

The background of the top half of the cover is an abstract, textured composition. It features a central globe with a grid of latitude and longitude lines, rendered in shades of blue and teal. Overlaid on the globe are several golden, metallic-looking arches and circular patterns, some resembling film strips or architectural elements. The overall effect is one of complexity and interconnectedness.

# TRANSFORMATIONAL EVALUATION

FOR THE GLOBAL CRISES OF OUR TIMES

**Rob D. van den Berg**

**Cristina Magro**

**Marie-Hélène Adrien**

EDITORS



**IDEAS**

KNOWLEDGE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NETWORKING

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## CHAPTER 1

# Transforming Evaluation for Transformational Changes

CRISTINA MAGRO, ROB D. VAN DEN BERG AND  
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When this book was taking shape, the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic was creating havoc throughout the world. Its occurrence has demonstrated the enormous challenges humanity is facing. The world is becoming more unpredictable by the minute, and speculations arise as to how we will survive the pandemic, when the next one will start, and when and how we can recover. Many of us seem to be willing to recover by transforming our societies, our economies and our relationship with each other and with the environment and the planet into a truly sustainable and just one.

That business cannot continue as usual seems very clear. Our 'usual' practices and dominant human systems bring climate change, biodiversity loss, rising and structural inequality and inequity, economic exploitation and repression, increasing mobility and migration. On top of that, we experience increased insecurity and unpredictability, as perhaps most clearly illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are less clear, though, on what we can do to move business from usual to new ways of interacting with each other and the planet on which we live. The agenda for action that almost all countries in the world have agreed upon is widely recognized as an 'aspirational' one, a shared vision

of the future that is meant to guide our actions. For its critics, it simply means 'impossible to achieve'. Furthermore, the agenda does not embody any mechanism to enforce its application, and it is powerless against lip service and wilful sabotage. It is, moreover, open ended, and the actions proposed are in themselves not sufficient for humanity to survive. On top of that, large numbers of our fellow citizens are not convinced at all that we face existential crises and vote for representatives and governments that undermine any common action.

## A Call for Action without a Central Machinery

The aspirational agenda for action, as laid down and agreed upon in Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, implies the decentralization of its implementation. Although effective international partnership is one of the stated aims of the SDGs, each country has the sovereign choice of how it would collaborate. It is up to each country to set its own priorities and find its own route to solve our global crises. It is thus a call for global transformational change without a centralized global mechanism to control and orchestrate global action.

The SDGs include indicators and targets, and countries are invited to report on progress towards the goals, according to the priorities they set. Although data gathering and analysis is primarily the way evidence on progress is tracked, for the first time in history, a role is ensured for evaluation. Agenda 2030 calls for 'follow-up and review processes at all levels' (UN 2015, 31–32), with evaluation tasked with providing evidence that is rigorous on top of the data required to track progress. Agenda 2030 recognizes (UN 2015) that many countries in the Global South need financial support to enable them to build up and strengthen their national evaluation programmes, which in many cases are more advanced than similar systems in the Global North but are not reaching their full potential because of low budgets. Since 2015, the SDGs and the role of evaluation have been discussed in the United Nations, in the multilateral banks, in countries and in professional evaluation circles, in which IDEAS has played a role. Exchange of experiences in evaluation between the Global South and the Global North have been stimulated in all IDEAS conferences, strengthening capacities and exploring and amplifying the perspectives to be considered by evaluators from both hemispheres. Partnerships with different kinds of institutions

were formed, promoting more intensive interaction. In 2015, in Bangkok, the IDEAS Global Assembly focused on evaluation for sustainability, asking for attention to be paid to the inadequacy of 'business as usual' and the need to change. In 2017, in Guanajuato, the Global Assembly discussed the role of evaluation in the SDGs, followed in 2019 in Prague by the focus on the role of evaluation in transformational change. This book emerges out of the Prague conference. Our writers have been challenged to build upon what was discussed in Prague and reach out towards the future of our profession.

