Putting gender and capabilities into the equation. Transformative evaluation for enhancing social justice

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Introduction

Child poverty is one of the most significant challenges at the global level and a clearly-established predictor of negative outcomes for children present and future well-being, with different impact on girls and boys. While there is no doubt that it constitutes a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the debates about how best to measure and ameliorate it remain open. Numerous organisations throughout the planet develop programmes and projects to alleviate child poverty, promote well-being, and boost gender equality from the early stages of life. In this scenario, over the last few years, awareness about the importance of evaluating these programmes has increased as well as diverse theoretical and methodological evaluation contributions have been developed. This movement has promoted the widening of the perspective of the evaluation from a positivist monolithic and unique scientific vision, with a predominance of classical evaluation models, and the use of quantitative tools, to a more plural and open one, in continuous transformation. New and eclectic evaluation approaches and purposes have been incorporated into this model, together with an increasing battery of research methods and methodological tools (Alkin 2012, Izquierdo 2008).

According to Carol Weiss, the evaluation of programmes - as a systematic process of valuing their design, processes and results - becomes a central tool for learning about and improving them, as well as for being accountable to society (1998). In concrete terms, the evaluation of programmes aimed at fighting child poverty is a key tool for understanding how they are designed, how they work and their impact on the lives of girls and boys. It is also an opportunity to make them more effective as well as to rethink the most adequate ways of alleviating poverty while promoting child well-being and gender equality. This necessarily begins by questioning and reexamining the concepts of poverty and well-being and their connections with gender equality within the broader framework of social justice. This is especially important given the historical link between the well-being of children and of women; the well-documented links between women's poverty and child poverty (Lister 2005); and the gendered experiences on and impacts of poverty (not only for adults but also for boys and girls). Despite this, feminist analyses and those concerning childhood well-being have not concurred until very recently. In fact, they have more often been presented as oppositional (Twamley et al. 2016). Contrary to this, and in line with recent literature (Rosen and Twamley 2018), our perspective is that feminist theories and those theories concerned with the subordination and oppression of children would benefit from engaging in dialogue. This perspective arises from a three-fold understanding of feminism: as an ontology (a way of being in the world), as a methodology (a way of studying and analysing the world) and as an epistemology (a theory about what and how

we know about the world) (Allen 2001). It has been said that feminist epistemologies are more easily developed in the theoretical than in the empirical (Martínez et al. 2014, Araiza y González 2017). Therefore, there is the need to elaborate guides and methodological designs and tools that allow us to implement feminist epistemologies and mainstream gender analysis within different disciplines.

This paper's objective is to explore the use of feminist and capability approaches to develop evaluation designs, methods and tools in line with the idea of "transformative evaluation" (Nirenberg 2013, Mertens 2009) and more specifically with what we have called "feminist capabilitarian evaluation."[1] In this vein, the paper pursues to contribute to the emergent literature on both approaches and discuss the potential and limitations of interconnecting them. Although there are relevant contributions related to feminist and capability approaches, not specific literature or practice combining both approaches have been published. Working through a concrete practice, the paper specifically blends both approaches to assess children's well-being in a more accurate way. In order to do so, we present a set of evaluation dimensions and methodological orientations used in designing an evaluation of a specific programme developed by Save the Children Spain: the 'Programme Against Child poverty'. Subsequently, based on collaborative work with Save the Children (StC) staff, it shares lessons learned of this evaluation design to enlighten future evaluations of other programmes.

Broadly speaking, children's programmes may be designed and evaluated based on different approaches. The capability approach (CA) was proposed by Amartya Sen (1993, 1999, 2004) and other development and well-being scholars (Nussbaum 1995 and 2001; Robeyns 2003) as an alternative development approach in the 80s and 90s. Since then, there have been important advances in the operationalisation of Sen's concepts that challenge the prevalent economistic thinking focused on maximising utility, income and primary goods to increase well-being (Khanal, 2014, Biggeri and Libanora, 2011). The CA focuses on what people, and, in our case, children, are able to do and to be, and what they value and have reason to value (Sen 1999). It gives a clear picture of how research trends have shifted from survival to well-being, from negative to positive, from narrow to wider domains, moving towards a composite and multidimensional notions of childhood well-being (Ben-Arieh 2008) which cannot be reduced to the material aspects of life. The CA understands poverty as extreme unfreedom (Green and Hulme 2005), a deprivation of the possibility to achieve the inherent potential in one's capabilities and functionings; a deprivation which is the product of social relations and structural constraints and intergenerationally transferred. Moreover, CA stresses how the true scale of children's poverty can only be determined when it is separated from their adult nexus and treated on its own terms: child poverty may cause irreversible failures in children's capabilities in mental, physical, emotional and spiritual terms, both as children and as

