



# **INNOVATION IN PUBLIC POLICIES IMPACT EVALUATION**

**METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL TO  
EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF THE URGENT AND  
TEMPORARY HOUSING NATIONAL FUND, OF  
THE RESILIENT AND REBUILDING PLAN**

**PROJECT PRESENTATION**

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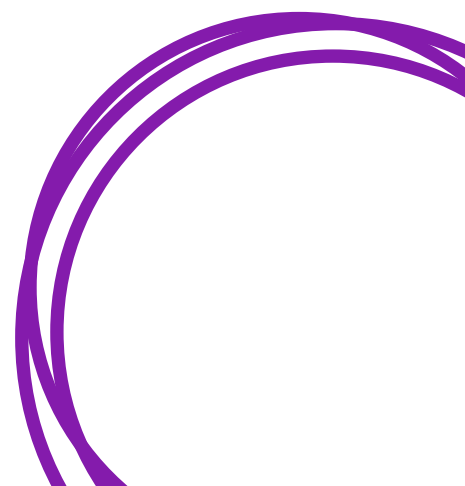
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (ENGLISH)

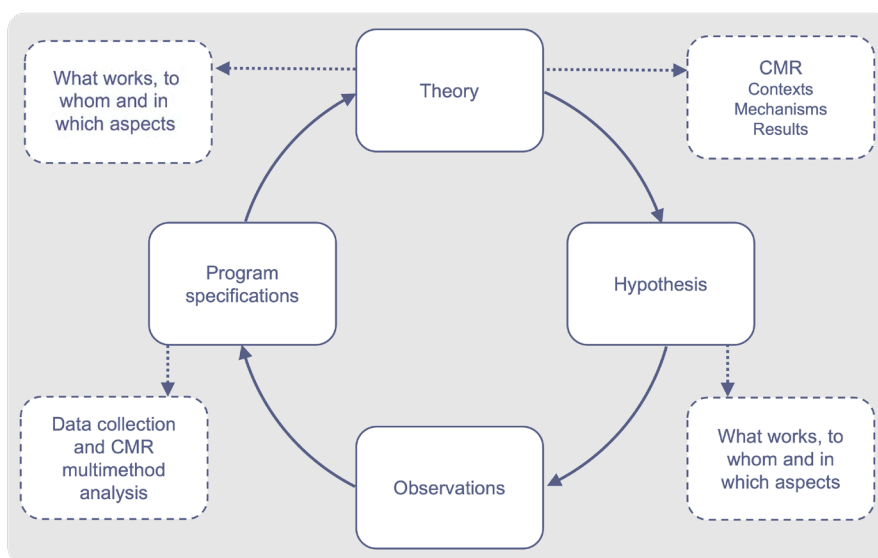
The project aims to develop and test an innovative methodological approach to impact assessment directed to the next generation of public policies financed with European Community funds (2021-2027). This methodological approach is anchored in the triangulation of three basic methods: Policy-Scientific Approach, Qualitative Comparative Analysis and Contingent Valuation Method. The implementation and testing of the methodological proposal will focus on Investment Priority 08 of Portugal 2020 and its social housing support operations (developed under the regional operational programmes). This option seeks to build an impact methodology framed in the logic of “theory-based evaluation” and in the “realist evaluation” type that maximizes the potential of combining two essential theories for the current Public Policy Science, programming theory and causal theory, also taking as a milestone the determination of two basic pillars of public governance: the logic of results-oriented public policies and the principle of evidence-based policies. It is considered that the main added value of this proposal is not so much in the overall calculation of the effects of the interventions, but rather in the possibility of knowing in detail the causal relationships that result from them, attributing to it an effective economic value, no longer only in the perspective of the achievements, but above all from the perspective of the real impact.

## 1. EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The project stems from the ambition to develop scientific knowledge in the gift of innovation in the evaluation of the impact of political policies, using the development and testing of an advanced and unique methodological approach to the assessment of policies. information. Its implementation will focus on the social housing support policy instruments financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds in Portugal in the 2014-2020 programming period [policy instrument entitled “Investment Priority 08 - The concession to support the regeneration of the social and social communities in urban and rural areas” (PI.08) – see Annex). The methodological model underlying the project is part of the approaches to evaluation of “theory-based” conditions and, within them, its fundamental structure is in line with the “Assessing the Realistic” type and with the body that is inherent to it, this characteristic is the first structuring element of the project construct.

The realistic analysis, whose reference work- Realistic Evaluation – was published by Ray Pawson and Nicholas Tilley in 1997 is a specific approach to the commission of the evaluation of political conditions that, as an alternative to the two most comprehensive schools of thought and around which the practice of evaluation has often been organized, positivism and social constructivism, clearly rooted in scientific realism. Its focus is to explain it from a complex approach to how social and individual behaviours work (or can work). In this case, policies and programs are understood as open, complex, dynamic, limit-permeable and elastic systems that allow interaction with other systems, so that any result that derives from these will always be a consequence of interaction in and through systems and is not a simple isolated program or political result. The realist evaluation seeks, in its essence, to understand how a policy or program causes the desired results, and its primary objective is not to test and perfect the theory for three years, as it is also m to determine the results of the survey in a given set of circumstances – a Realistic Assessment does not ask “what works?”, nor “how much does it work”, but rather “what works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts and how?”.