The main problem remains that, although transformational change is desperately needed, and evaluation has contributed to better understanding of how governments and their partners can support and strengthen transformational change, we still lack a broad understanding of and agreement on what constitutes transformational change; how it can be supported, initiated and strengthened; and when and how it can be termed successful and effective in warding off disaster.

This is a somewhat curious situation, because transformational change is well known to mankind. We have lived with transformational changes throughout history, many of which are known through terms and concepts such as globalization; colonization; the agricultural, industrial and energy revolutions; commercialization; the various information, communication and technology revolutions; and an understanding of the roots of our global crises. Knowing how we happened to be where we are today does not mean that we have a clear perspective on how to do, stimulate and support potential transformations. One could argue that most if not all of the transformations of the past happened to humanity without any master plan and without global collaboration or agreement on the goals to be achieved. One may conclude, 'No wonder it is such a mess, and no wonder urgent action is needed', or sceptics could claim 'Transformations happen throughout history, and no action seems necessary or possible'.

## The Need to Transform Evaluation

Evaluation is not immediately qualified to help humanity. It is not immune to 'business as usual'. Many evaluators feel that they should just continue to do their well-designed, methodologically sharp, properly implemented evaluations, often focusing on whether interventions have produced counterfactual evidence on 'what works', or whether money, time and effort were spent efficiently and effectively and learning and benefits were achieved.

Historically, evaluation has been closely linked to accountability; in international cooperation, the Global South is often required to present proof of a well-implemented project to the donor, often serving the accountability needs of the sponsor and not the learning needs of the country or the unit being evaluated. Questions about longer-term impact and sustainability tend to be put aside as 'not within the time frame of the evaluation' or briefly explored through the potential to continue to bring benefits to recipients through learning. Evaluators often argue that they hardly receive sufficient funds to answer the more challenging questions, leading to a micro-macro paradox of successfully implemented projects, with substantial outcomes that demonstrate 'micro' success, which is not reflected at the 'macro' level of countries and global challenges, as Van den Berg and Cando-Noordhuizen (2017) have demonstrated for global action on climate change. The straitjacket evaluation model that commissioners have traditionally imposed on evaluators, with its emphasis on accountability and meeting the needs of donors, shows the need to transform evaluation itself to enable it to contribute to transformational change.

Perhaps one of the most influential groups unwittingly promoting business as usual is the one that is focused on evidence-based policies. One of its core beliefs is that policies for which no rigorous and counterfactual evidence is available should not be adopted. Change should be based on experimentation and finding out whether there is hard evidence that the change 'works', but politics and policies often must be based on what is needed, rather than on hard evidence based on experiments, because this evidence will not be available in time, and may never be available. Critics of the evidence-based movement, such as Paul Cairney (2016), focus on the 'bounded rationality' of policy processes, where much more must play a role than rigorous evidence, or the lack of it. Justin Parkhurst (2017) asks for attention to be paid to 'good governance' in using evidence for policymaking, focusing on the appropriateness of evidence for the problems that must be addressed. If evaluation remains stuck in its tradition, it will have great difficulties delivering relevant material for transformational change. Evaluation must reframe its purposes, and its tools, methods and approaches must be chosen considering an interwoven network of changes to be achieved and reflecting the urgency of finding solutions and a way forward.

Within the evaluation profession, a relatively small group of evaluators and evaluation units have contributed in a major way to better understanding of how evaluation could support transformational change and be transformed itself in the process. These efforts started more than three

decades ago and had even earlier roots. They are and were scientifically linked to systems thinking. In evaluation, they were initially developed for climate change; for understanding the interactions between ecosystems and humanity and for delivering our natural infrastructure of clean air, healthy soils, healthy foods, water, energy and so on. For a long time, any evaluation approach at the nexus of development and environment was treated in mainstream evaluation land as of hardly any consequence for international evaluation practice. The first international conference on evaluating climate change and development took place in Alexandria, Egypt, in 2007. The resulting book was the first of its kind as well (Van den Berg and Feinstein 2009), incorporating a great range of authors and chapters that initiated discussions that would reverberate in later years and grow to include other environmental issues. Publications such as those of Juha Uitto (2017; 2021) and the Third International Conference on Evaluating Environment and Development, which took place jointly with the IDEAS Global Assembly in Prague in October 2019, promoted and showcased this relevant growth.

