Complexity, Metagovernance and Evaluation: From Evaluation Capacity to Evaluation Meta-skills and Beyond

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Rationale and main argument

- As societal complexity deepens, public policy evaluation meta-skills become ever more important.
- Meta-skills refer to generic leadership competencies (and skills) which are by nature both individual and representative of the collective capital of those in effective at public administration commissioning and implementing public policy evaluations.
- Evaluation meta-skills constitute of joint sensemaking, know-how and competencies which cut across organisational boundaries within government, public institutions and public organisations, ignoring the compartmentalised sectors and organisational siloes within public administration.

KNOWN - SIMPLE	KNOWABLE - COMPLICATED		
Characteristics:	Characteristics:		
- Cause and effect relationships are linear, predictable and	- Cause and effect are separated over time and space		
repeatable	- Policies are interconnected and difficult to separate		
- Policy contents are clear and easy to define	- Scenario planning, foresight and systems thinking needed		
- Things are known and best practices can be applied			
	Management or policy strategy:		
Management or policy strategy:	- Systems management; experimental policy-making		
- Process management and re-engineering;	Sense> Analyze> Respond		
incremental policy-making			
Sense> Categorize> Respond	Evaluation Design:		
	- Formative evaluation, realist evaluation		
Evaluation Design:	- Focus on context, mechanisms	- Focus on context, mechanisms	
- Summative evaluation	- Apply systems thinking		
- Validation of best practices			
- Focus on monitoring, outputs and outcomes			
UNKNOWABLE - COMPLEX	UNKNOWABLE - CHAOS		
Characteristics:	Characteristics:		
- Cause and effect is contingent and are only coherent in	- No cause and effect relationships are perceivable.		
retrospect and non-repeatable	- Rapidly changing and highly unstable systems dynamics		
- Policies are blurred and problems are wicked	- Focus on interventions	- Focus on interventions	
Management or policy strategy:	Management or policy strategy:		
- Complex adaptive systems and pattern management;	- Crisis management, intuition and emergency policy-making		
agile Policy-making	Act> Sense> Respond		
- Probe> Sense> Respond			
	Evaluation Design:		
Evaluation Design:			
Evaluation Design: - Developmental evaluation	- Rapid assessments		
	 Rapid assessments Situation awareness, validity of the data available 		
- Developmental evaluation		Uusikylä (2019); Modifie	

Theoretical lenses to public policy evaluation meta-skills

- Distributed public leadership & policy coordination
 - Shared leadership and policy coordination grounds on the idea that these functions is not the monopoly or responsibility of just one person or authority

Meta-governance

- 'governance of governance or the organisation of self-organisation'.
- The essence of meta-governance is to focus on the different mechanisms and practices how public policies function in terms of coordination and maintenance to deliver public services in an effective way.

Metacognition

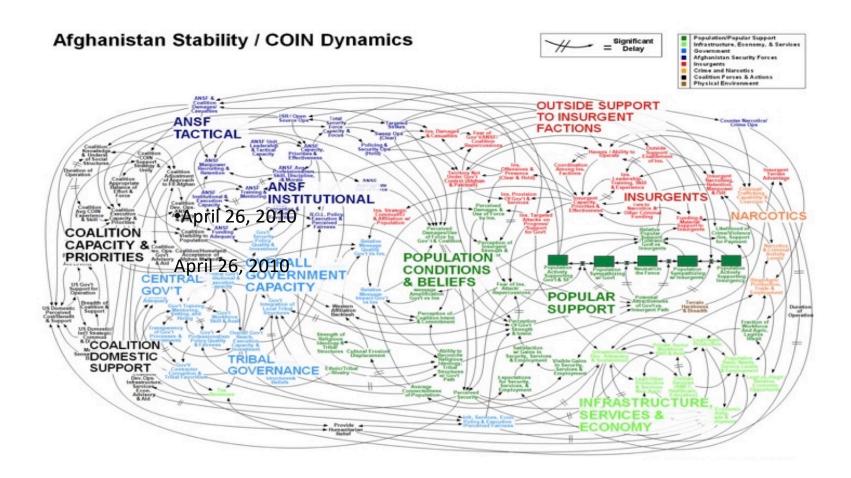
- Metacognition conveys the idea of being conscious about what we think about how we and others think
- Metacognition is 'cognition about cognition' or 'knowing about knowing' which comes from the root word meta in metacognition referring to 'go beyond'.
- Metacognition concerns the overall consciousness of individual and collective thought (i.e. knowledge about cognition), and has more specific dimension that relates to learning and problem solving (i.e. regulation mechanisms that govern the use of cognition).