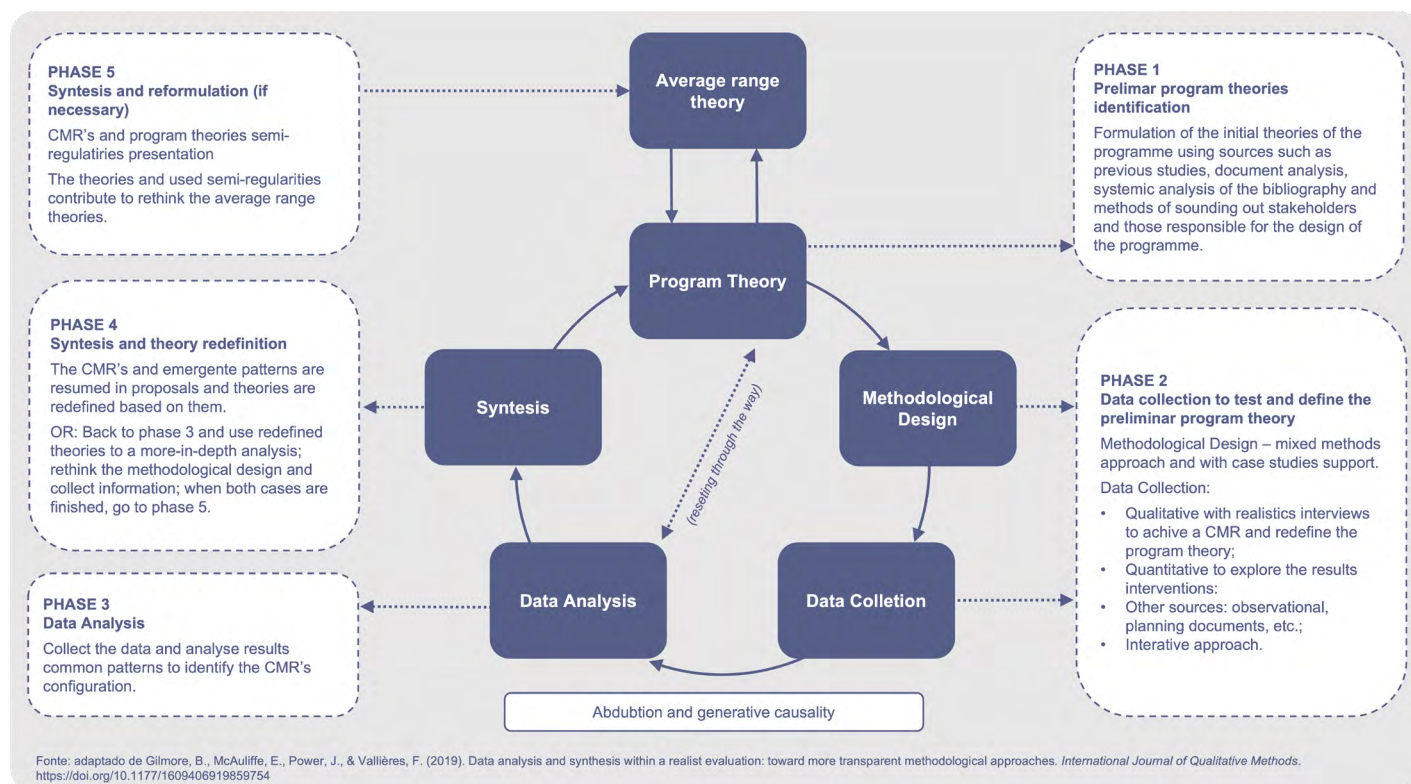
**Figure 1 – Realist Evaluation Cycle**



Source: Adapted from Pawson & Tilley, (1997)<sup>2</sup>, p. 85.

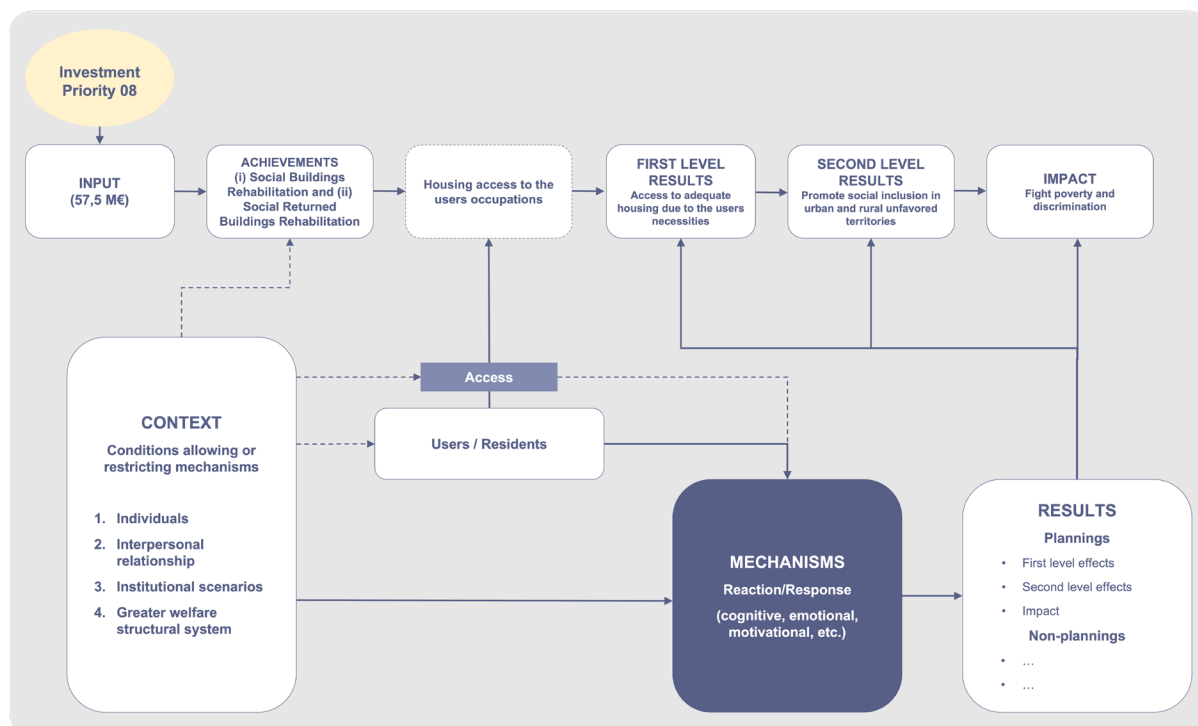
<sup>2</sup> Pawson, R. & Tilley, N. (1997). Realistic evaluation. SAGE.