Systems thinking and approaches were also presented in a broad range of articles in the *American Journal of Evaluation* and the *Evaluation Journal*, as well as *New Directions in Evaluation*, by authors from all around the globe. It was discussed in the IDEAS publication *Evaluation for Transformational Change* (Van den Berg, Magro and Salinas Mulder 2019), including a majority of authors from the Global South, with more women than men, from all continents and from small island developing states. Contemporary scientific ways of thinking can support transformational changes (Patton 2020a; Magro and Van den Berg 2019). Extensive work in evaluation has been directed to support evaluators in promotion of the learning that transformations require through, for example, redefinition of its object (Uitto, Puri and Van den Berg 2017); redesign of evaluation criteria (Patton 2020b), instruments, values and principles embedded in the evaluation work; review of the relationships between the projects, programmes and policies and the systems changes observed (Ofir et al. 2019); and the relationship between monitoring and evaluation for adequate follow-up of the intended changes (Chaplowe and Hejnowicz 2021).

A second stream of transformational work has focused on social and democratic transformation, necessary for making our societies inclusive and leading to social justice. An example is the transformative lens that Donna Mertens (2009) advocates, which came to include many aspects that have gained ascendancy in recent times, such as Indigenous perspectives (Mertens, Cram and Chilisa 2013). The link from social justice to democratic values has also been made, as Robert Picciotto (2015) discusses in his



article in the *Evaluation Journal*. He sees a transformational role for democratic evaluators to provide neutral information services, broker debate and facilitate deliberative decision-making processes and thus describes an evaluative role supporting the shift to governance of evidence that Parkhurst (2017) advocates. This paragraph could not do justice to the many other efforts to enable evaluation to support transformational change of our societies.

A third stream of transformational thinking and science is linked to economics, unfortunately always labelled as 'heterodox' to express that it is not mainstream economics, that continues to build on neoliberal perspectives. Ha-Joon Chang (2007), Kate Raworth (2017), Jason Hickel (2020) and Mariana Mazzucato (Jacobs and Mazzucato 2016; Mazzucato 2018) are four examples of influential economists who aim to transform economics in the direction of a balanced approach with social justice, sustainable economics and environmental sustainability. Apart from the fact that mainstream economists continue to marginalize them, evaluators have yet to explore their full potential.

Nevertheless, transformation of evaluation is taking place, even if in a somewhat haphazard and uncoordinated manner. A shift is definitely occurring that is not complete and is just as aspirational and full of wishful thinking and hope as the efforts to transform our interaction with each other and with the environment, before the global crises lead to catastrophes. The commitment to a collective global transformation, as promised in Agenda 2030, demands extensive coordination of actions, especially in a context in which rising traditionalism contributes to the destruction of achievements of civilization processes and cultures (Teitelbaum 2020). When fake news, denialism and escapism have shredded the social fabric and prevented the development of meaningful conversations, mutual understanding becomes increasingly difficult. On top of those confounding factors, the COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged the globe, calling into question the aspiration for the SDGs and for a better future for all.

This discourse and the accompanying confusion are not new for evaluators and those working in development. The idea of *development* itself emerges from the perspective of abundance of the West and the North (broadly speaking) and is inattentive to the variety of ways of living by different people from various cultures inhabiting the planet. Questioning this idea has raised a warning for evaluators. Evaluators have addressed this in many ways, including by paying attention to multiple cosmologies, modes of thinking and living of Indigenous peoples (Mertens, Cram and Chilisa 2013), non-Western philosophies (Mishra 2017) and Black perspectives

(Coates 2017) that could bring light to this dark era and to their professional roles. The recourse to various non-traditional, non-canonical ways of thinking unveils the angst of evaluators to beat the traps of Western commonalities and to bring diversity of perspectives into play, a move that rejoins a communal and democratic demand and the quest for fundamental changes in our societies, economies and interactions with the environment.