Sensemaking

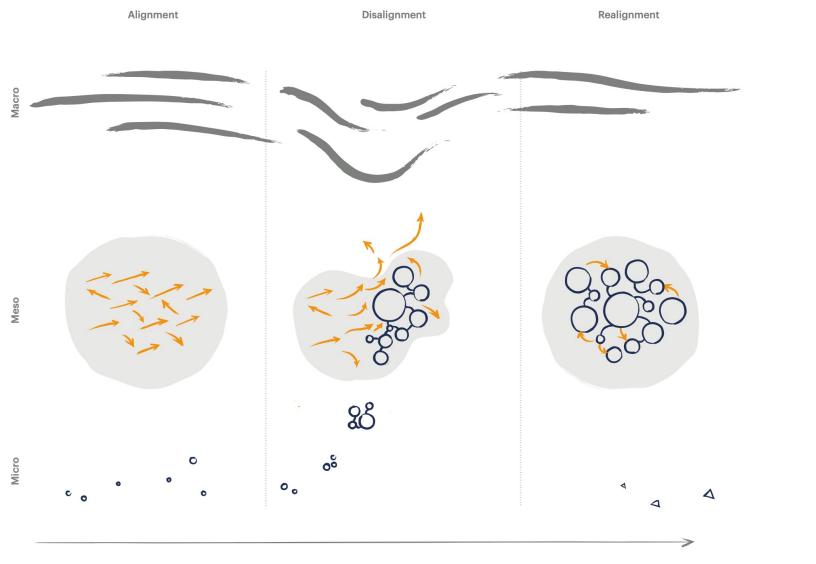
• Sensemaking refers to participating collectively through a process in "which active agents construct sensible events and structure the unknown" with the aim of achieving collectively more than people would do by themselves

Systems thinking

- General Systems Theory (GST): open and closed Systems as the context for public policies and public organisations
- The underpinning logic is to conceive public institutions and policies as a systemic network.



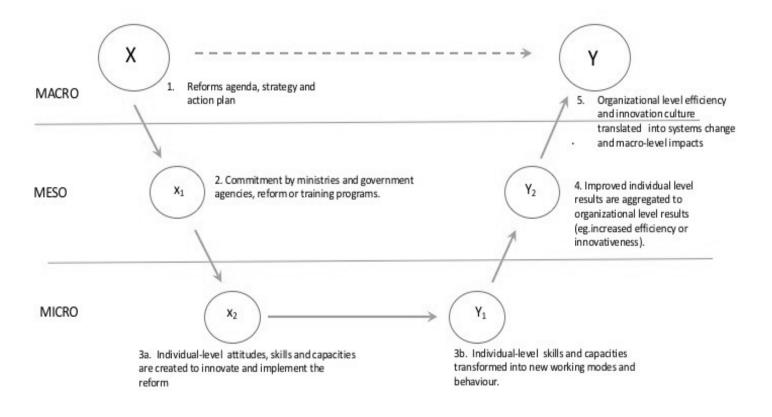
NY Times April 26, 2010



(Leadbeater & Winhall, 2020)

Public Management Reform

Increased efficiency or Innovativeness



Uusikylä (2019)

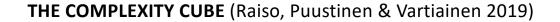
Evaluation criteria for complex policies