**Figure 2 – Methodological guide example in Realist Evaluation**



Still, in the epistemological framework, the project also uses two central theories in political conditions, that is, the Program Theory and the Theory of Causality. The combination of these two theories and their triangulation with the Realistic Assessment, derives the second structuring element of the construct of this project, that is, the design and application of the CMR (Context-Mechanisms-Results) which forms the core of the methodological approach. The CMR is constituted by a configuration of “explanatory actors” (which in its original version are three: Context, Mechanisms and Results) designed to identify how certain causative mechanisms can function in contexts to generate specific results for certain groups of people. This method is in its way one of the ways to conceptualize the causative factors and translates into models that indicate how interventions (programs, research, projects, etc.) activate mechanisms between individuals and what conditions are needed to induce changes in behavioural or event regularities and how these, together with the relevant contexts, allow to predict and explain the variation of the standard of the results of the policies themselves. For this to be possible it is necessary to create in advance three mechanisms that are likely to act, the contexts in which they can operate and the results that will be observed, thus constructing the CMRs that are validated or refuted in the evaluation exercise.

**Figure 3 – Investment priority 08 CMR basic configuration**



*Source: Elaborated by the authors.*

Since the public policy is the object of study of this project (Investment Priority 08) a financial instrument to support the public for social housing, that is, generically goods and services for which there is no market, we seek to explore and rehearse options for alternative methods that are not being common in the national context and community of the river and the area of the policies of housing, would not allow us to build and test a robust conceptual framework on the “black box” of the program and the causes that derive from it (or are supposed to derive), as it is also possible to value economically the options taken in the function of different conditions and contexts, a step usually omitted or neglected in this type of evaluation. To this end, we complemented the most common architecture of a realistic approach to evaluation, with a method closer to the economic analysis, to which a dual function was assigned: on the one hand, to assist in the validation of the results obtained in CMR and, on the other side, to allow scenarios creation of economic valorization of the intervention and its cost-effective impact.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the project is to identify and test methodological solutions for the impact assessment of public policies aimed at subject to the next generation of policies of support to social housing and urgent and temporary housing, in particular those that will be financed under the Resilient and Recovery Mechanism (2021-2026) of the European Union.

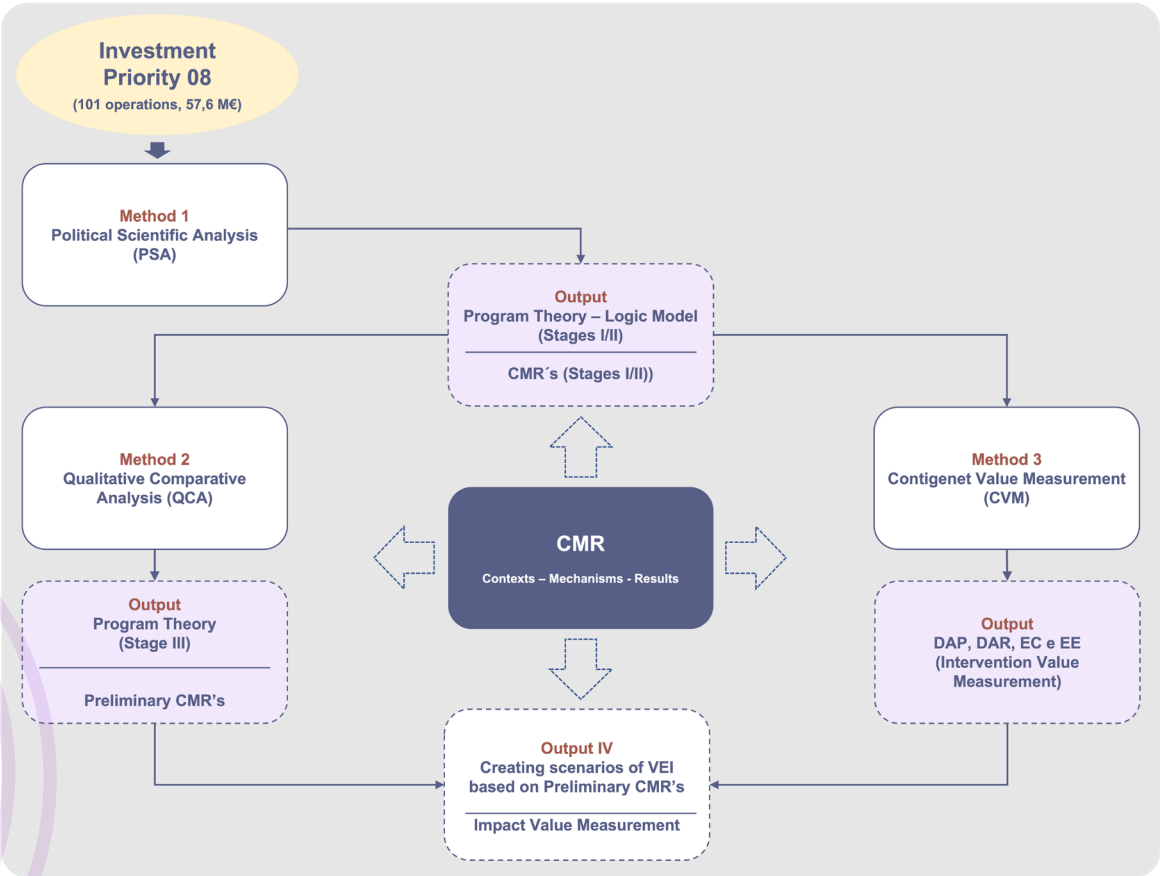
From this first objective, a second was defined to develop and test an impact assessment methodology anchored in the Realistic Assessment approach duly adjusted to the field