## The Need to Understand and Address Transformation

The word *transformation* is ordinarily used to refer to changes an observer sees as *major modifications of an object or phenomenon in a relatively short period of time* and often describes as if something had changed into something else or that, after the process identified as transformation occurred, there was a totally different object or phenomenon from before.

Change is universal, as Heraclitus said, '*panta rhei!*<sup>1</sup>', but a river stream- ing through a valley changes at every moment while still remaining the same river through the valley.

Transformation is not new to humanity, although its treatment from a systems perspective and as a systems phenomenon is relatively recent. The Neolithic revolution, also called the agricultural revolution, is usually thought to have started about 12,000 years ago, when humanity adopted and developed agriculture and shifted from a lifestyle of hunting and gathering to one of settlement and domestication of plants and animals. Several geologists have argued that the agricultural revolution could be seen as the start of the Anthropocene (the age of mankind) because settlement and agriculture quickly spread throughout the world and may have led to the stabilization of the climate for an unprecedented 11,000 years that made agriculture so successful in producing food for growing populations (Lewis and Maslin 2018). One aspect of the agricultural revolution worth emphasizing is that actions developed in one system (human beings working the land planting and harvesting crops regularly) affected another system with which the first relates, which is the change in the composition of the atmosphere and climate stabilization. Because systems are not distinguished in

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<sup>1</sup> 'Everything flows!' Heraclitus (535–475 BC), Roman philosopher, which Heraclitus expresses as 'No man steps into the same river twice'. As quoted in Plato, *Cratylus*, section 402a.

a void and establish ongoing relations with other systems, when talking about *transformation*, one should look for changes beyond the original system considered for our actions and observations. In the example above, change in the composition of the atmosphere and climate stabilization are of primary interest. Nevertheless, other systems have also changed following the agricultural revolution.

Development of states followed the agricultural revolution, which led to (international) trade, expansion, warfare and in the end, imperialism, with a few European countries colonizing the world while they expanded slavery into a cross-continental trade. Europe in general was also the site of the first industrial revolution, which led to increased, systematic use of fossil fuel energy sources and thus to human-induced climate change. Other countries like the United States and Japan started contributing to further industrial revolutions, and more countries, like China, became involved in the various information revolutions. These processes have led to more globalization and growing inequity and inequality between and within countries, issues that the SDGs and the Paris Agreement aim to redress, but also led to the rise of worldwide populism and a resurgence of racism and discrimination.

Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin (2018, 348–349) define historic systems from a perspective of how humanity is organized according to ‘modes of living’. The first agricultural revolution changed humanity from hunter-gatherers to agriculturalists. The next phase they describe starts after the European Middle Ages, when mercantile capitalism enabled some European countries to enter into international trade, including establishing trading posts and colonies all over the world. Industrial capitalism enabled imperialism and the division of the world between the major imperialist powers, which can be seen as a step towards globalization. Consumer capitalism pushed the system into overdrive and began to approach planetary limits – using resources beyond what could be replenished.

The same phenomena described above can be identified in the case of the smartphone market and climate change. Systems dynamics are such that the changes they perform may trigger events distant in time and space, in a non-linear, retroactive way – or to use common jargon in some systems approaches, in recursive feedback loops. According to this, no phenomenon in systems is equivalent to traditional linear cause-and-effect relationships. Moreover, leverage points to support and consolidate transformational changes may be within neighbouring systems and may be unpredictable but desirable as opportunities for change. All this alerts us that a larger picture, or a view of the ‘macro’, is permanently needed.

These revolutions are all seen as leading to transformational changes in human societies, economies and our interactions with nature and our environment. These processes continued as decolonization took shape after the Second World War and new revolutions emerged, with the information revolution and the emergence of computing power, the Internet and social media, among others. As we look at these historical processes from a systems perspective and move away from more or less static, individualized and linear event perspectives, it becomes clear how complex and powerful systems structural interrelations are. The critical thing is that these processes seem to happen without conscious guidance by humanity, and when a trajectory has become firmly established, as with fossil-fuel energy sources, it seems almost impossible to change, but change we must, and conscious guidance we must provide, or we will not survive.