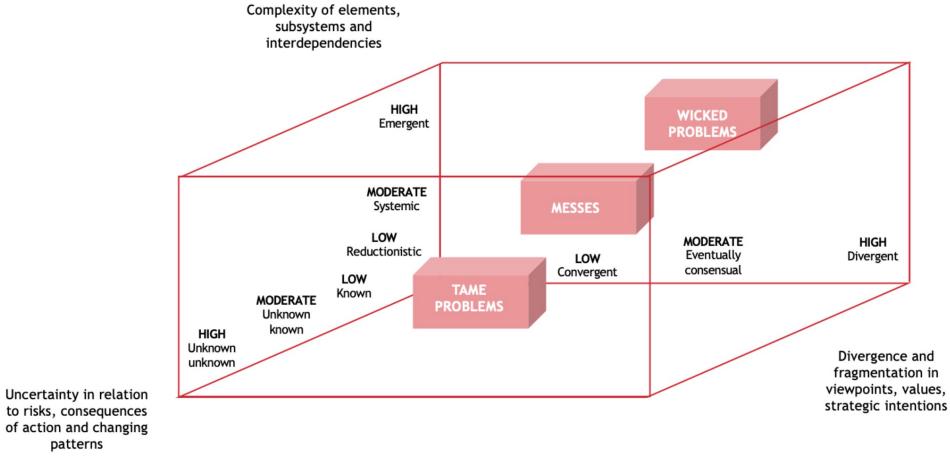
Feature	Description	Evaluation criteria
Agents	The system comprises large number of individual agents connected through multiple networks.	Inclusiveness of the networks. Dynamics of the systems. Number and type of agents.
Interactions	The agents interact dynamically, exchanging information and energy based upon heuristics that organize the interactions locally. Effects propagate though the system.	Type of interaction patterns and networks (weak ties or strong ties; loosely coupled or dense networks). Dissemination mechanisms and patterns. Role of subgroups or individual agents (brokerage, isolated nodes, centrality etc.)
Nonlinearity	The interactions are nonlinear, iterative, recursive, and self-referential. There are many direct and indirect feedback loops.	Type of dynamics Feedback mechanisms
System behaviour	The system is open, the behaviour of the system is determined by interactions, not the components, and behaviour of the system can only be understood by looking at the interactions.	Interaction patterns Learning type (single loop, douple loop or triple loop learning)
Robustness and adaptation	The system displays both capacity to maintain its viability and the capacity to evolve. When the agents will adapt to each other, the system can reorganize its internal structure without the intervention of an external agent.	Capacity to adopt and evolve Level of trust Number of enabling or restricting structures or processes.

Modified from Innes & Booher (2010, 32)

Evaluation meta-skills?

- **Meta-skills are scalable** (organisation organisation, public policy domain public policy domain, public management system public management system) skills that go beyond traditional organisation or public policy sector boundaries.
- Meta-skills relate to cooperation, collective sensemaking and learning.
- Meta-skills can be **multidimensional** focusing on individual & collective aspects.
- Current societal challenges call for **the turn from the traditional leader-centred approach of change and capability-building to systems thinking, networked leadership, shared knowledge-bases** and a more relational delivery approach.
- **Competence-building of evaluator is a personal life-long process** which deserves constant attention and reflection, but an important part of evaluation as an agency is to enable others colleagues, co-operation partners, commissioning bodies to develop and learn.
- Meta-skills are always **dependent on the contexts in which people** operate (thus there cannot be validated exhausted 'lists' of meta-skills that are valid in all contexts).





to risks, consequences of action and changing patterns

Proposal for two-dimensional set of evaluation metaskills? (1)

- Evaluator related meta-skills:
 - Learning to learn
 - "Does learning concern me? How do I learn as an evaluator? What is my reading list? How do I make sense of the world?"
 - Harnessing thinking skills
 - "How do I avoid narrow conceptions of knowledge and a desire to solve complex issues with one mechanical approach? Do I question my own and common beliefs and established practices in a constructive way?"
 - Enabling mindset
 - "How do I help others? Does my work help others to perform better?"
 - Connecting human agency
 - "How do I work with others? Is it customary of me as a person? Am I easily to be in contact with?"

