



# Evaluation in Norway: Historical developments and persistent tensions

The Norwegian Evaluation Conference | 21.09.23

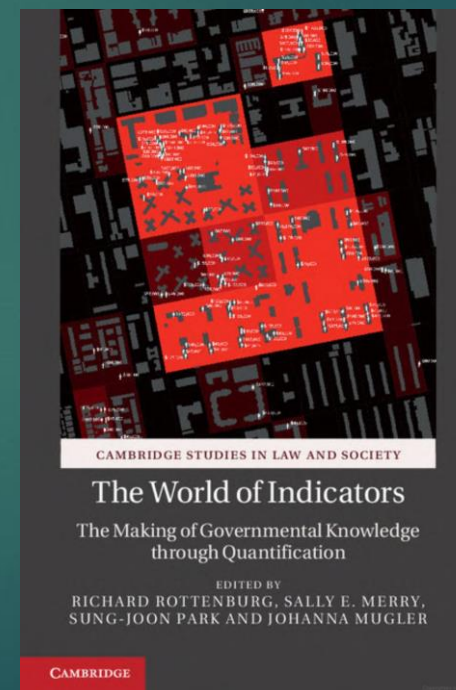
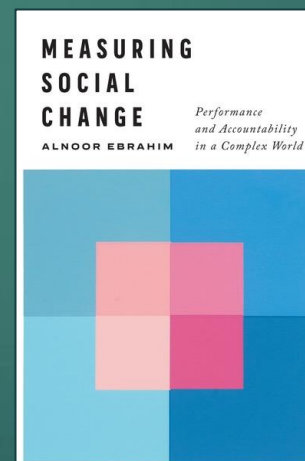
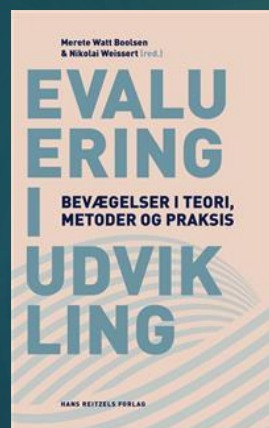
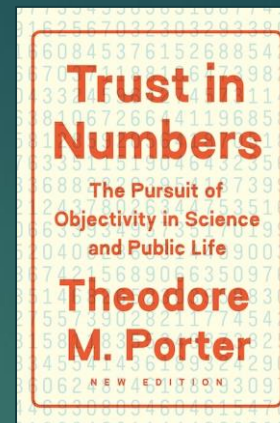
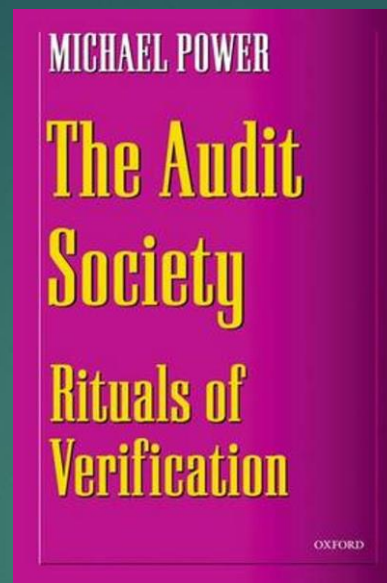
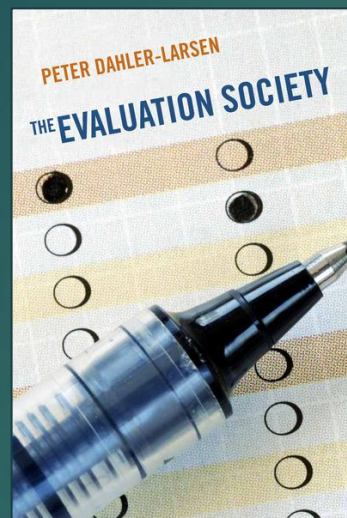
Hilde Reinertsen, Ph.D.