## What This Book Offers

This book offers an introduction to the manifold problems we encounter when we aim to establish how evaluation can be transformed to support transformational change. The first section sets the stage for the grand challenges we are facing. The second section delivers four chapters on practical experiences of evaluators with transformational evaluations. The third section raises issues of professionalization, including perspectives of young and emerging evaluators, new initiatives like the International Evaluation Academy, and deep and broad reflections on professionalization in evaluation. The fourth section goes into themes and cases, and the fifth section presents detailed approaches and methods. The book ends with a discussion of the Prague Declaration of 4 October 2019, and whether it calls on us to further develop concepts and approaches.

The first section includes this introduction, which explores the context of the book and presents historical and systemic ideas for formulating the notion of transformation. Michael Quinn Patton also sets the stage in chapter 2 on the Blue Marble Evaluation Perspective. He establishes that the global crises of our times require transformational change. For evaluation to help in achieving this, he proposes a series of principles from global thinking to knowing and facing the realities of the Anthropocene to transformative engagement and integrating these principles into the evaluation of systems change and transformation initiatives. He develops these principles as ethical in nature and as imperative for evaluators who are committed to transformational change, using the COVID-19 pandemic as illustration of

how social justice, our interactions with the environment and our economic paradigm are intertwined and need to be untangled and transformed. His chapter ends with a thorough examination of the criteria that the international evaluation community uses and how these criteria must be adjusted for evaluating transformation. This move includes a complex systems framing criterion, eco-efficient full cost accounting, adaptive sustainability with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, amongst others, ensuring that these criteria can contribute to a visionary, future oriented evaluation for a just, sustainable future.

In chapter 3, Adeline Sibanda and Zenda Ofir explore evaluation in an uncertain world from a Global South perspective, arguing that the global evaluation community needs to think and work in fundamentally new ways. The potential of the Global South – in which they include minority Indigenous societies around the world – must be realized, not only because global problems affect it the most, but also because it has much to offer in shaping the paths and goals of transformation towards sustainable development that the world so urgently needs. Sibanda and Ofir plead for the Global South to address the consequences of centuries of colonization, as well as ongoing power asymmetries in global governance, economic and financial systems. They see it as essential that all those who shape and work in the global evaluation system collectively ask how decolonization of the mind and of practice in the Global South and Global North can be achieved and propose conducting, synthesizing and learning from evaluations of South–South cooperation and innovative approaches to sustainable development, advancing evaluation in support of systems change and transformation and thus contributing to the development of mechanisms for intensive generation, documentation and accumulation of innovative Global South approaches to the challenges the world faces.

Chapter 4, the first of the section on experiences with transformational change evaluation, discusses the lessons learned and insights of the Climate Investment Funds (CIF). The authors, Matthew Savage, Tim Larson, Jessica Kyle and Sam McPherson, have been involved in various roles in developing a conceptual framework for the independent evaluation of transformational change in CIF investments and ongoing work to develop this framework for practitioners of climate action in multilateral banks and in countries that aim to achieve transformation. Although the findings of the evaluation played an important role in extending the CIF into a second phase and solicited a first prize in 2019 as most influential evaluation at the IFAD/World Bank/IDEAS award competition for transformational evaluations, the ongoing work is especially relevant for future practice as it aims to identify signals

of and progress towards transformational change as useful instruments for design, inception, adaptive management and evaluation of transformational initiatives.

In chapter 5, Juha Uitto tackles evaluation at the nexus between nature and humanity based on the discussions and presentations at the Third International Conference on Evaluating Environment and Development, which ran in conjunction with the IDEAS Global Assembly in Prague in October 2019. Uitto, like Michael Quinn Patton in chapter 2, uses the COVID-19 pandemic to demonstrate the interdependence of human and ecosystem health. He highlights that the global environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation must be addressed through transformational changes in major systems ranging from energy and transportation to agriculture and cities. Evaluation can and should help identify solutions for the future, as the evaluative work on the portfolio of the Global Environment Facility demonstrates. According to Uitto, this requires an open theory-of-change approach that pays attention to unanticipated consequences for the environment; for different groups of people, especially the vulnerable; and for incentives and disincentives for a true transformation to sustainability.

