Evaluation for Transformational Change

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Moderator: Dorothy Lucks
UNICEF Webinar Tuesday 7 April 2020, 9:00am EST
Overview

• Introduction of the webinar (Dorothy)
• Introduction IDEAS and its publications (Rob)
• Overview of the 2019 book (Cristina)
• Towards dynamic evaluation for transformational change (Rob)
• Q&A (Dorothy)
• Towards system thinking (Cristina)
• Transformation for sustainability (Rob)
• Q&A (Dorothy)
IDEAS and its publications

• IDEAS is the only global professional association for internationally active development evaluators

• “Development” now integrates everything in the Sustainable Development Goals, which are Goals for all countries

• IDEAS has focused on the SDGs right from when they were agreed (September 2015):
  • UNDP/IDEAS conference in Bangkok, October 2015
  • Joint Conference IDEAS/ReLAC/RedLACME in Guanajuato, December 2017
  • IDEAS/GEF in Prague in October 2019
Publications

• IDEAS has a tradition since 2009 that each Global Assembly is associated with a publication

• First three publications were edited by Ray C. Rist, Marie-Helene Boily & Frederic Martin
  • Published by the World Bank
  • Now open access
  • Influencing Change (2011)
  • Development Evaluation in Times of Turbulence (2013)
  • Poverty, Inequality, and Evaluation (2015)

• Available at the IDEAS Website’s Public Library > IDEAS Books
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Influencing Change (2011)


Poverty, Inequality, and Evaluation (2015)
Bangkok & Guanajuato

• Ad hoc teams of editors
• Bangkok book: Rob D. van den Berg, Indran Naidoo & Susan D. Tamondong

• Evaluation for Agenda 2030: providing evidence on progress and sustainability (2017)

• Guanajuato book: Rob D. van den Berg, Cristina Magro and Silvia Salinas Mulder

• Evaluation for Transformational Change: opportunities and challenges for the Sustainable Development Goals (2019)
EVALUATION FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Opportunities and challenges for the Sustainable Development Goals

Rob D. van den Berg
Cristina Magro
Silvia Salinas Mulder

Editors

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IDEAS as publisher

• The World Bank stopped publishing non-WB books in 2016
• IDEAS decided to become publisher of its own books
• The Bangkok book was published through a UNDP grant and jointly with UNDP
• The Guanajuato book had no financial support, except for a generous grant of Universalia to finalize the publication
• Published under Open Access (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 international license)
• Electronic version published at www.ideas-global.org – order a paper copy at Amazon!
Bringing Guanajuato to Prague…

Presenting “learned arguments” for what needs to be done

Together we decided that what we wanted to deliver, on the basis of the discussions in Guanajuato, and the increasing attention for transformational change, would be essays that would pose the opportunities and challenges for evaluation to contribute to transformational change. We approached the authors of this volume with the promise that they could write an essay rather than an academic article that would be based on research or evaluative evidence. An essay is not necessarily a lesser effort than an academic chapter. It is used often as a way to allow the development of an argument regarding a topic worth discussing. Essays are seen as striving towards a “learned argument” that exhibits insight, mastery, and promise of future research. We invited our authors to develop a perspective on the opportunities and challenges of evaluation for the SDGs as seen from a transformational change perspective. This challenge has been met by them in surprising ways.
Overview: the structure of the book

• 1 foreword, 8 chapters, 31 contributors
  • 17 women, 14 men; 22 from the Global South, 6 from the Global North and 2 from transition countries
  • IDEAS promised to bring the voice of the Global South to the Global North in Prague and delivered!

• 1 foreword, 8 chapters, and a variety of themes and experiences
  • The foreword pictures the world four years after the 2030 Agenda: initial enthusiasm, goals not achieved, changing scenario
  • The introduction sets the tone
Overview: Meaningful connections

1. Diversity of contributors invited, experiences and programmes reported
2. Experiences from the Global South and North reported
3. Challenges and proposals from a diversity of perspectives and different types of reflection displayed
4. Prevalence of different conceptions of transformational change
Dynamic Evaluation (Chapter 2)

Osvaldo Feinstein:

• Changing focus: from projects/programmes to strategies/policies; from micro to macro, from country to global, from linearity to complexity
• Scaling up
• Quasi-real time evaluation
• Politically sensitive evaluation
• Making context matter
• Third loop learning
Science injection

- Dynamic evaluation requires the capacity to conduct, manage and demand these evaluations
- Promote a massive involvement of universities in evaluations:
  - Through engagement in evaluation teams
  - Contribution to evaluations through background papers and studies
  - Focus on interaction between research and evaluation from identification of research topics to inclusion of evidence in intervention design
- Support for an International Evaluation Academy as a vehicle to promote links between research and evaluation
Q & A (Dorothy)
Towards systems thinking