**Associate professor**, Department of Linguistic and Nordic Studies,  
University of Oslo | **Project leader**, Evaluation optics of the nation state:  
The past, present and future of public documentation (**EVALUNATION**)

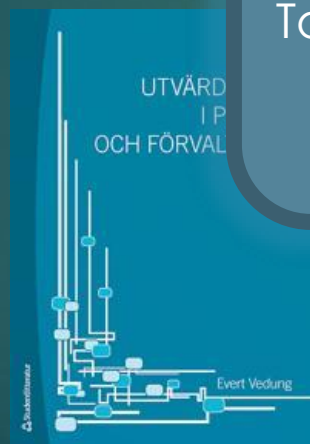
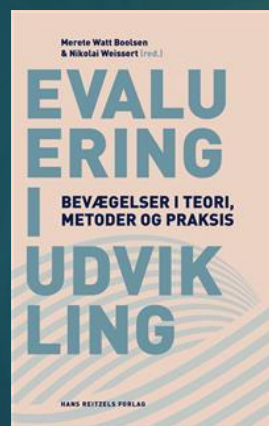
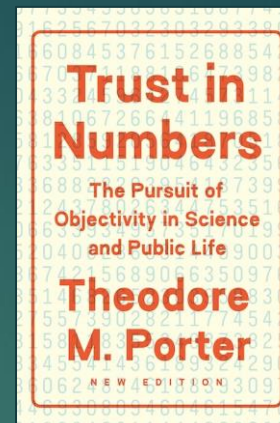
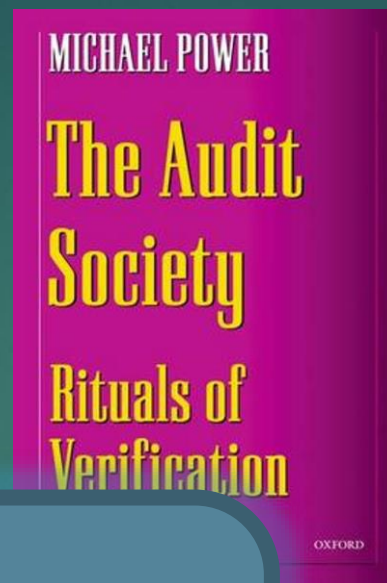
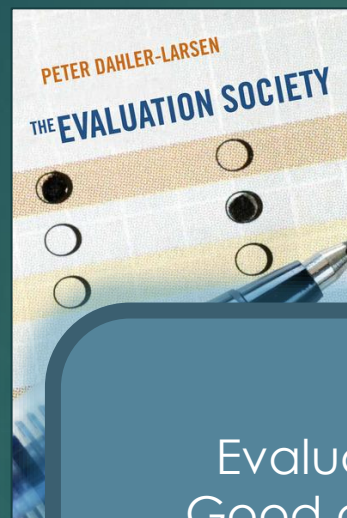


UNIVERSITY  
OF OSLO

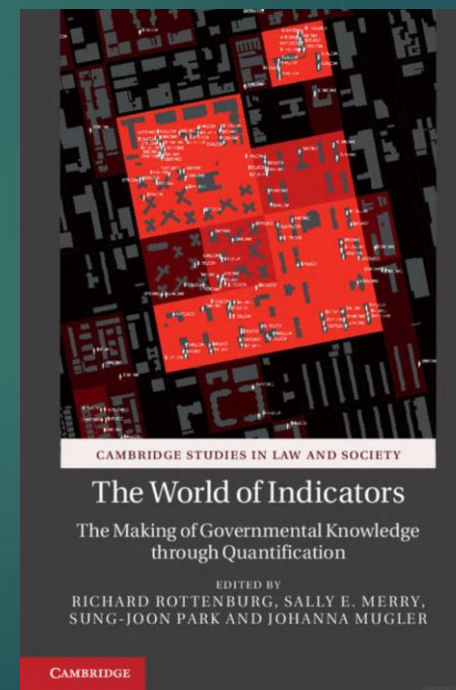
Funded by  
The Research  
Council of Norway







Evaluations:  
Good or bad?  
Too much or too little?  
Symptom or cure?