Proposal for two-dimensional set of evaluation metaskills? (2)

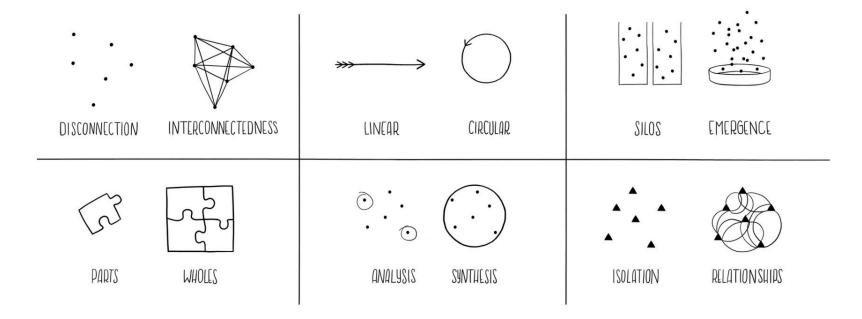
Evaluation practice related meta-skills:

- Systemic understanding of society
 - "What constitutes society and how it operates? How evaluation pinpoint cross-cutting themes, topics and phenomena?
- Adopting dialogical approach
 - "How evaluation seeks to widened understanding of different experiences, societal phenomena and contexts in order to build bridges between them?"
- The deployment of methodological diversity
 - "How evaluation explores societal phenomena and bypass the problem of the 'dehumanizing the citizen/service users'? How evaluation reaches out to civil society and the everyday lives of people?"
- Evaluation as an impact-oriented science
 - "How evaluation reaches out into praxis? What is the diversity of interaction channels deployed to maximise evaluation impact? How the impact of evaluation studies are meta-evaluated? How evaluation enhances systemic societal change?"

Conclusions

- **Policy-making environment has changed** from slow and predictable to complex and unstable; in it, policy outcomes and impacts are difficult to predict. This challenges the traditional evaluation paradigm and evaluation skills.
- In complex decision-making situations or dealing with wicked problems, **there is normally no clear evidence-base or quick solutions available to solve the problem**. Evaluations are needed to comprehend the problem and understanding systemic patterns.
- Often the underlying cause–effect relationships cannot be determined by mechanistic, linear evaluation models. Therefore, in order to understand complex political phenomena, **evaluators must seek to apply systems thinking and systemic tools** to analyze or evaluate policy-making processes. Evaluation meta-skills are urgently needed to do this.
- Evaluation is always affected by the **political context** in which it is produced and used to propagate the values of those who produce and commission it. Evaluation meta-skills are needed to understand the contextual factors influencing policies and their outcomes.
- Public policy institutions learn both through individuals and collectives and they learn in a timely fashion only if enough learning loops are embedded in everyday processes of organisations and agency networks. Evaluators could act as **knowledge brokers** during this process.

TOOLS OF A SYSTEM THINKER

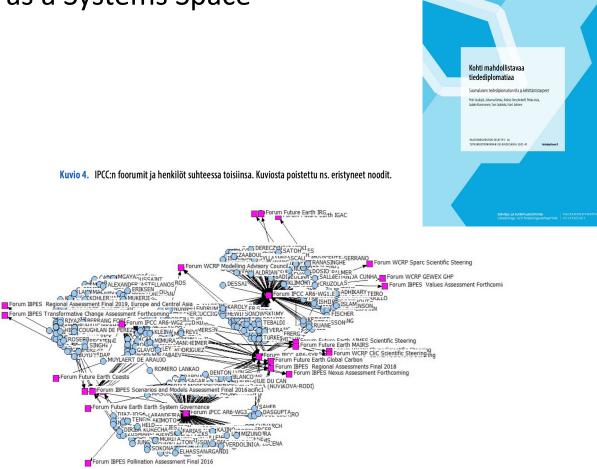




Science Diplomacy as a Systems Space

 The report evaluates the current state and development of Finnish science diplomacy. First, the report discusses the relevance of the tripartite categorization: science in diplomacy (the role of science in decision-making), diplomacy for science (the role of diplomacy in scientific cooperation) and science for diplomacy (the role of scientific cooperation in developing international relations). The study also considers interest-based approaches, as well as the

role of international networks. The report provides a broad overview of science diplomacy globally, and discusses key arenas and actors relevant to Finland. Science diplomatic networks are examined with case studies of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the International Panel on Biodiversity (IPBES).



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