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[1] In light of Robeyns (2016, 2017), we use the term 'the capability approach' for the general and underspecified approach, understood as a "general view, which is used across disciplines and for various purposes" (Robeyns 2016: 398) and the term 'capabilitarian' for the specific use of the capability approach understood as capability accounts or theories, in this case, for an evaluation purpose (capabilitarian evaluation) and for the analysis of child poverty.

future adults (more about these issues can be consulted in Comin et al., 2011 and Comin and Mehrotra 2011). In addition, this approach acknowledges gender inequalities and how they are produced and reproduced. In fact, there has been a fruitful dialogue between the CA and feminist literature (Nussbaum 1995 and 2001, Robeyns 2003).

As gender and political studies highlight, there are no gender-neutral programmes or policies. If they do not include specific attention to gender inequalities in their design and implementation, they tend to reproduce the gender-unequal social order. In the case of children's programmes, if they do not consider gender inequalities, they ignore the fact that "children's vulnerability is socially constructed through a masculine-ordered social environment" (Corkburn 2010, 35) and therefore reproduce gender inequalities and the feminisation of poverty. In relation to evaluation processes, the CA provides a framework for evaluating how child-poverty alleviation programmes contribute to children's well-being. The approach calls for programmes that seek to remove obstacles in people's lives "so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life which, upon reflection, they find valuable" (Robeyns 2003: 6). Do girls and boys have the same opportunities in this regard? In relation to this matter, feminist evaluation[2] – as an evaluation approach per se-in combination with a capabilitarian evaluation helps to identify how these programmes impact girls' and boys' freedom to exert choice in their lives. This combination of approaches in evaluation also contributes to generating evidence and learning about how to challenge a gender-unequal order.

As mentioned above, our aim is to explore how two emergent approaches in evaluation - capability and feminist- could help to measure the impacts of a programme on children's capabilities, to address gender inequalities and promote changes in the lives of girls and boys. The paper offers a theoretical contribution and also reflects on the methodological implications, potentials and limitations of combining both approaches, adopting a "feminist capabilitarian approach" in the evaluation of child-poverty alleviation programmes.

1. Capability and feminist evaluation approaches for evaluating programmes

For the last two decades, evaluation has experienced an important upsurge, and currently, there is a global consensus on the relevance of carrying out this kind of exercise (EvalPartners, 2016). This is true also for Spain, although here, public and private organisations became aware of this relevance later than in other countries (Izquierdo, 2008). The evaluation practice, internationally and also in Spain, has been influenced by funding agencies and their focus on positivist, quantitative and top-down approaches. From this perspective, evaluation has been understood as a mere technical process that, carried out by external experts with measurement techniques, is able to get objective results and conclusions (House 1980, Scriven 1973). In this regard, evaluation constitutes

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[2] Feminist evaluation is an evaluation approach that has been developed since the late 90s. Its main references are Humphries (1999), Bamberger and Podems (2002), Patton (2002), Seigart and Brisolara (2002). In recent years, the most important references are Podems (2010), Hay and Mendez (2012) Brisolara et al. (2014) and Sudarshan and Nandi (2018).

a process-oriented to commanders for ensuring control and accountability. However, since the 70s, new constructivist, qualitative and pluralist evaluation approaches have emphasised the political nature of evaluation and the reflexivity and inter-subjectivity as characteristics of the evaluative processes (Chelimsky 1998, Guba and Lincoln 1989). These have promoted practices focused on learning, improving and, in recent years, transformation and not only on control and accountability. In this context, the "transformative evaluation" approach acknowledges the political nature of the evaluation and highlights that knowledge -and knowledge generated by the evaluation- is influenced by different interests and power relations (Nirenbert 2013, Mertens 2009, Nirenberg et al. 2003). Evaluation becomes a process to empower excluded people and promote social justice, making visible and changing discrimination and social exclusion situations (Nirenberg 2013; Mertens 2009).