under assessment (social housing), which incorporates mechanisms of economic valuation of interventions and that responds to the following challenges: i) the need to assess the impact not only in terms of scheduled results but also of results not programmed; ii) possibility of constructing the possibilities of the value of the intervention in the function of varied contexts and indicators of valuing the impact; iii) commitment to present a methodological proposal for a viable and feasible impact assessment for the next generation of social housing support technologies.

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The general methodological approach is part of a “ theory-based” policy assessment and is particularly anchored in the “Assessing the Realistic” type. Its operationalization consists of the conjugation and triangulation of three distinct used in the evaluation of scientific conditions, two of them directly linked to the evaluation of impact and in theory (scientific approach is a qualitative comparative analysis) and one that is already relatively common in public conditions and is also very close to the economic (Contingent Value Measurement). With this option, we seek to build an impact methodology that maximizes the potential of the combination of two essential theories for political science, the Program Theory and the Causal Theory, also having as a background the integration of two pillars in public governance: the information of the conditions that are oriented to the results and the principle of the political conditions based on the analysis.

Figure 4 – CMR method articulation with the project-based-method





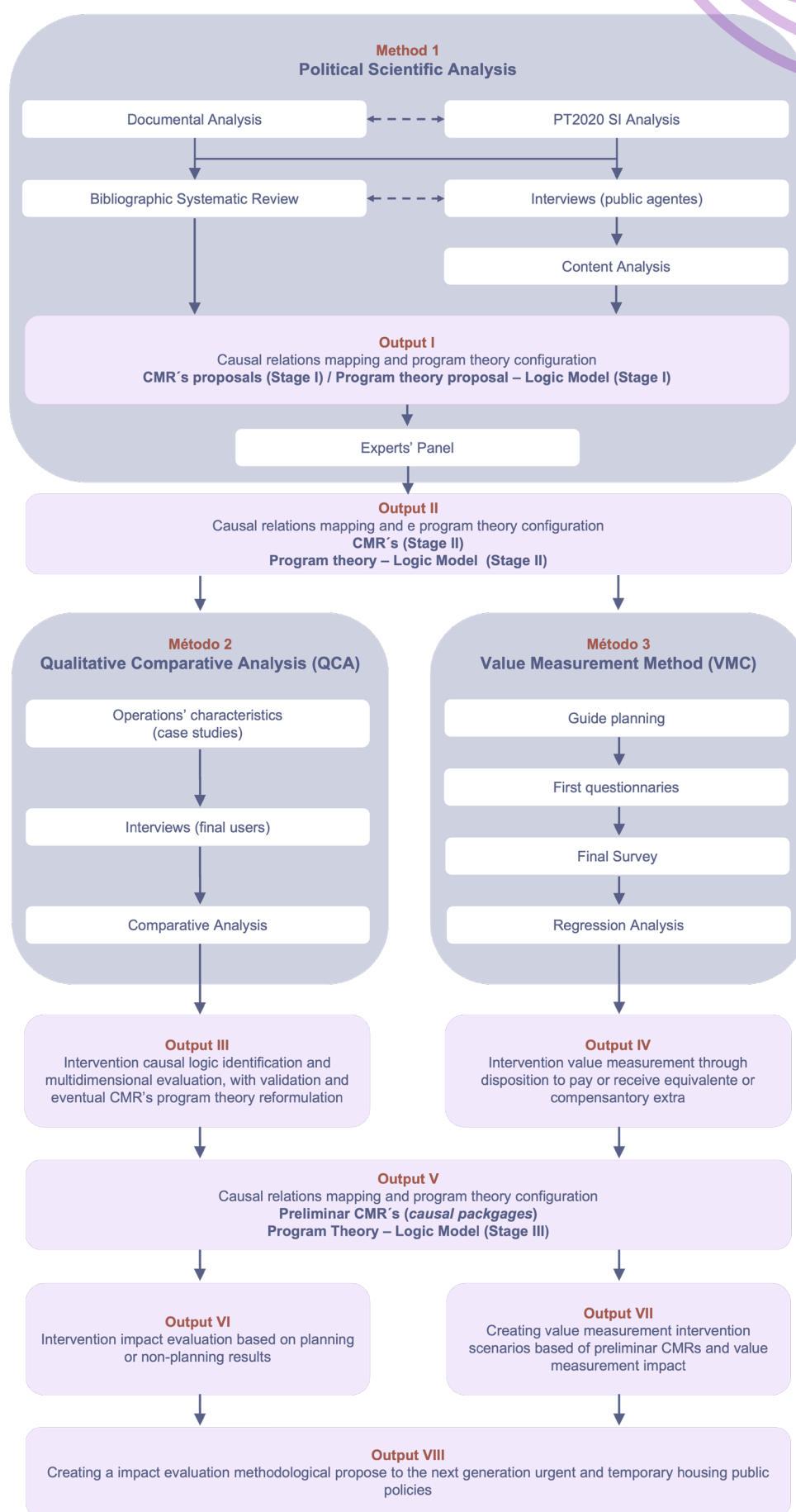
In this project, as is generally the case in other structured equally based on the realistic approach, the CMR method is of paramount importance, from the outset, because it constitutes "the anchor" of the triangle of all others. In this case, the CMRs identified and conceptually consolidated in the development of the first design method (Political Scientific Analysis) and analyzed, quantified, validated, and financially valued in the second and third (Qualitative Comparative Analysis and Contingent Value Measurement) will act as 'causal packages' of reference that explain the functioning and scope of the policy from the perspective of impact. In terms of selecting the CMR configurations to be used, since there are some possible variations, we chose to follow the version of the original work of Pawson & Tilley (1997) and by configuring context-mechanisms-results type, CMR. In terms of the concepts inherent to this configuration, the following elements have been stabilized:

**- Context** - The context describes the characteristics of the conditions in which the programs are introduced that may be relevant to the functioning of the program mechanisms. The context does not refer to places, people, time, or institutions themselves, but to the social relations, rules, norms and expectations that constitute them, as well as the resources available (or not). Therefore, the contexts that are linked to the mechanisms through which the programs work should be understood as distinct but interconnected as an element of a CMR configuration. The context arises here very much linked to the "background" in which the operations are carried out and the characterization of them at the time of start-up of the projects (i.e., before their materialization), as well as to the main problems they sought to respond to from a close perspective.


**- Mechanism** – The mechanism involves the resource created by the materialization of the operations and their availability to those destined to the rivers, that is, the "access" to the dwelling (new or renewed, depending on the typology of the project) – that is, the act of enjoying / dwelling in the conditions provided for in the project (inherent to the characteristics of the information financed) experienced by the user (+) plus the response (cognitive, emotional, motivational, etc.) of users to the enjoyment of the good provided by the program that can lead to the obtaining of the results. In this case, the mechanisms are essential behaviours, choices, reasons, and decisions taken by individuals who access the enjoyment of social housing (material input of the program) and contribute to a causal achievement of the results of the program (whether they are expected or not).

**- Results** - The results comprise the intended consequences and the intentional consequences of the programs, resulting from the activation of different mechanisms in different contexts. The results to be included in the CMR are of two types: i) those programmed, that is, those formally provided for in the ip.08 programming framework and which derive from its objectives; ii) are not programmed, that is, those that will be identified as potential results identified during the application of the political scientific analysis instruments.

**Figure 5 – Methodological synthesis**




Source: elaborated by the authors



The first method, «Political Scientific Analysis» (PCA), is a method shared by Leeuw<sup>2</sup> in 2003 it incorporates rationale stemming from the realistic evaluation and theory of the program applied to the political policies. On its own, it is intended to identify or rebuild the theory of a scientific instrument, giving special emphasis to the importance of the specific tools, the view of the political actors on the intervention the identification of the reasons for which those responsible for the political situation understand that it is necessary to solve the problem to which situation directed. The methodological approach may have some variations, but in its way, it incorporates methodological tools of documentary analysis, literature review, auscultation, interaction with stakeholders and content analysis. In the case of this project, it was decided to use six tools to obtain and treat chained and articulated but distinct from each other:

- **Documental Analysis** – Seek and treatment documents relating to the policy instrument in evaluation, namely reference documents of public policy that are in its genesis, program documents, operationalization, implementation, and evaluation of PT2020, legislation or/and regulations, scientific studies and t is technical reference, as well as documenting the similar of other programs that have preceded Investment Priority 08. Thus, it seeks to identify, among others, the mechanisms, instruments, processes, and means provided for the implementation of PI.08, as well as the information needed for a vision of the intervention in agreement, which can be useful for the design of the program theory and identify the causes that sustain it.
- **SI PT2020 Analysis** – It is the only acquisition of information (qualitative and quantitative) integrated into the family of desk research methodologies, consisting essentially of the collection (and subsequent analysis) of information directly associated with PI.08 operations existing in the information systems of the management bodies of the PT2020. This tool is essential to know and make available for later analysis the detail of the data relating to the operations supported and their applications.
- **Bibliographical systematic analysis** – This is a systematic analysis of the literature specialized in the evaluation of public policies for urgent and temporary lodging. The analyzed publications enclose articles published over the last two decades (2000-2022) in journals indexed in the Web of Science (WoS). This analysis is carried out in eight phases (Sanz, 2020): **Phase 1** – Questions definition for the systematic review; **Phase 2** – Choice of the action protocol; **Phase 3** – References search from the keywords combination; **Phase 4** – Criteria application for inclusion/exclusion of references; **Phase 5** – Quality evaluation of publications; **Phase 6** – Building of a reference database; **Phase 7** – Systematization of pieces of evidence; **Phase 8** – Writing and transferring the results in a report. This methodology is intended to systematize the state of the art of international literature on the evaluation of public policies on social lodging and identify the relationships between contexts, mechanisms, and results for the definition of casual packages (CMRs) and the theory of the program (Stage I).
- **Public agents semi-structured interviews** – The semi-directive interviews correspond to a technical test of direct and personalized information of essentially qualitative nature, constituting a privileged mode of learning and the analysis of the perspectives of the actors about a program, allowing the identification of the meaning that these companies are in the and the events faced and/or the analysis of a specific problem taking into account the views present, highlighting what is actually at stake

