



The Future of Evaluation begins now

Nazareth

Peter Dahler-Larsen

Dept of Pol Sci

University of Copenhagen



Introductory remarks

- Evaluation
 - A specific practice bound in time and place
 - A (relatively general) set of ideas, concepts, models, experiences which informs evaluative practices (values, knowledge, evaluands, use)
- The future
 - The future is something we imagine and something we create
 - The promises of the past no longer valid



Evaluation: Early promise

- The self-appropriation (Stehr) of a democratic society
- Takes place through the impartial provision of objective knowledge which is rationally used in decision-making



Sources of inspiration

- Sociology of knowledge
 - All knowledge is situated (“hinterland”)
 - The knowledge society is fragile (Stehr)
- Evaluation as socio-political phenomenon
 - Reflexive modernization
 - Audit society
- The “transparent society” (Vattimo): No guarantees... and paradoxical consequences



Three themes

- Changing relations between social science and evaluation
- Integration of evaluation into management
- Failure to understand evaluation use



Changing relations between social science and evaluation

- Popularization and partial detachment
- Increasing number of criteria
- Threats from “fake news”
- Social control of knowledge production and dissemination?
- Reconfiguration: Which elements?
 - Methodology
 - Theory? Paradigms eg systems; complexity?
 - Reflexivity?

Integration of evaluation into management practice

■ Mainstreaming of evaluation

- Elimination of eval assessment
 - Policies, guidelines, indicators
 - Attention(?)
 - Costs (?)
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- Reconfiguration of evaluation themes, including audit and risk mngmt (Power)
 - Increasing number of roles (commissioner, evaluation manager, middle manager, internal evaluator, consultant, evaluation process adviser, reviewer, evaluation victim, social critic, external users) (accountability?)
 - Non-use less likely



Dynamic effects of eval systems ("organic" / planned eg meta-evaluation)

■ Expansion

- First we take Manhattan
- Evaluation deficit

■ Transformation

- Dislocation among levels: negotiations, IT, risk

■ Withering away, termination, fatigue

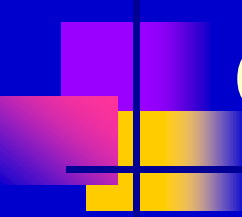
■ Stabilization

- Purification; guidelines and standards
- Institutional lock-in
- Facticity



Problem

- To justify the effectiveness of an evaluation regime with reference to increasing scores on indicators defined by the same evaluation regime



Failure to understand evaluation use properly

- Typology of forms of use
 - Accountability
 - Learning
 - Enlightenment
 - Info of the public
 - Strategic, tactical, symbolic
- Not easy to separate
- Not easy to make exhaustive list
 - Constitutive effects of evaluation



Constitutive effects

- When indicators become a way of seeing reality
- When an indicator system defines what it claims to measure
- When it shapes a landscape of meanings in which action takes place



Why not just *unintended effects?*

- Whose intentions?
- At what time?
- Only official intentions?
- How clear?
- How can intentions be captured empirically?
- Solidarity with the system architect?

Constitutive effects:

Domains

- Content
- Time
- Social relations
- World view
- Other indicators, forms of knowing



Paradigms related to use

- Rationalist paradigm
 - Evaluation is rationally planned and used
- Participatory paradigm
 - All relevant stakeholders are involved in designing the evaluation and making sense of it in a collective learning process
- Affective paradigm
 - Work today requires emotional engagement (Hochschild). People react to evaluation in non-linear ways: Affective alliances/resistance



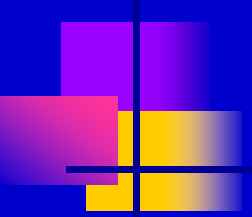
Three themes

- Changing relations between social science and evaluation (reconnect)
- Integration of evaluation into management (attention, cost, accountability)
- Failure to understand evaluation use (constitutive effects)

Reactions from the evaluation field?



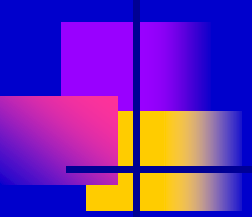
- Professionalization
 - Education
 - Ethical guidelines
- Certification (beware: Schwandt)
- Demarcation of evaluation – or cooperation?
- Reflexivity?

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- Without a sense of purpose of evaluation in society, the promotion of evaluation as such cannot be a purpose in itself



Evaluation: Promise?

- The self-appropriation (Stehr) of a democratic society
- Takes place through the impartial (...) provision of objective knowledge (...) which is rationally used (...) in decision-making (...)

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- Without a sense of purpose of evaluation in society, the promotion of evaluation as such cannot be a purpose in itself



References

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