As part of the "transformative evaluation", the emergent capability and feminist approaches share a focus on social change in the evaluation process, and both highlight that evaluation is not a value-free process but, rather, a political one closely linked to power. In all evaluation processes, there exist different competing values and points of view regarding what is a desirable change. Evaluation, therefore, is a moment for rethinking a programme and boosting actions to promote change, such as spreading social equity, democratic values and participation of all the stakeholders (Brisolara et al. 2014, Khanal 2014, Biggeri and Libanora 2011).

In the case of organisations working with children, evaluations have also been increasingly demanded and acknowledged as a key exercise for improving the effectiveness and efficiency as well as for generating evidence for future planning phases (Lewis and Utting, 2001). In line with this, evaluation has been understood as a systematic process that helps to assess the design, implementation processes and results of programmes in order to promote not only accountability but also learning and improvement. Evaluation, therefore, is a fundamental tool for understanding the development of children's programmes and making them more successful (Newburn, 2001). In the same vein and in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, different evaluative proposals focused on child poverty have also been developed in recent years (Chzhen et al. 2018). These proposals go beyond positivist models, explore more constructivist and pluralist approaches and focus on social change and transformation. There is still scarce practice from capability and feminist approaches. However, different UNICEF's publications highlight that evaluation exercises can be an opportunity for promoting more gender-equal societies, and they propose to rethink traditional evaluation approaches so that they consider gender inequalities (Bamberger and Segone, 2011 and Sanz-Luque, 2010).

In the case of child poverty alleviation programmes, this means including children in the definition and development of the evaluation process.[3] From a CA, it becomes central to

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[3] The evaluation process refers to the different steps taken to carry out an evaluation. Broadly speaking, four steps can be distinguished: evaluation design; gathering of information, analysis and interpretation; reporting; and use and follow-up. Specifically, evaluation design refers to the approach, methods and tools used when assessing a programme. It is not neutral but depends on "the purpose and scope of the

identify what is the poverty-free life that children value and want to live and how the programme is contributing to this path. In other words, it is fundamental to actively listen to children's and consider their agency in understanding child poverty and material well-being (Main 2019, Naven 2019). This implies recognising that they have the right to develop their skills along the way to their future adulthood, but that they are also citizens now with rights and entitlements to immediate well-being as children (Ben-Arieh 2008, Casas, Frønes, et al. 2014) and the ability to give insights that increase our understanding of actions that need to be addressed to achieve this well-being (Naven 2019). However, it is true that "the capability approach is an open-ended and underspecified framework" (Robeyns 2017, 29), and this leads to a plurality of perspective within the approach and to some strong scholarly disagreements. In fact, there have been important debates around the possibility of using the CA with children; some authors object to the idea that children are capable of and mature enough to decide what is good for them and, more important, to revise their decision (see for example Saito 2003 in Fegter and Richter 2014). In contrast, others propose acknowledging a weak self-determination principle for children; this is, they highlight the importance of defining the framework within which children make choices in a way that develop their capacity for evaluation and eliminates certain, especially harmful, choices (Ballet et al. 2011).

From a feminist evaluation approach, this implies acknowledging a gender-unequal social order and try to promote more gender-transformative programmes. Different gender-focus proposals have been developed in recent years. Specific and emergent literature on feminist evaluation understands evaluation as a political tool to promote social justice and proposes using it to make gender and intersectional discrimination visible and change this situation (Sudarshan et al., 2018, Brisolara et al., 2014, Hay et al., 2012, Podems, 2010). More institutional literature on gender-sensitive or gender-responsive evaluation highlights the role of evaluation for promoting gender equality and focuses on technical steps to do it (Bamberger et al., 2016, UNEG, 2011). Both works of literature acknowledge the importance of including all stakeholders' voices in the whole evaluation process, paying special attention to those who are frequently excluded (Bamberger et al. 2016, Brisolara et al., 2014, Hay et al., 2012, UNEG, 2011, Podems, 2010). In the case of childhood programmes, it means identifying the different socialisation processes for girls and boys and how both are impacted by gender norms. Evaluation, therefore, constitutes an opportunity to include children's points of view and to try to include specific measures to bolster change in terms of children's well-being and gender equality.