2 Leeuw, F. L. (2003). Reconstructing program theories: methods available and problems to be solved. American Journal of Evaluation, 24(1), 5–20.



and the systems of relationship that structure the functioning of the system. These semi-directive interviews (16 in total) are aimed at decision-makers and experts who had direct contact with the application of PI.08 PT2020, which are: managers of CCDRS (Coordination and Regional Development Committees), mayors and councillors; and business managers involved in the execution of operations.


• **Content Analysis** – Content analysis is a standard tool in logic and philosophy for the analysis of qualitative data, especially when involved with semi-directive interviews. According to Bardin (2016), is following the following steps: i) pre-analysis of the material, with a floating reading and preparation of the material; ii) exploration of the material, with the coding of the content in units of context and registration; and iii) treatment of the material, with the categorization of the information analyzed.

• **Experts' Panel** – The expert panel is used for analysis and validation of the first proposal of CMRs and the theory of the program (Stage I) designed using the five previous tools. In this case, the expert panel shall be composed of the higher responsibility for monitoring operations in situ after they are made available to the final recipients. It is therefore expected to synthesize the information from a set of points of view to reach a value level of value on the functioning of the program in asking impacts in the light of the CMR and the theory of the proposed program.

At the end of the PCA and from the results of the expert panel it will be possible to graphically map the potential causation links resulting from the implementation of PI.08 to build a new version of the program theory (Stage II), as well as to stabilize in number and content the set of CMR that will serve as the basis for the design and implementation of the following two methods.

The method «Qualitative Comparative Analysis» (QCA) is a technique that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies and was initially created by John Stuart Mill, still during the nines to establish causation relationships by systematic comparison. This is possible to expand the exploratory potential of scientific approaches qualitative, to the extent that, from analysis of more circumscribed study cases in the single, but analyzed intensively (addressing many aspects of the cases, in an integrative way and examining how the different parts of a whole fit together, both contextually and historically), the QCA makes it possible to bring the information and the empirical intensity of qualitative approaches to studies that cover a small number of cases (situations of an area that normally require the use of quantitative oriented). The comparison that is at their base represents each case as a combination of causalities and results from conditions so that these combinations can be compared with each other and then logically simplified using an upward process of comparison. Therefore, by constructing information from the qualitative studies of the phenomenon in question (based on case studies) the QCA allows us to guide the investigation of the empirical data for the generalization of the analyses enabling their replication in other studies. The expected fin result with the use of the QCA goes, first, by not restricting to a single causal model that best suits the data, as is usually the case for the different causal models that exist between comparable cases. In the present project, we opted for a fuzzy-set QCA, since it is the one that best allows the transformation of qualitative information into quantitative values, maintaining the original distinctions, the combination of instructional videos in a single instrument, as well as the identification of the causes.

In terms of implementation of the QCA method, a "case selection" is made, the final sample of which will be built by twelve operations financed through the PI.08 that they are chosen in function of several matters, such as the characteristics of the operation (e.g. the financing typologies and characteristics of the beneficiaries), the date of approval of the operations and



the location and geographical representativeness it's going to stay. Then and based on the configuration of the CMRs, a clear description of the variables will be established, as well as a standardized anal table to evaluate each case. The characterization of the selected operations will be carried out based on the information available in the PT2020 information system and its project/application dossier, as well as information from the Strategic Urban Development Plans that were in their genesis (which required them to contain a detailed characterization of the operations). The subsequent step is to carry out semi-directive sums (40 in total) to benefit the final rivers (residents/users) of the selected operations (sample). The questions to be included in these interviews are focused on the one hand, on responding to the specific information needs of each of the CMRs derived from the PCA method and, on the other hand, on the obtainable information relating to independent context variables, such as the types of risk situations that are the basis of access to housing and the socio-economic characteristics of the interviewees and their household. The interviews are transcribed and analyzed using content analysis, following the defined protocol by Elo & Kyngas<sup>3</sup>.


Finally, we will have the comparison analysis, for which we will use fs/QCA software. In the first moment, only the selected cases will be explained and lead to an initial minimization. However, as the main objective of the case compared is to find a generalization as broad as possible, in a second moment the research will subsequently include "logical cases" to detect more general standards. The main "indicators" of QCA are then calculated, i.e. the consistent coverage. In addition, to calculate the efficiency and robustness of the configurations, the indicator called "need response" (RoN) will be calculated, which allows for verifying whether the necessary conditions are trivial or not. the "table of truth" will be created and the information is carried out to reduce the causal complexity and to outline the combinations of all conditions, linking these combinations to the conditions of a result. To finish the relationship, two more years are being carried out. On the one hand, the table of truth will be logically minimized, a process by which information is expressed in a more parsimonious, although logically equivalent, way of seeking similarities and differences between cases that share the same result. On the other hand, a subset analysis will be carried out to explore all the possible needs, for individual conditions, or conjunctions (even if the conjunctions are redundant), as well as all possible disjoint conditions. necessary for a given outcome.