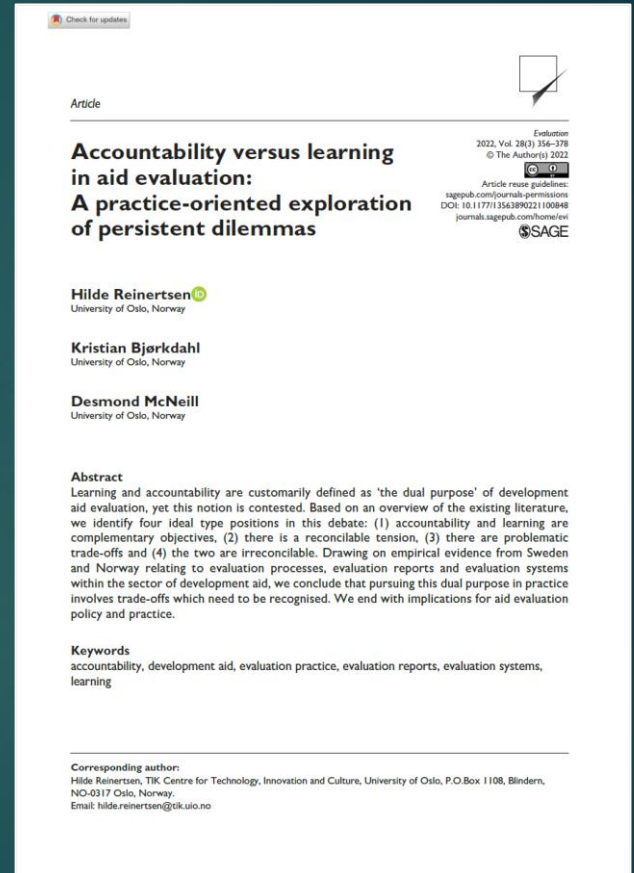
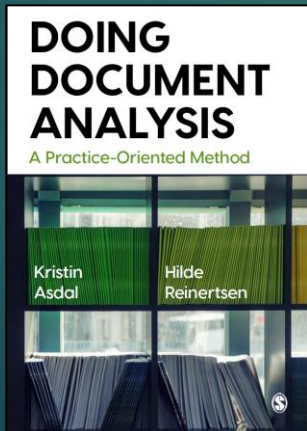
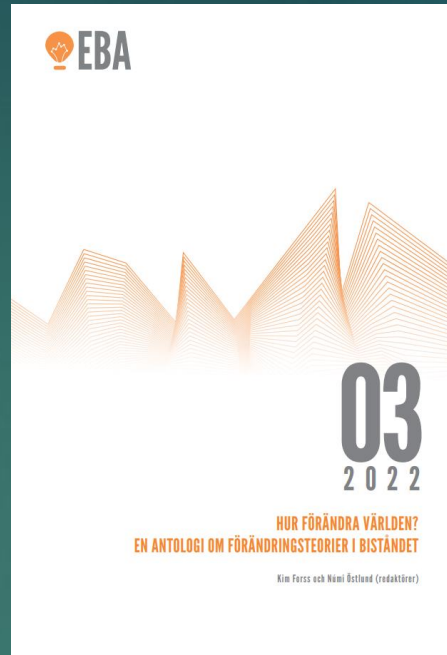
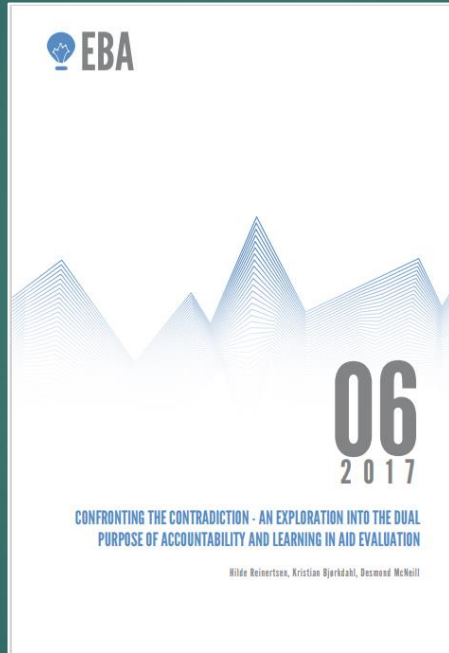
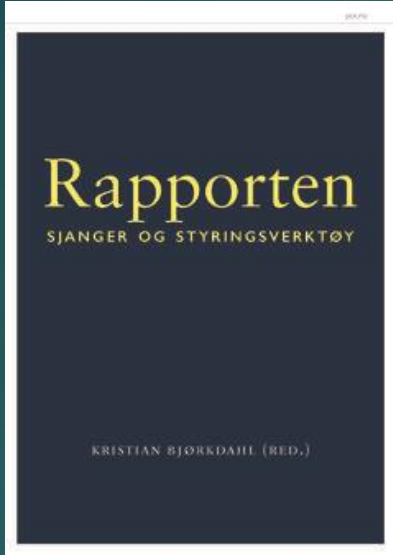
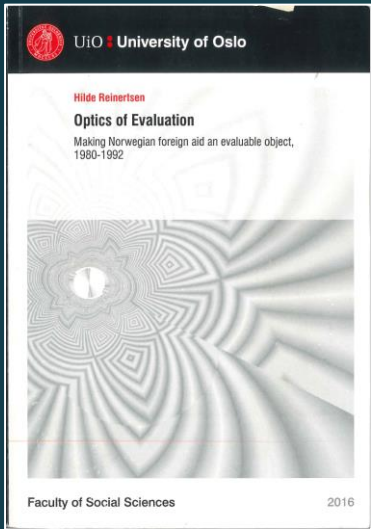
# Evaluation as a **tool**

