: researchers are confronted with measurement problems similar to those of governance parties.	No
408	Mixed methods	Triagulation and complementarity of findings through different mehtods. Measurable targets and agencies responsible for achieving them	-
409	Multiple-criteria analysis	The assessment of the governance of an organization. The objective is to elaborate a diagnosis of the quality of governance of the Organization with respect to sustainable development and A cross-comparison of organizational governance. The objective is to	No

1.General-characteristics | 2.Specificity-to-SI | 3.Evaluation-characteristics | 4.Features-of-the-tools

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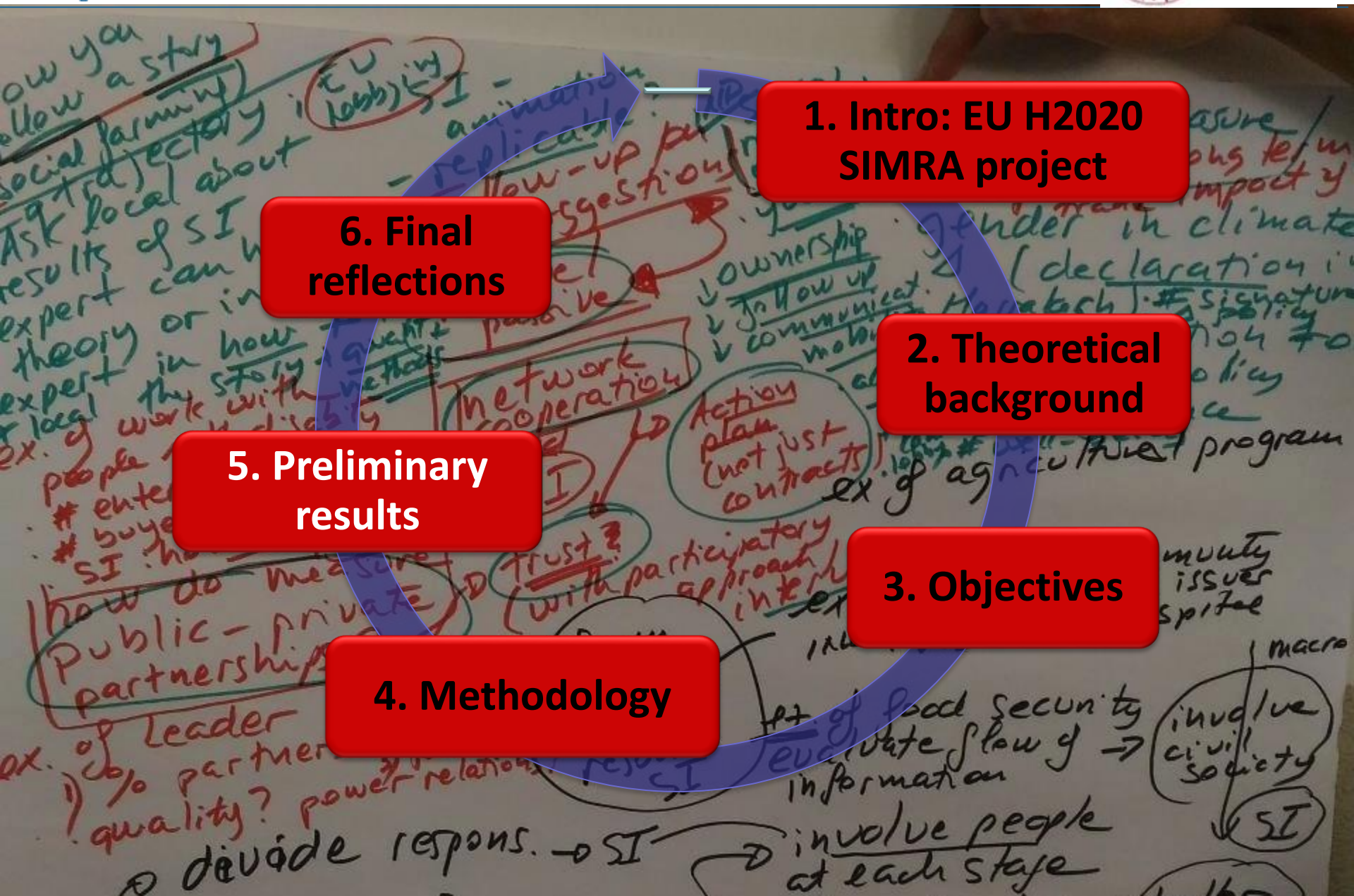