Systems evaluations for transformational change (Chapter 8)

Cristina Magro & Rob D. van den Berg

• Agenda 2030, the call for transformations and the contemporary problems: opportunities and challenges for evaluators

• By adopting a systems stance evaluators can:
  • Help identify and promote sustainable transformational changes
  • Promote learning
  • Adopt a transformative role in society
Systems in Evaluation

• The need for systems thinking, with examples from Climate Change
• History and context of the emergence of systems thinking
• A definition of systems as “dynamic units that we distinguish and choose to treat as comprised of interrelated components, in such a way that the functioning of the system, that is, the result of the interactions between the components, is bigger than the sum of its components.”
• Types of systems, different approaches and perspectives
• Challenges to evaluators
# Challenges and opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CHALLENGE 1</strong></th>
<th>Evaluators need to become fluent in systems thinking to apply systems concepts, approaches and methods in their evaluations.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHALLENGE 2</strong></td>
<td>Evaluators need to be open to evidence and sources of knowledge generated through systems analytics, including especially future scenarios and power-law phenomena that lead to transformational change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHALLENGE 3</strong></td>
<td>Among the rich diversity of approaches, tools and methods that systems analytics offer, evaluators need to be able to identify the ones relevant and significant for the task they are about to undertake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHALLENGE 4</strong></td>
<td>Evaluations need to provide insight and understanding of whether interventions and policies are able to reverse trends and may overcome barriers to move in sustainable directions.</td>
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In sum

• In Chapter 8, the authors:
  • Advocate for a stronger and well articulated systems thinking which brings into evaluation attitudes, which are incomparable to what we have done in the past. This means to absorb a different paradigm, in fact
  • Call evaluators to push forward the traditional frontiers of the field, to expand their views, to learn new ways of being in the world which systems perspectives may bring
THE TRIPLE LEARNING LOOP

Understanding  Action  Time Orientation  Questions

- Shared Vision  Transformation  Future  What can be transformative that one can implement and share?
- Systemic Structures  Creation
- Patterns  Adaptation
- Events  Reaction  Present  What recurrent structures (beliefs, behaviours, emotions) create these patterns?
  Can we identify recurrent patterns of behaviours?

What is the quickest and most efficient action?

Cristina Magro based on Argyris, C. and D. Schöen (1978)
The SDGs are, themselves, the quest for a Shared Vision. It leads us to triple loop learning!

- Are we ready to go through all reflections required in the Triple Loop learning model?
- How much are evaluators prepared to or willing to assess Mental Models as structures that define an array of interconnections between interventions and the evaluands’ behaviour?
Second order Change: learning to learn…

After COVID 19, shouldn’t we approach the SDGs with a twist and allow for a more significant change on purpose – the quadruple loop?

An interesting reference: 
*Virus lays bare the frailty of the social contract: Radical reforms are required to forge a society that will work for all* (Financial Times Editorial 3 April 2020)
Inspiration for a new world

• What does the book tell us about how evaluation should support a new, transformed world after the COVID-19 crisis?
• Evaluations need to look beyond the intervention to place them within the systems they are supposed to address
• These systems need to become sustainable
• Sustainability needs to be redefined to:

  An adaptive and resilient dynamic balance between the social, economic and environmental domains
Systems dynamics: feedback loops

**Reinforcing dynamics**

**Virtuous:** earning interest account

- Deposit + Interest

**Vicious:** the spread of a virus

- Contamination - Virus activity

**Balancing dynamics**

**Eating and hunger**

- Eating + Hunger

**Supply and demand**

- Supply + Demand
Sustainability is a systems issue

- Sustainability is achieved when systems become adaptive and balanced over time in the relationship between the social, economic and environmental domains
- Neglect of the social domain has led to increasing inequity and inequality, a race to the bottom on labour conditions, health care, conflict, financial security, etc.
- Neglect of the environmental domain has led to climate change, biodiversity loss, chemical pollution, deterioration of eco services and pandemics
- The primacy of the economic domain is fed by the belief that economic growth will solve societal problems through wealth creation and environmental problems through new technologies
Pose three sustainability questions…

Does the transformation that the intervention aims for leads to:

• More equity, human rights, peace, social sustainability?
• Strengthening of our natural resource basis and our habitat and sustainable ecoservices (clean air, water, food, etc.)?
• Economic development that is equitable and strengthens our habitat?

The book poses challenges and possibilities
Download at ideas-global.org or buy at Amazon!
Q&A
Thank you!