- What kind of tool is this?
- What does it make us see?

- A tool for seeing
- A tool for governing

→ **Optics of evaluation**

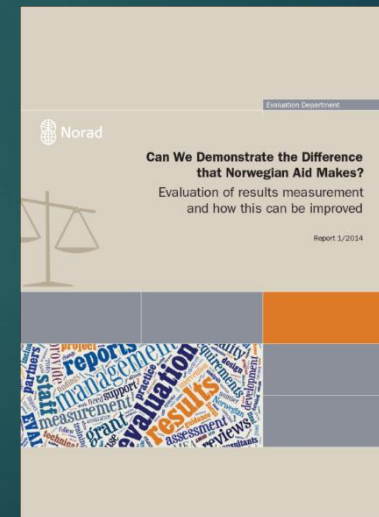
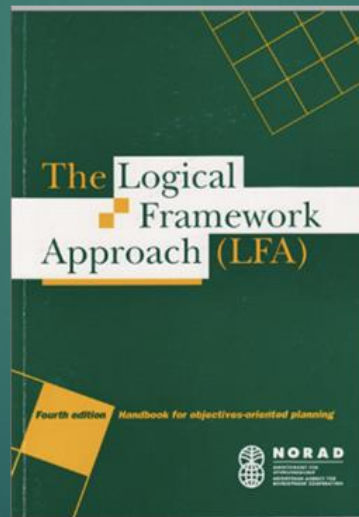
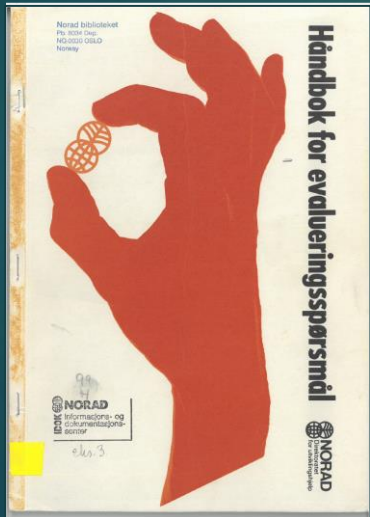
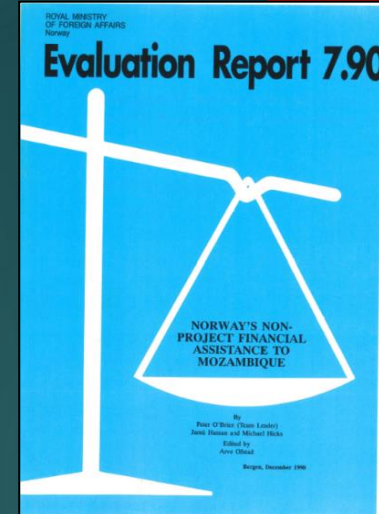
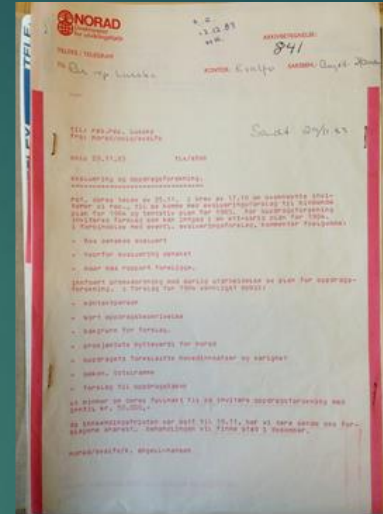
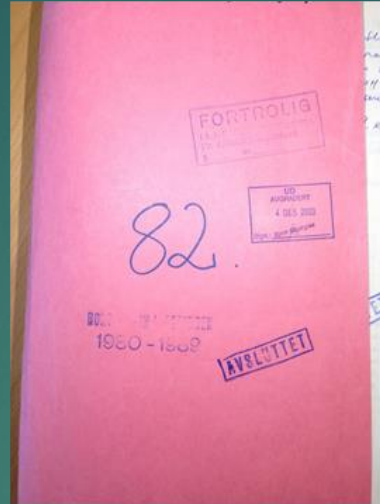
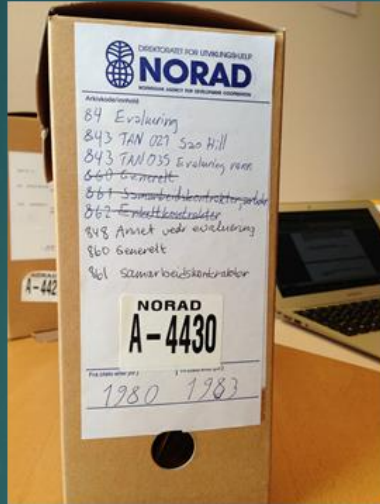