In terms of evaluation, CA put the focus on assessing what people are able to do and to be and on what they have reason to value, including the immaterial aspects of their life. Broadly speaking, this perspective gives merit to individual and community experience, values and participation (Mayoux and Chambers 2005), and conceives the success or failure of programmes in terms of achievements and freedoms, or the expansion of choice-sets, both at the individual/household and community/territorial level. In other words, an evaluation needs to focus on the characteristics of the local systems where

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evaluation, the evaluation questions, and also the nature and the context of the intervention to be evaluated" (Bamberger and Segone, 2011, 41).

individuals live and interact, to capture the complexity and territorial specificity of a programs' mechanisms and outcomes. Four concepts are key to the CA (Khanal, 2014; Biggeri and Libanora, 2011; Robeyns, 2003) and, subsequently, to the design of evaluations based on it:

- Functionings: the valuable activities and states that make up a person's well-being (being safe and at peace, having a healthy body, close friendships, an educated mind, a good job).

- Capabilities: the 'alternative combinations of functionings (choice-sets) that are feasible (for a person) to achieve,' their actual freedoms.

- Agency: a person's ability to pursue and realise goals that he or she values and has reason to value. An agent is 'someone who acts and brings about change.'

- Conversion factors: the particular personal, social, institutional and structural arrangements (preconditions) which allow individuals (girls and boys, in this case) to convert (or not) resources and commodities into individual capabilities and functionings (effective options and freedoms).

Comin et al. (2011) and Ballet et al. (2011) distinguish between internal, environmental and social conversion factors. Internal conversion factors are related to personal characteristics (e.g. sex, age, physical conditions and abilities, talents, intelligence). Nevertheless, many freedoms (and this may be particularly true for children, but not only for them) also depend on the actions of others and/or on the nature of social arrangements. These non-internal conversion factors can be environmental or social. Environmental factors are related to climate and geographical characteristics, while social conversion factors are related to characteristics of household (e.g. parent's education), community (e.g. traditions) or state/region (e.g. rules and institutions). In the same vein, according to CA literature, gender roles can be specifically defined as a social conversion factor. Therefore, conversion factors can range from social and legal structures and environmental contexts to very specific resources and skills people need to exercise freedoms. Hart and Brando (2018), for example, reflect on how to be free to read children not only require particular cognitive skills; they strongly depend on the appropriate external conditions that allow this capability to flourish: education; access to language-appropriate literature and a social and legal system to protect their freedom to read. In this sense, parental education and love for reading and having books at home allow children to exercise this freedom to read effectively.

We are aware of possible adult-centric biases within the CA as this approach overemphasises and operationalises 'control' over resources in forms that are frequently inaccessible to children, such as control over income or access to freedoms associated with adulthood (Main 2019). However, through the analysis of the interactions and synergies of conversion factors, "the CA helps us to identify the social constraints that influence and restrict well-being" (Ballet et al. 2011, 31). CA also helps us to understand how individual (girls or boys) can influence their own and other people's well-being by changing his/her internal conversion factors and by contributing to modify social and

environmental conversion factors through socio-political participation and action at the different levels. These processes always take place in the framework of structural constraints -social and economic institutions, social and legal norms and environmental factors- (Robeyns 2019). Generally speaking, the CA enriches the evaluation of children programmes because it acknowledges the multidimensional nature of social change and it emphasises the interaction between individuals, communities and structural constraints. As it has been highlighted, the lack of evidence that poverty arises because of individualised behaviours and sub-cultural practices calls for a policy approach that draws on structural explanations of poverty (Main and Bradshaw 2014). In this sense, the CA offer a very useful approach for evaluating impacts on girls' and boys' lives due to its focus on assessing the extent to which programmes increase people's capabilities to live a life they value and produce change in their life.