The Emerald Network, represented by Mehjabeen Abidi-Habib, Jane Burt, John Colvin, Chimwemwe Msukwa and Mutizwa Mukute, has contributed with chapter 6 on contradictions and complementarities between the Global South and the Global North. As an emerging community of evaluation and learning with Global South and Global North consultancy partners, their experience goes beyond evaluation into policymaking, design, strategy, finance, implementation and research. They write about transformative development pathways in service to a just, regenerative, low-carbon, resilient world. They reflect on how their praxis has evolved over the past eight years, sharing stories of success and failure and what they have learned. In an innovative dialogue, they describe, explore and argue about the role of evaluation praxis in transformational design for sustainable development, focusing on how assumptions and framings, leadership teams, collaboratives and social movements seeking to address global-to-local problems such as the pandemic and climate change will be better equipped to navigate power in South–North complementarities and contradictions.

Chapter 7 brings us the perspective of the small island developing states. Based on priorities for post-COVID-19 recovery in the region that the Association of Caribbean States identified, Lennise Baptiste examines how transformative evaluation practices can help in the crisis management

and recovery phases. She argues that, considering the gaps in governance systems of the region, which were designed to keep citizens safe and provide relief in times of crisis, strengthening internal monitoring and evaluation systems would increase the accountability of member states for their responsibilities to their citizens. She identifies four pathways along which better governance and progress towards the SDGs can be achieved. She concludes that capacity building, strategic planning, policy development and the use of information and communication technology are key transformation pathways for the region.

The third section is dedicated to the professionalization of evaluation. It begins with chapter 8, in which three authors from the Global South, Pablo Rodríguez-Bilella, Silvia Salinas Mulder and Sonal Zaveri, hypothesize that, in the current neoliberal context, evaluation runs the risk of becoming another service that gives answers that those who pay for it want. Based on theory and practices from the Global South, the authors present a framework for transformative evaluation, differentiating it from conventional evaluation, and introduce a competencies profile for gender-transformative, context-relevant evaluators that unites the technical, ethical and political dimensions of transformative evaluation in a set of competencies for evaluators. The chapter identifies factors and evaluator competencies that facilitate usable evaluation and concludes by raising readers' awareness of the complexities underlying frequently invisible power issues and relations and the need to fine tune one's ability to identify and address them in evaluations.

In chapter 9, we encounter two young and emerging evaluators (YEEs), authors Kenza Bennani and Gerardo Sánchez-Romero, joining one of our editors, Marie-Hélène Adrien, in exploring avenues that YEEs can follow to become involved in transformational evaluation. They use the concept of 'professional identity work' to present a framework that defines and differentiates the various types of evaluator identities that YEEs could explore through formal employment engagement or involvement with voluntary organizations for professional evaluation and YEE networks. These should be considered 'identity workspaces' that support YEEs in discovering, understanding and shaping who they are and can become as transformational evaluators. The chapter presents inspiration and opportunities but notes that perhaps, most importantly, YEEs must be enabled to shape their futures and their contributions to transformational evaluation and in doing so contribute to the transformation of evaluation itself.

Chapter 10, by Linda Morra Imas, focuses on one of the initiatives emerging from the IDEAS Prague conferences: the International Evaluation Academy, which is on the verge of becoming fully operational. Her chapter

is therefore to some extent a snapshot of the situation in April 2021 but one that is of high importance for the future of the evaluation profession and for better linkage between science, research, policy and evaluation theory and practice. The Academy was started in a careful, interactive process including the responses to an international survey that confirmed broad-based support for the International Evaluation Academy concept, including a focus on professionalization and what it means in our time, with transforming evaluation for transformational change as one of the key areas of work. The mission, strategy, guiding principles, values, organization, thematic strategies and business model have been developed, and this chapter is our first chance to observe how it is taking shape.