# Historical developments: changes and continuities







# What has **changed**?

- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Available data
- ▶ Staff and resources
- ▶ Technical sophistication

Yet also: Strong **continuities**



# Continuities of evaluation practice

## The genre

- ▶ Analysis
- ▶ Conclusions
- ▶ Recommendations
- ▶ Executive summary

## The methods

- ▶ Description of method
- ▶ Explicit criteria
- ▶ Independent external view
- ▶ Open tender process

## The dual purpose

- ▶ Accountability
- ▶ Learning
- ▶ Governing, change, action

# Continuities of evaluation practice

## The genre

- ▶ **Analysis**
- ▶ Conclusions
- ▶ Recommendations
- ▶ Executive summary

## The methods

- ▶ Description of method
- ▶ Explicit criteria
- ▶ Independent external view
- ▶ Open tender process

## The dual purpose

- ▶ Accountability
- ▶ Learning
- ▶ Governing, change, **action**



Norad biblioteket  
Pb. 8034 Dep.  
NO-0030 OSLO  
Norway

# Håndbok for evaluerings spørsmål

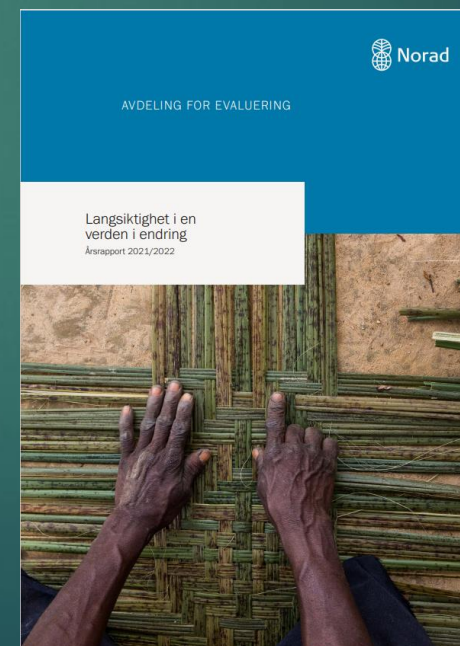
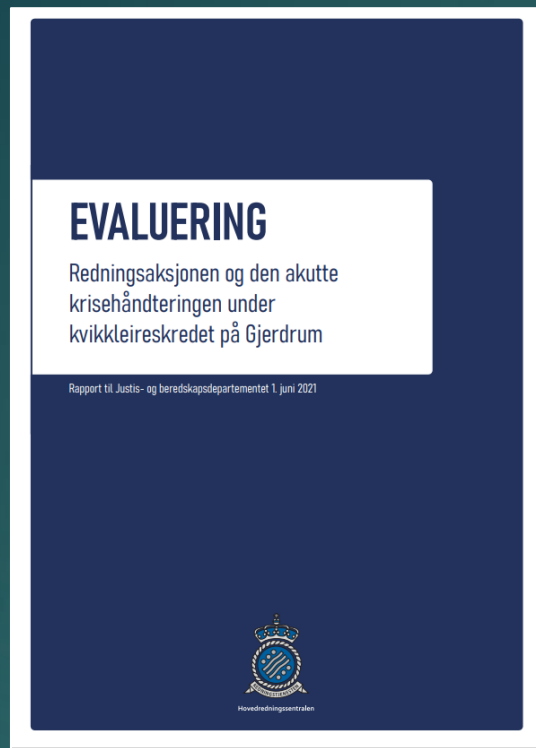