In the end, the QCA method should provide a detailed and multidimensional assessment of the causal aspects inherent in the implementation of the Investment Priority and allow the resumption of the theory of the PCA program for validation and possible reformulation (Stage III), as well as to identify the preliminary CMRS (preliminary means among the CMR combinations tested those which prove to be more robust in terms of consistency and coverage and which, as such, function as the reference to 'causation packages' that best explain the functioning and scope of the policy from the perspective of impact).

The «Contingent Value Measurement» (CVM) falls within the field of economical approaches used to estimate the monetary values of rivers of goods and services for which there is no market price, i.e. goods and services that are not worth, but which are not marketed in formal markets. The CVM is assessing the preference declared that asks for the provision of payment, the provision to accept or the provision to vote relating to future issues that directly estimate the benefits that are not the market, being considered "contingent" because it uses information about how people say they would behave in certain situations of hypothetical situations (contingents to the actual situation). In the context of market signals, the m is all demand, through surveys, to reveal

<sup>3</sup> Elo, S. & Kyngas, S. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107–115.





the preferences of the consumer for a good or service and, with this, to capture their disposition to pay for it. Among the methodologies of CVM, this study will be used the whole "Willingness to pay" (WTC), which consists of a subcategory of value the economic contingent focusing on a service or good used.

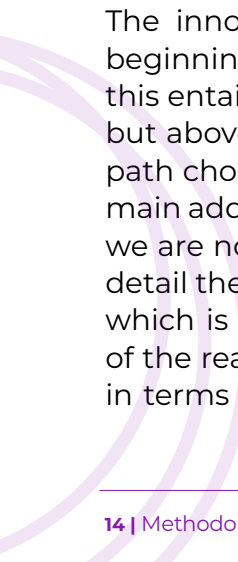
The CVM, through the WTC, may vary according to the survey format of the survey, which can be divided into two large groups: direct and indirect. In this project, we opted for a mix of both. In the direct, the response of the individual is a monetary value to the river that already represents its next "disposition to pay" for the improvement of the part the meter of the established good or service and, consequently, the measure of well-being. In this case, it has resorted to open-ended scenic as a question that will be later complemented with a second question. In indirect, which is those that provide a most accurate indication of the true "willingness to pay" of the individual, will be used the quota ranking tool. In this case, how the quests are drawn produces a set of values that do not directly represent the next "provision to pay", thus implying additional processing of the data through a return analysis. Both questionnaires (sample of 60 individuals) will be drawn based on the multiple parameters that characterize the case-of-study operations and the configurations of CMRs derived from the Qualitative Comparative Analysis method.

In the end, the CMV must make it possible to identify the value of the economic performance of the intervention through the agreement of the Provision to Be Paid, the Provision to Be Received, the Compensating Surplus and the Equivalent Surplus in two distinct dimensions: i) even matters of programming, such as the characteristics of the operation financed (e.g. the housing, number of divisions), the characteristics of users (e.g. gender, qualification, income) or situations of risk that are at the basis of access to housing; ii) the various prominent CRM configurations identified in the Qualitative Comparative Analysis method.

Once the three methods have been finalized, the conditions for the implementation of the project's finishing components will be created: i) definition of conclusions regarding the value of the impact of the intervention in terms of scheduled results and results not scheduled; ii) the construction of economic assessment of the intervention in the function of prominent CMRs and calculation of indicators of the impact; iii) and work of a methodological proposal of impact assessment for the political conditions for supporting social housing of next generations, built from the lessons of experience drawn from this project.

#### **4. EXPECTED RESULTS AND INNOVATION CHALLENGES**

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The innovative and complex car of this methodological approach was assumed from the beginning of the project, even having full awareness of the challenges and risks that a choice like this entails, not only those that stem from the limitations intrinsic to each of the methods used but above all those related to the process of articulation and triangulation between them. The path chosen and the options inherent to it have always focused on what we consider to be the main added value of this methodological proposal, that is, the fact that in the evaluation exercise we are not limited to the overall impact of the effects of interventions, also seeking to know in detail the these are proven to be inherent to it and to attribute to it an effective economic value, which is not only from the perspective of the realizations but above all from the perspective of the real impact. At this point, we believe that an important contribution can be made, both in terms of knowledge and in terms of methodological reinforcement and refinement, to the



practice and scientific acquis of the Realistic Assessment. We, therefore, consider that this methodological approach is admittedly innovative, at least in five different areas.