The feminist evaluation approach states that discrimination based on gender is systemic and structural, that specific actions are necessary to promote gender equality; and that evaluation could be a key tool for generating learning in this regard (Seigart and Brisolara 2002, Podems 2010, Hay 2012, Brisolara et al. 2014). In relation to CA from a feminist point of view, all the social conversion factors relating to the household, community or state/region could be defined by systemic and structural gender inequality, and that they produce and reproduce the same (Benería, 2016). In this vein, feminist evaluation recognises the complexity of gender order and, to promote change, proposes to analyse gender dimensions in relation to the social conversion factors in each specific programme. These gender dimensions are: sexual division of labour and different gender roles, participation of women and men in private and public spheres, the control of women's bodies, practical and strategic gender needs, different uses of time by women and men, and the unequal access to and control over resources, benefits and services (Hunt and Brouwers, 2003 and Miller and Razavi, 1998, in Espinosa, 2013). In addition, it highlights that gender discrimination intersects with other kinds of discrimination based on age or social class, for example (Bustelo, 2017, Brisolara et al., 2014). In this respect, when including the feminist perspective in the evaluation of children programmes, it is necessary to take into account how gender and age intersect.

To sum up, combining capabilitarian and feminist evaluation approaches means putting the focus on tracking changes in terms of capabilities and gender equality. Our proposal explores how to do it to contribute to social change and social justice. In terms of evaluation design, this implies promoting children's participation in the whole evaluation process, from the recognition of the importance of their perspectives and values and through the adaptation of the dynamics and tools used to collect them (Hart, 1992). An evaluation utilising capability and feminist approaches should also analyse the impacts on children's capabilities, paying attention to different gender dimensions connected to social conversion factors, analysing specific gender needs and interests and considering the intersection of gender inequality with other inequality axed. In the following section, we present a case study of the evaluation design for assessing the 'Programme Against Children's Poverty' of StC Andalusia using a feminist capabilitarian approach. This model

results from combining both approaches theoretically and reflects on how to do it in practice.

2. An evaluation model for the 'Programme Against Children's Poverty', StC-Andalusia: looking at children's well-being and gender equality

StC collaborated as a third sector partner in the project SEJ 2727 *Infancia y Bienestar. Indicadores y Bases para el Desarrollo de Políticas Públicas desde un Enfoque de Capacidades* (Childhood and Well-being. Indicators and Bases for the Development of Public Policies from a Capability Approach)[4]. Among the aspects of the project that arouse the most interest in the StC team, the inclusion of the gender perspective and new approaches in evaluation stood out. In response to this, the research team proposed to work together to address these issues on specific programmes that were active at the time. StC chose to work on the Programme Against Children's Poverty. The following paragraphs describe the context and characteristic of the programme. After that, we address the development of the evaluation model.

Due to the great recession and the development of austerity policies, over the last decade, children's poverty has significantly increased in Spain (UNICEF 2009; UNICEF 2011; UNICEF 2014). In 2016, one out of three Spanish children lived in poverty or at the risk of social exclusion, and half a million more children suffer from severe poverty than in 2008. This data confirms that children are among those most impacted by the economic crisis and by social budget cuts (Contillón et al. 2017). These cumulative impacts on children's lives are considerable, both in evident and hidden ways (Ridge 2013) and have long-term consequences (Hudson and Küher 2016). Moreover, they are experienced in different ways by the female and male population, and they contribute to the reproduction of the feminisation of poverty (Walby 2016).

In Spain, childhood has not been a priority (neither before nor after the recession). In fact, Spanish public spending on child protection in 2013 accounted for only 1.3 % of GDP while it reached 2.3% in the EU-28 (Save the Children 2015). Gender equality has not been a priority either (Alonso, 2015). Budget cuts were significant in the field of gender equality, and gender issues have not been fully integrated into childhood public policies.

In this context, since 2007, StC-Andalusia has developed a 'Programme Against Children's Poverty', within the framework of a larger action funded by CaixaProInfancia, which in 2015 assisted 60,000 children nationwide between the ages of 6 and 17, and about 5,000 in the city of Seville (Andalusia) alone. The program broadly defines poverty as a situation with a paucity of tools and material resources that prevents children from fulfilling their rights and developing all their capacities. It is, therefore, the lack of both material and psycho-socio-educational inputs that ultimately hinders the development of these children.