99  
4  
IDOK NORAD  
Informasjons- og  
dokumentasjons-  
senter

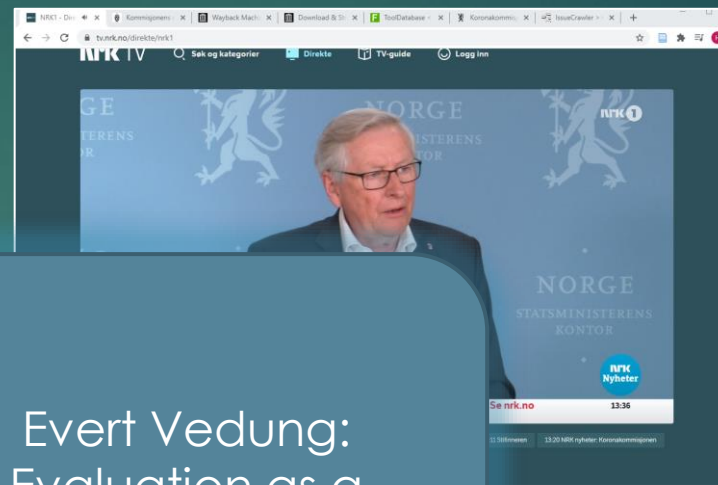
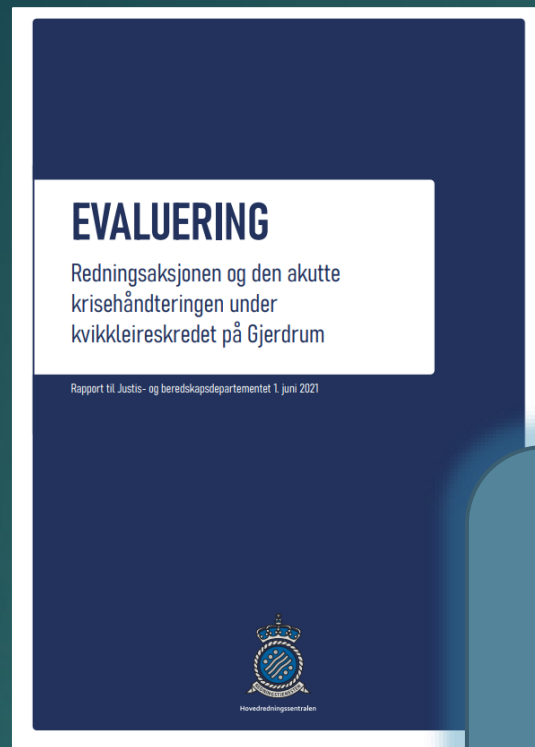
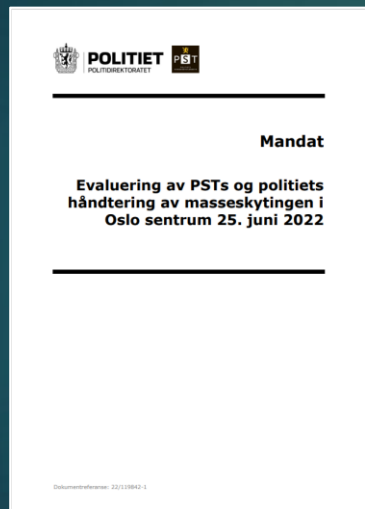
els. 3.

«An evaluation report –  
no matter how good it  
may be – has little value  
unless it is used.»