Robert (Bob) Picciotto, in chapter 11, on the importance of professionalization, asks: What will it take? He positions evaluation as one of the knowledge professions, threatened like the others through rising populism, fake news and loss of confidence in the media and the 'elite' and paints this as a transformation challenge that evaluation must meet. He proposes new policy directions to transform the enabling environment of evaluation practice. Most importantly, he argues that the public good nature of evaluative evidence must be restored and that the process of turning evaluation into a private, commercial good must be reversed. To do this, the evaluation profession must break the chains of the current market-based governance model, while at the same time, evaluation must become more highly regarded and recognized for its expertise. Picciotto recommends ensuring an ethical charter, expert knowledge, proven competencies and self-management as established principles in evaluation. This is what it takes.

The fourth section, exploring themes and cases, begins with chapter 12 on evaluation in contexts affected by fragility, conflict and violence. Inga-Lill Aronsson and Hur Hassnain draw upon their experience working in these contexts and explore ideas gathered in successive interactions they maintained with evaluators while discussing the challenging experience of evaluating in such violent, rapidly changing, unpredictable environments. More specifically, the chapter is an outcome of the background research that the authors completed, a reflection of their own personal experience working in challenging environments around the world, as well as some key highlights of the rich discussions held during the full day workshop they conducted during the IDEAS Global Assembly in Prague attended by global evaluation practitioners. The chapter explores the contexts of fragility, conflict and violence that pose particular challenges for evaluation: people are vulnerable; lack trust; live in complicated and sensitive relations and lack faith in experts, outsiders, locals and government representatives alike.



The challenges range from the definition of indicators of 'change' or simply understanding 'how change happens', to data collection and analysis and associated risks and the need to rely on people on the ground to contextualize what works and what tools should be tested or avoided. They reflect and build on the recently published guide *Evaluation in Contexts of Fragility, Conflict and Violence* (Hassnain, Kelly and Somma 2021).

Chapter 13 examines the support of the African Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Research for transformational change in value chains in agriculture, starting at the local and national levels but taking the international extensions of these chains into account. The authors, Fabrizio Felloni and Girma Kumbi, see mixed evidence of transformational change for smallholder farmers and rural small-scale producers because major changes in organizational culture are required at the national and international levels to institutionalize positive changes at the local level. They conclude that evaluations of local support must take the full system level of value chains into account to strengthen support for transformational change, because this will help in understanding the complexity of value chain development and the interconnectedness of a value chain system.

Evaluation of the SDGs in the unique context of Palestine as a fragile, conflict-affected country is the subject of chapter 14 by Khaled Rajab. The ongoing colonization and the deliberate policies and restrictions of the Israeli occupation mean that several SDGs and targets cannot be achieved or monitored, including those related to conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources; clean water and sanitation; the environment and transboundary concerns. Within these major restrictions, the emphasis of the Palestinian government is on mobilizing stakeholders and developing partnerships to raise institutional and community awareness of the SDGs and take as many steps as possible. Rajab concludes that a tailored, adapted approach and implementation is needed to address the political, social and economic factors that affect the transformational agenda for the SDGs in fragile states under protracted occupation.

Section 5, Approaches and Methods, starts with chapter 15, Complex Systems, Development Trajectories and Theories of Change, by Aaron Zazueta, Nima Bahramalian, Thuy Thu Le, Johannes Dobinger and Eko Ruddy Cahyadi, focusing on support of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization for transformational change in quality systems in Indonesia. The authors present a case study of the application of complex adaptive systems thinking to develop a robust understanding of the dynamics of the quality system to understand the ways and extent to

which the trajectory of that system can be influenced. They explore a mix of methods that include different conceptual frameworks, analytical tools and information-gathering techniques. This approach helps identify a manageable number of conditions for intervention by embracing complexity and mapping the extent to which the key conditions interact and influence each other. It engages technical and non-technical stakeholders from inception and across the project or programme cycle (including planning, monitoring and evaluation) and is thus likely to increase effectiveness and help sustain the new trajectory by building stakeholder ownership of technically sound strategies and outcomes.