In order to design a feminist capabilitarian evaluation, a collaborative process was carried out with the programme's staff. This process consisted of three onsite workshops (January

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[4] This project was supported by the Andalusian Council for Innovation, Commerce, Science and University, Andalusian Regional Government.

and September) and fluid email exchange, and telephone conversations between and after them. Three StC staff members participated in these workshops: the head of the Andalusia office, the head of the CaixaProinfancia Program in Seville and a programme technician. Two researchers participated in the first and last workshop and one in the intermediated one. Up to that point, StC was using evaluation models that combined positivist and quantitative approaches with constructivist approaches. Their interest was in generating accountability and learning, and improvement. However, they had no experience with transformative approaches. Specifically, in relation to this programme, evaluations were being carried out based on the collection of quantitative evidence (satisfaction questionnaire) as well as qualitative inputs (interviews and group meetings). The feminist capabilitarian evaluation design pursued to make evaluation an opportunity to assess programme's effects and rethink its design looking at children's capabilities and gender equality, two key issues for StC.

In this regard, first (workshop I), we jointly identified a programme theory to reveal its assumptions about change and design how to assess it; for this, we decided to work initially with the adult staff responsible for the program. We identified the Caixa ProInfancia's main goal as preventing the reproduction of inter-generational cycles of poverty, taking as a starting point the idea that family poverty is linked to children's rights violations. This is especially true at a period when "Child poverty is being privatised as children's needs are repositioned back into the family; a family setting that is under siege, bearing the heaviest burden in relation to welfare cuts and financial insecurity and systematically undermined through political rhetoric and media hyperbole" (Ridge 2013, 414). The programme theory was based on two premises: (1) changing children's lives through their families and (2) implementing a 'Child first' model. This theory also specified four types of action:

1. Social and educational services: development of skills to prevent school failure, promotion of child and youth participation through educational and leisure activities.

2. Specialised services (in coordination with Social Services, psychologists and pedagogues); services to children with special needs.

3. Family services: monitoring families, parenting, schools and support.

4. Material support: afternoon snacks, school supplies, glasses and hearing aids.

The programme's stakeholders were primary and secondary schools, Social Services, children and their families, local organisations and StC. Although the focus was on the children, the families were always involved. This implicitly recognised that children's capabilities are affected by conversion factors, the inter-generational transfer of capabilities and by the functionings and entitlements of their parents. That is to say that they are, in part, an outcome of a cumulative path-dependent process (Ballet 2011).

After identifying the theory of the programme and its stakeholders, a set of evaluation dimensions – based on proposals from capability and feminist evaluation approaches -

were discussed as the first step in the definition of the evaluation matrix.[5]. This was coherent with the idea of transformative evaluation, which establishes that the participation of staff members in the design of the methodology is very important.

In this respect, a review of the list of the most relevant capabilities for children's well-being in Spain, proposed by Domínguez-Serrano et al. (2019), was carried out. This list follows Robeyns (2003) and Biggeri et al. (2006) and the procedures developed by the Thematic Group on Children's Capabilities, a sub-group of the Human Development Capabilities Association. After that, StC staff members prioritised the three capabilities they considered most relevant to evaluate the programme. This prioritisation process was made considering two axes: a) identification of the most relevant capabilities to break the inter-generational transfer of poverty, and b) the capabilities they were most interested in discovering how the program impacted. The three capabilities selected were:

• Leisure activities, playing and imagination: being able to enjoy one's leisure and free time.

• Formal and informal education: being able to learn and receive good-quality, prejudice-free formal and informal education (access to information, critical analysis, sports training or music and arts education).

• Good treatment and safety: being able to enjoy a life free of violence in its different spheres.