Step 1: SITT stakeholders consultation

Key messages on topic A: process-oriented vs. outcome-oriented

- Evaluation depends on whether **SI is defined as a process or as a result**: **both need to be evaluated**.
- **Outcome-oriented fulfils political expectations**.
- **Process-oriented is a learning process.**

- Different opinions on the order:
  - 1) **start with outcomes**, and then identify the elements that led to failure or success;
  - 2) **start with the situation** (context analysis), then the assessment of process and then of outcomes.
- Choosing between process and outcome-oriented evaluation **depends also on the length of the project.**

Step 1: SITT stakeholders consultation

Key messages on topic D: quantitative vs. qualitative approaches

- They are **complementary**
- Useful for **triangulation** (in-depth information on the process + synthetic information on its outcomes)**.**
- Need to use of **both internal and external evaluation.**

- **Quantitative methods** are not always popular among practitioners but they are considered extremely useful (or fundamental) when discussing with and trying **to convince policy makers and funders**.
- **Qualitative methods** provide you with in-depth information; e.g. perception of different groups of stakeholders **and how they feel they benefit** from the program.

Step 2: analysis of existing methods

- **103 frameworks/approaches/methods + 200 tools** collected and fully analysed for social, economic and environmental domains
  - 33% in **Europe**
  - 28% in **rural areas**
- 23% specific to assess **social innovation** issues
- 42.3% propose a **participatory approaches** assessment

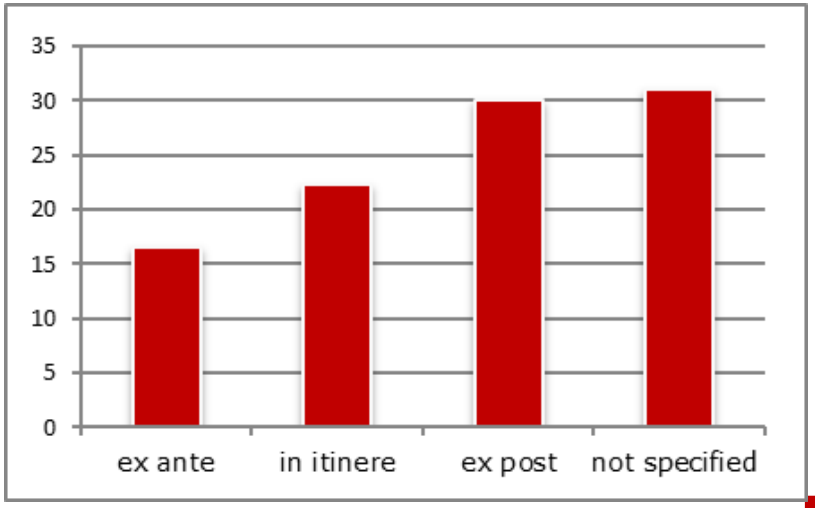
involving multi-stakeholders: beneficiaries, policy makers, citizens, experts, community representatives, farmers, decision makers, NGOs, companies, suppliers, public operators, households, etc.

- At least 54.6% of methods needs an **external evaluators**, while 24% of methods can be used for **self-assessment**
- 63% use **indicators** (of different types: outcome, impact, etc.)

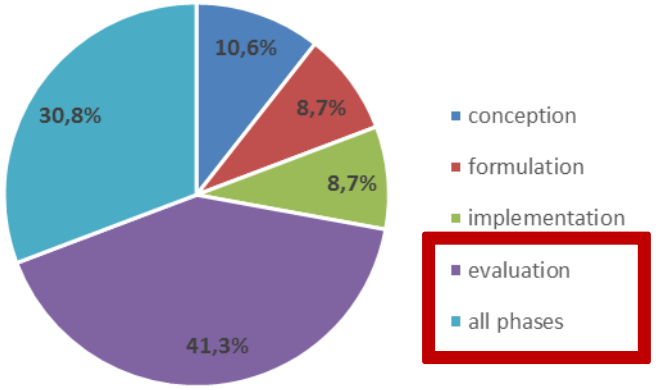
Experiences in SI evaluation: use of a structured methodology

- 60.6% mention "**framework**" and "**approach**", 67.3% "**method**", and 58.7% "**tool**"
- 27.9% consider the use of **counterfactual analysis**
- Few methods adopt **specific evaluation criteria:**
  - Relevance 44.2%
  - Efficiency 35.6%
  - Effectiveness 48.1%
  - Impact 58.7%
  - Others: equity, capacity, sustainability
- 33.7% need the use of **specific software** (for modelling, SNA, mapping, etc.)