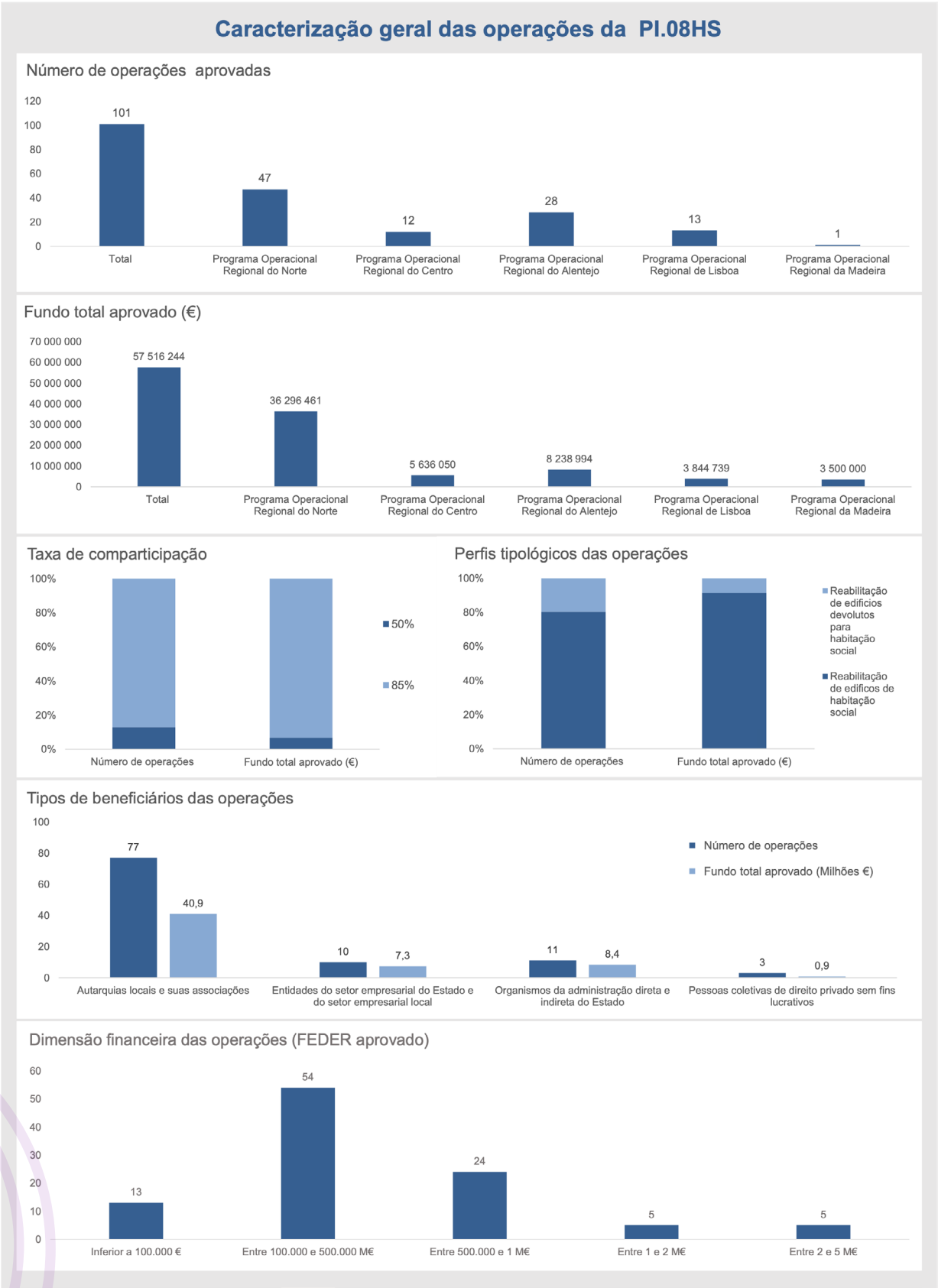
Firstly, we have the fact that the approach is a multi-method, not to the just use of both, but the sequence, conjugation, and articulation of three distinct evaluations of political blocs, two of them directly linked to the evaluation of impact based on theory and a closer to the economic. With this approach, we seek, from the outset, to fill some of the gaps when they are used in isolation and move to a new level of capacity of impact assessment as an instrument to support the political and political areas, in general, and those financed with community funds.

Secondly, we have the use of the CMR method, not only as a structuring part of one of the methods (in this case, the QCA) but as the 'matrix line' of the structuring of all methods and their tools. From the beginning of the evaluation process to its end, all methods and tools either contribute to the design and consolidation of MRCs or serve for their testing and evaluation or produce results according to them, thus allowing progressive and cumulative levels of tuning and validation of these 'causative packages' that explain the functioning and scope of the policy from the perspective of impact.

Thirdly, we are trying to make an invigorating contribution to the Political Scientific Method of the Policy, through a methodological innovation effort to strengthen it as an instrument of 'theory-based evaluation', in general, and realistic evaluation. From the outset, we chose to try to overcome one of the weak points that are attributed to this method, namely the fact that it is often not due attention to the social and behavioural information involved in the processes of implementation of policies. To this end, participatory and auscultation methods of direct actors were incorporated into the implementation and monitoring of the policy in question. Another equally important element in this area was the incorporation of the CMR method not only as the guiding thread of all the research and design of the ACP tools but also as a structuring element of the results of the PCA.

Fourthly, we try to include the economic value of public intervention (financial quantification of impact) in a methodological approach that in most cases does not incorporate it, that is, working from (and in conjunction with) methods that are markedly qualitative. This seeks, among others, to achieve a greater capacity to understand the variations in the economic quantification of the policy according to the contexts in which it is implemented, duly accompanied by the knowledge of the explanatory factors of this variation and the causative processes inherent to it. This step, to be achieved, opens very interesting perspectives of extrapolation and benchmarking for the evaluation of other policies that act in the same field.

Fifthly, and in line with the role that impact assessment should play in supporting the gift of political interventions, we consider that this methodological approach is innovative since by accurately integrating the validation of the causal information of interventions and the economic value enjoys enormous potential in terms of decision-making support, whether in the world (preparation, analysis, approval and monitoring of operations/programs) or the side of the evaluation and reschedule of political ones.







Innovation in Public Policies Impact Evaluation

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