Following Nielsen and Thorne (2014), we consider that, in the global North, contemporary childhoods are organised around two main institutions: privatised families and schools, and that gendered patterns are present in both of them, which affect the chances of children's present and future capabilities to flourish. We also intended to pay special attention to the different interests, needs and values of girls and boys and to analyse how the programme promotes capabilities that enhance gender equality. When asked how these issues could be addressed, StC staff members could not easily answer. The joint discussion concluded that girls and boys should be able to enjoy equivalent leisure and free time, and that no gender-biased leisure activities and games should be promoted; that possible gender prejudice in formal and informal education should be eliminated, and that the special sphere of gender violence (sexual abuse, for instance) should be taken into great consideration.

The following step (workshop III) was to jointly complete the evaluation matrix considering the selected capabilities as evaluation dimensions and operationalising them into evaluation questions to guide the inquiry process. The final evaluation questions referred to different functionings connected with each capability (see table 1).

Table 1. Evaluation Matrix

In parallel to the definition of the evaluation matrix, a set of theoretical and methodological orientations (capability theory), which would guide this whole evaluation

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[5] The evaluation matrix is the tool where evaluation dimensions, questions and indicators, as well as techniques for gathering information, are presented. It is essential for designing evaluation processes and guides the implementation of the evaluation, the analysis of evaluative information and the reporting.

process, were agreed with the programme's staff. These were, firstly, that any list of capabilities must be context-dependent (Sen, 1992, in Robeyns 2003); that is, defined according to the criteria of explicit formulation, methodological justification, sensitivity to the context, different levels of generality, exhaustiveness and non-reduction (Robeyns, 2003). Secondly, that androcentrism and other biases must be avoided – to the degree that this is possible- in the selection of capabilities. Thirdly, that the insights of girls and boys must be included during the evaluative process. As mentioned, a feminist and capability-based evaluation design implies promoting girls' and boys' participation in the evaluation process, acknowledging the importance of their perspectives and values. In this regard, the team recognised the need to involve in the evaluation the children who benefit from the programme. Finally, the evaluation must be seen as an ongoing process; this involves redefining, in collaboration with the children, the most important capabilities promoted by the programme, and listening to how the programme has impacted them. This has some important ethical and practical implications that could be addressed through the engagement with care ethic/ethics of care that involves active listening and paying attention to people's needs in their own terms while being aware of the importance of diversity and the subtle nature of disempowerment (Tronto 2010, Cockborn 2010, Abma et al. 2020). Evaluation is also an opportunity for redesigning the programme, making it more relevant and promoting more attention to children's well-being and equity from a social justice perspective.

Therefore, a second phase should be included in the design, consisting of different workshops with, or even, by children. This involvement would require revising the evaluation matrix so they could change it and include new issues. Unfortunately, it has not been possible so far to develop these workshops due to the project's time and financial constraints. Obviously, the participation of children in this phase would always be voluntary, and their decision to participate or not, would never affect their access to the programme service. These future workshops could address the three mentioned capabilities plus other emerging issues based on the children's experience in the programme.

Following Lansdown (2005 in Fegter and Richter 2014), we consider that this process would favour children's access to opportunity structures that promote their autonomy and self-determination and therefore allowed us to move beyond the debates around the applicability of the CA to childhood. This can be better achieved through participatory, creative and qualitative tools, which can help to capture changes in capabilities, in functionings and in the agency of girls and boys (Biggeri et al. 2006; Biggeri and Libanora 2011). Nevertheless, integrating quantitative methods can also enrich the evaluation analysis and results. These methodological orientations go beyond what Feeny and Boyden (2003, 2004 in Biggeri and Mehrotra 2011) call the "tireless statistical obsession", which prevents understanding childhood poverty as a process, and ignores how children perceive their situation and what their future aspirations are. Children may experience loss of income, health or education but may also retain resourcefulness, courage or optimism (Feeny and Boyden, 2004; Mehrotra, 2006 in Biggeri and Mehrotra

2011, Roets et al. 2015). The inclusion of multiple methods can be valuable as this favours the access to diverse data (insights and understandings) that may be difficult to collect through a single method (Darbyshire et al. 2005). For instance, photovoice, which combines complementary methods of data collection, may be useful (Latz 2017; Liegghio and Caragata 2020).