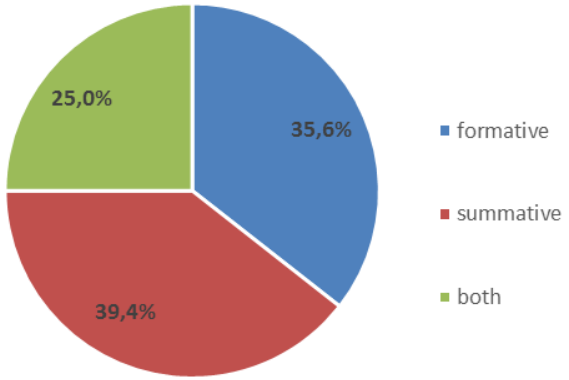
Evaluation characteristics



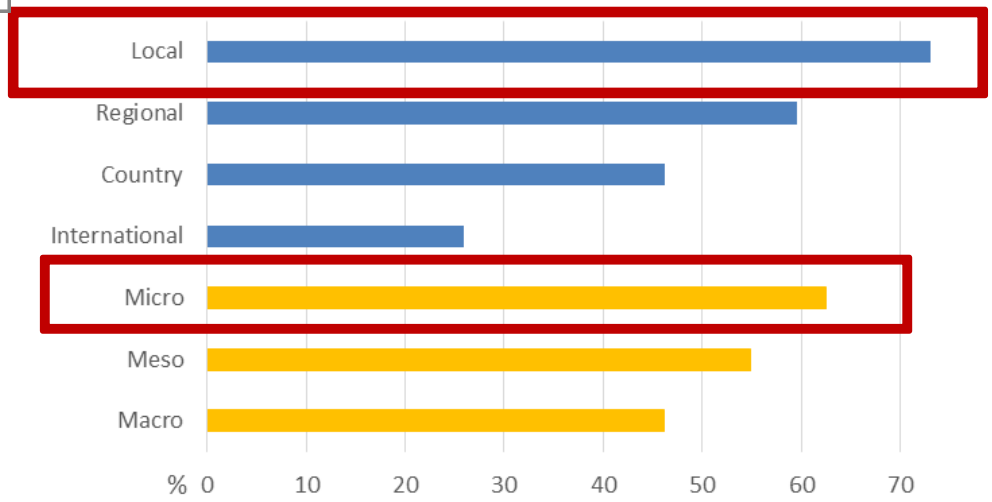
Policy cycle phase



Final use



Spatial scale and Scope of application



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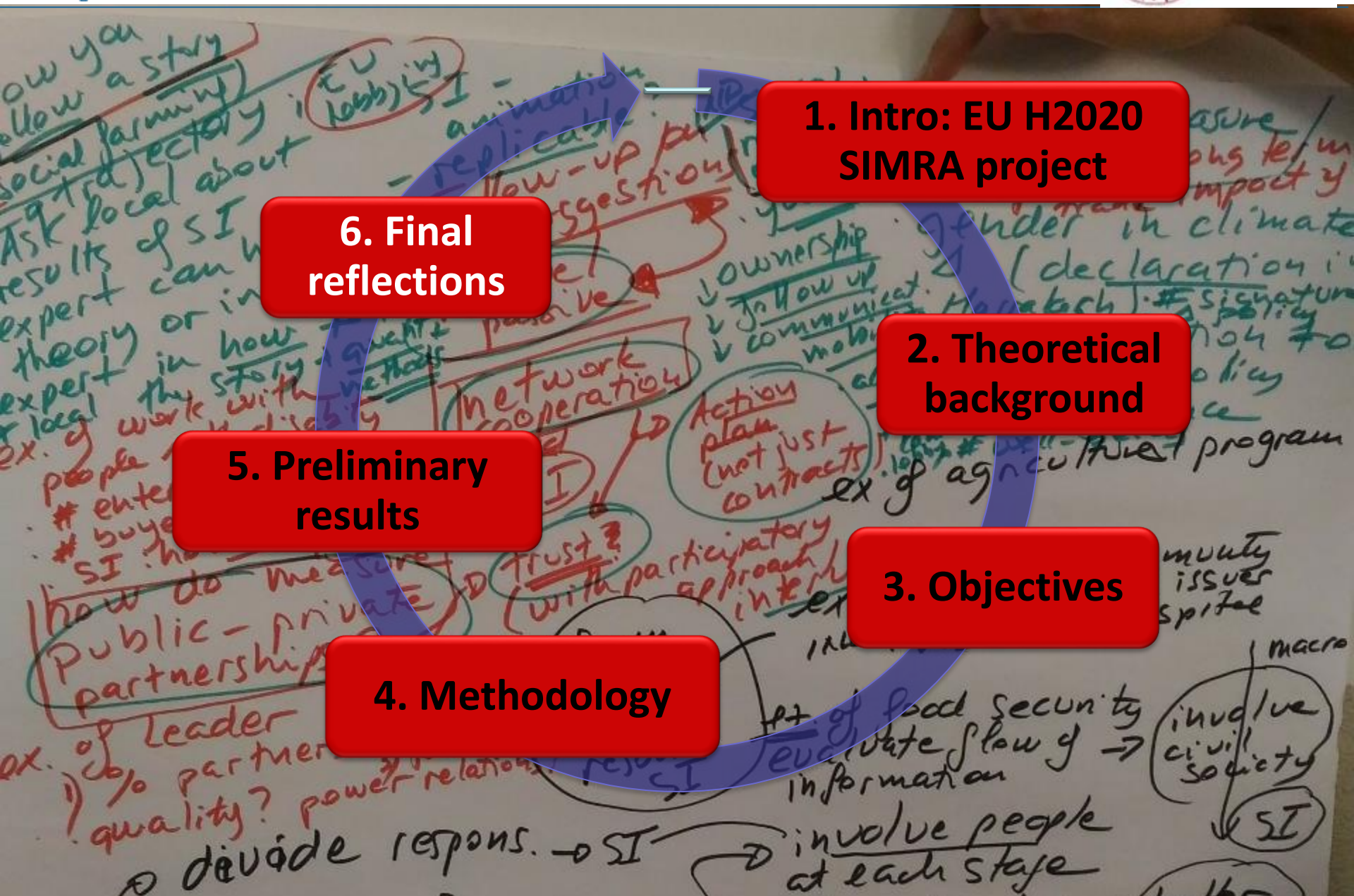

6. Final reflections

Congruence between **analyzed existing methods** and **guidance provided by SITT members:**

- it is **not easy to find a clear cause-effect chain** (theory of change, result-chain approach)
- main results presented in the literature are on **immediate effects on small groups of beneficiaries**
- finding the **overall impacts on wellbeing** over the long term and generalise them is much more complex: need **to integrate quantitative with qualitative methods to** understand both outcomes/impacts and intangible factors of SI actors (e.g. satisfaction, trust)!

- More specific questions, related to **how to measure** the emergence of SI, its promotion and adoption, as well as its outcomes on wellbeing, are to be addressed in the next steps

6. Final reflections

The **identification of specific critical issues in the evaluation of SI** in marginalised rural areas **can support more effective and inclusive development policies** by:

- Adopting **indicators** that capture the tangible and intangible elements of SI (***e.g. network building, trust, quality of participation, strength of ties, policy response***)

- Highlighting the importance of **following the story** and **supporting processes** that lead to SI in MRAs, rather than simple outcomes (e.g. number of new jobs created)

- Understanding the **complexity** in the identification of indicators and the appropriate 'evaluation moments'.

6. Final reflections

- The **co-constructed framework** for evaluating social innovation in marginalised rural areas will form the **basis for the evaluation** of the **SIMRA case studies** in 2018.

→ Work in progress for SIMRA!

7. Aknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the:

- SITT stakeholders who partecipated in the consultation and shared their experiences and knowledge

- WP4 Tasks 4.2 and 4.3 SIMRA partners who contributed to collect and analyse existing methods:
  - **ICRE8 (Greece): economic aspects**
  - **UNIFG (Italy): social aspects**
  - **EFI (Finland): environmental aspects**
  - **DLO (The Netherland): governance/institutional aspects**
  - **BOKU (Austria): policy implications (qualitative methods)**

Join our discussions in SIMRA!

Find (soon) useful material, tell us about cases of SI in MRA, contribute to our blog and more!!!

www.simra-h2020.eu

http://www.thechilicool.com/

http://www.targatocn.it

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Thanks for your attention!

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