Evaluation Department,  
Norad, 1981







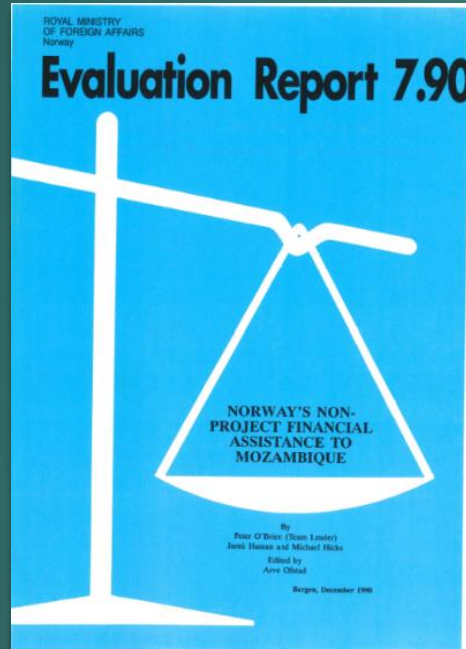
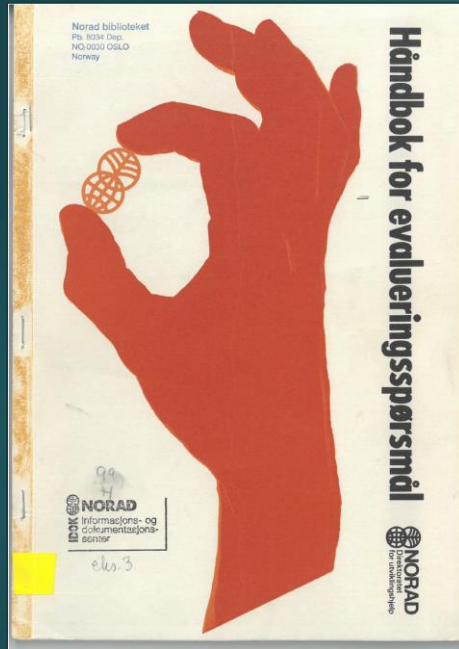
Evert Vedung:  
Evaluation as a  
'semantic magnet'



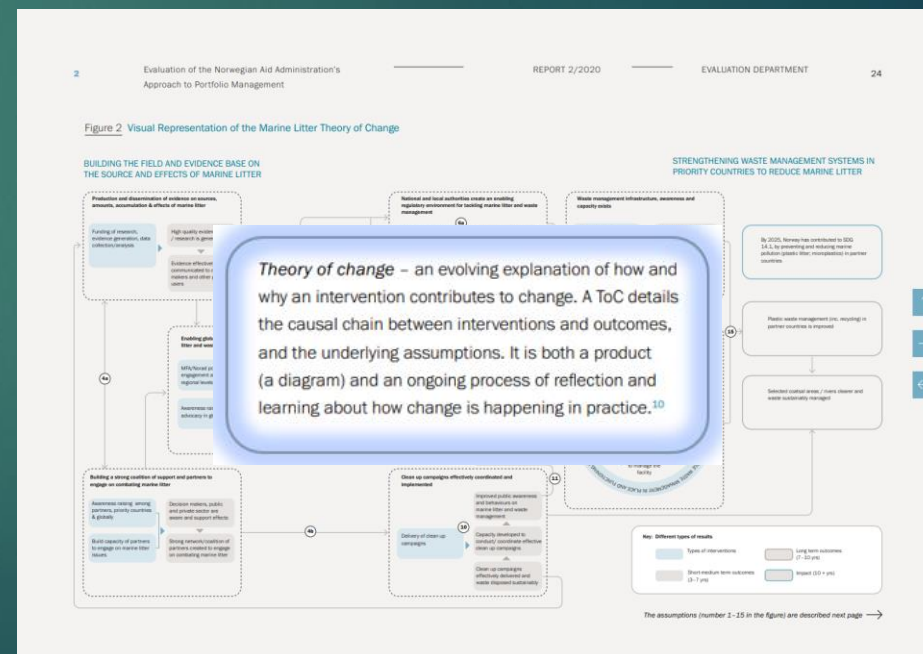
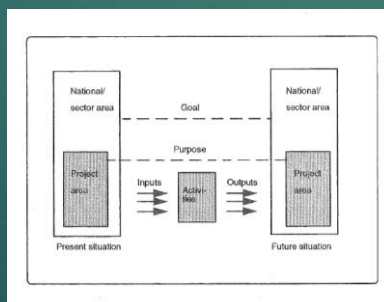
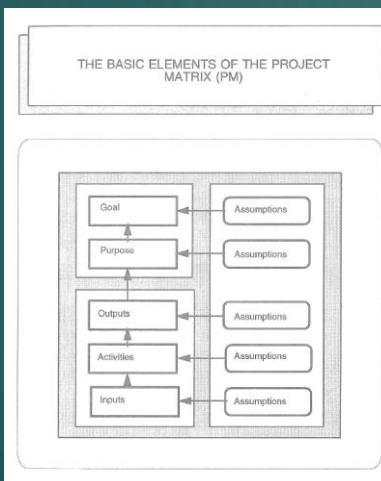
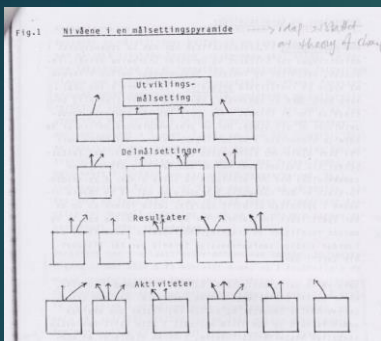
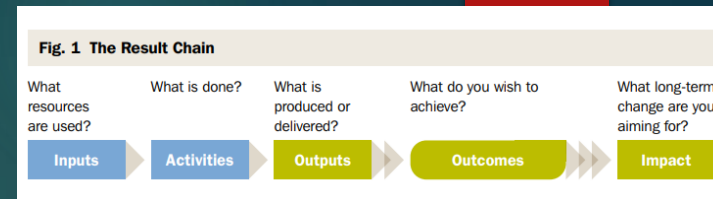
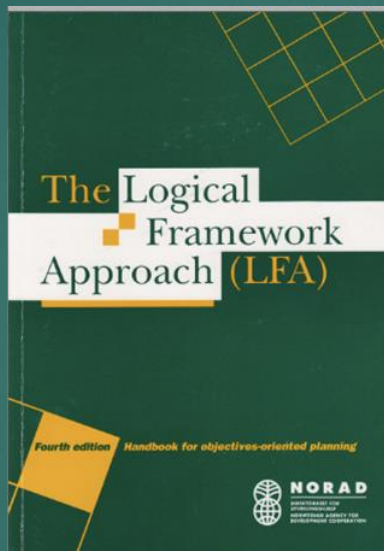
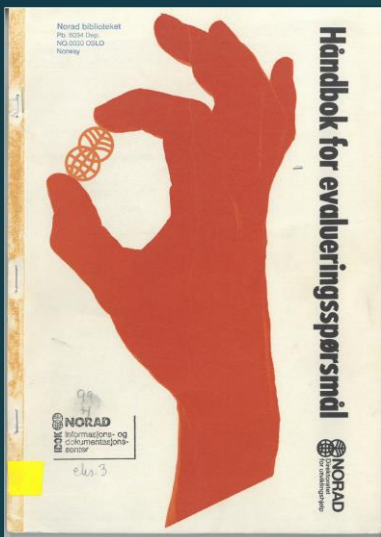