Chapter 16, by Jonny Morell, draws from complexity science to discuss transformation to a green energy future through a meta-theory that can be applied to theories of change and theories of action. Six types of behaviour of complex systems are explored: stigmergy, attractors, emergence, phase transition, self-organization and path dependence. Because complex systems behave as they do, the recommended theory of change is sparse; it has few well-defined elements or relationships among those elements. Instead of a detailed, well-ordered approach and planning for transformational change, Morell argues that *questions* need to inspire action, ranging from the characteristics of the desired state to whether that state is a 'new normal' to whether it is qualitatively different from the old normal to what the outcome chain would look like to how coordination mechanisms between all involved actors would work. These questions, formulated in more detail with reference to the six types of complex behaviour, lead to an understanding of the complexity involved in transformational change that can guide action.

In chapter 17, *Of Portals and Paradigms*, two of our editors, Cristina Magro and Rob D. van den Berg, take the reader on a journey through systems thinking. They take the pandemic as a platform for learning and exercising ways of thinking that will help evaluators focus on key questions and approaches that are adequate for current global challenges, becoming skilled in the reasoning, language and narrative of systems thinking and crossing portals of Western conventionalities. The chapter builds on the authors' previous work (Magro and Van den Berg 2019) for the exploration of basic concepts and explores the habits of a systems thinker (Benson and Marlin 2019) to gain insights and a natural flow of reasoning in systems terms. For the authors, all social, economic, environmental, cultural and cognitive contexts are favourable for evaluators to adhere to systems thinking, and more than that, the context demands transformational actions that are better understood and fostered in systems terms.

## Building on the Prague Declaration

The foundation of this book was laid in Prague, in October 2019, at the IDEAS Global Assembly in conjunction with the Third International Conference on Evaluating Environment and Development. Transforming evaluation for transformational change was a recurrent theme in keynote addresses, special sessions and many presentations, with an emphasis on bringing experiences and insights from the South to the North. The conferences concluded with the adoption of the Prague Declaration, which summed up the aspirations of the participants. Many of the chapters and ideas in this volume have links to the Declaration, and we felt it would be appropriate to end the book with a special section dedicated to the Prague Declaration, presenting it along with some testimonials and statements. Although this section could have opened the book, because the Declaration was the starting point of much work since then – not least the inauguration of the International Evaluation Academy – we thought it would be good to end with the Declaration as a stepping stone to inspire further transformational work and to expand our horizons. To solve the global crises of our times, we need evaluation to step up to the plate and contribute its share.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the enormous challenges humanity is facing. It has been facilitated by other crises as climate change, biodiversity loss, economic exploitation, and increased inequity and inequality. The UN Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change call for transformational change of our societies, our economies and our interaction with the environment. Evaluation is tasked to bring rigorous evidence to support transformation at all levels, from local to global. This book explores how the future of the evaluation profession can take shape in 18 chapters from authors from all over the world, from North and South, East and West, and from Indigenous and Decolonized voices to integrative perspectives for a truly sustainable future. It builds on what was discussed at the IDEAS Global Assembly in October 2019 in Prague and follows through by opening trajectories towards supporting transformation aimed at solving the global crises of our times.

*By combining practical experiences with perspectives drawn from new initiatives, this book offers invaluable insights into how evaluation can be transformed to support transformational change on the global stage.*

Indran A. Naidoo, Director of the Office of Independent Evaluation of IFAD

*Across continents, educational systems, and historical complexities, this book builds up the language we all should speak about our field. A mandatory read for all young evaluators.*

Weronika Felcis, Board member of EES and Secretary of IOCE

*After reading these chapters you will have a sharper look at what is relevant when managing or doing an evaluation, and you will notice that 'business as usual' will no longer be an option.*

Janett Salvador, Co-founder of ACEVAL, Former Treasurer of ReLAC

*This book offers original, visionary discourse and critical perspectives on the challenges evaluation is facing in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.*

Doha Abdelhamid, Member of the Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology

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