Discussion and conclusions

Over the last decades, feminist epistemologies have developed an abundant and transdisciplinary corpus of knowledge, but there is still a gap in the design of practical tools for the implementation of this feminist epistemic perspective in specific projects and their evaluation. This article aimed at addressing this gap. Our contribution is to offer an evaluation model based on the "feminist capabilitarian approach" developed within a particular area of interest (child poverty alleviation programmes) but transferable and adaptable to other areas.

In recent years, demand has increased for the use of evaluation processes in the field of children's programmes. These processes have been recognised as key in learning about how interventions work, for improving their effectiveness and efficiency, and also for being accountable. As explored previously, evaluations also offer an opportunity for revising child poverty alleviation programmes and for making them more transformative in terms of well-being and gender equality. According to StC, incorporating these perspectives on gender, community and participation within the design and implementation of the program is now highly value by fund managers and key donors.

The use of capability and feminist approaches in evaluation places the focus on how programmes impact children's lives, capturing not only tangible and visible results but also non-tangible and non-expected ones, and aids in a better understanding of how relevant these changes are for them. In this regard, the combination of both approaches helps to assess better a programme's contribution to girls' and boys' capabilities and to identify its impact in terms of gender equality. It also facilitates to rethink of the programme's design to promote more social justice-oriented interventions.

In relation to the CA, it states that the poverty alleviation agenda is a multidimensional one, which cannot be reduced to the material aspects of life but needs to focus on what people are able to do and to be and what they value and have reason to value. Therefore, it opens up the meaning of impact in terms of well-being and makes evaluators and commissioners pay attention to more than just the material aspects, which are most visible and quantitatively measurable.

The feminist evaluation approach highlights that programmes and policies tend to reproduce an unequal gender order if they do not include any diagnosis and measure to prevent this. 'False gender neutrality' (Okin 1989 in Robeyns 2003, 67) persists when planning and evaluating programmes. The feminist approaches state that the gendered socialisation process defines different opportunities, roles and expectations for girls and

boys and that discrimination against women also occurs during childhood. The evaluation process is a good moment to assess how children's programmes address gender equality issues and how they impact girls and boys differently.

In summary, putting the focus on capabilities and gender equality requires analysing a programme's impact on the capabilities of children (and their families), whilst paying attention to different gender dimensions, the intersection of gender inequality with other kinds of inequalities, as well as specific gender needs and interests. In this sense, as part of "transformative evaluations," both approaches recognise the complexity of social change and the need to combine methods and participatory tools to capture this complexity. Moreover, both highlight that, merely having a valid evaluation model, is not enough. Evaluation design must be contextualised and discussed with the different stakeholders, which is what was attempted when developing our evaluation design for StC Andalucia's programme. This discussion requires the inclusion of children and their perspectives and values within the process and gives them a place of priority.

The evaluation design of StC Andalucia's programme shows that including both approaches is not an easy task and that there are several limitations to address. Firstly, although there is an increasing evaluation culture, policies and practices in organisations working with children, the inclusion of capability and feminist approaches in evaluation is challenging. As this case study evidenced, CA is very alluring due to its focus on boosting well-being, but it also very abstract and difficult to operationalise or communicate to others. In relation to feminist evaluation, gender equality is an emerging issue in children's programmes, but there is not always the acknowledgement of how a programme can reproduce (even unintentionally) the gender-unequal order. In this sense, organisations try to include a gender perspective when planning, but they do not always pay attention to the relevance of measuring a programme's specific impacts on girls and boys. Additionally, even when there is a clear commitment to gender equality, there can be a lack of appropriate skills and knowledge regarding gender analysis frameworks and tools. Moreover, the limited experience in the field at large in applying both kinds of approaches in the evaluation of children's programmes also contributes to the challenge, and the researchers hope that more evaluation models and tools will be developed. In fact, the recent creation of a Unit of Quality and Evidence within the structure of StC Spain is an important step in this direction.

In any case, acknowledging the tensions and difficulties that can arise from the integration of two such distinctive and rich paradigms is a necessary step along the way to designing and carrying out more evaluation processes oriented toward the promotion of childhood well-being and gender equality. Given the alarming poverty and inequality rates and the theoretical and practical possibilities that these approaches offer, the challenge is worthwhile indeed.

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