# Built-in tensions and persistent dilemmas





Built-in tensions  
and persistent  
dilemmas





# Built-in tensions between...

- ▶ **Contradictory ambitions** → accountability or learning, control or trust?
- ▶ **Overarching goals and measurable results** → catching the whole or its parts?
- ▶ **Contextualisation and atomization** → successful in reference to what scale?
- ▶ **Flexibility and rigidity** → demanding a plan or allowing for change?
- ▶ **Narrative and technical writing styles** → qualitative or quantitative assessments?
- ▶ **Temporal horizons** → Short-term or long-term perspectives?  
→ Open future-orientation or retrospective reporting?

For all of these: **It matters what optics you use** and how you use them for **what you see**.



# Optics of evaluation: Core questions

- What tools, methods, routines and systems are in use, and how do these change over time?
- What do our optics enable us to see, and what do we not see?
- How does this affect what we know, and what we then choose to do?
- How do the optics affect the objects they observe, and vice versa?



UNIVERSITY  
OF OSLO

Funded by  
The Research  
Council of Norway



Thank you!  
[hilde.reinertsen@iln.uio.no](mailto:hilde.reinertsen@iln.uio.no)



UNIVERSITY  
OF OSLO



Funded by  
The Research  
Council of Norway



# Bibliography

- Asdal, Kristin & Hilde Reinertsen 2020. *Hvordan gjøre dokumentanalyse: En praksis-orientert metode*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Asdal, Kristin & Hilde Reinertsen 2022. *Doing Document Analysis. A Practice-Oriented Method*. London: SAGE Publishing.
- McLellan, Timothy 2020. 'Impact, theory of change, and horizons of scientific practice.' *Social Studies of Science* 51 (1): 100-120.
- Norad 1981. *Håndbok for evalueringsspørsmål*. Oslo: Norad.
- Norad 1990. *The Logical Framework Approach (LFA). Handbook for objectives-oriented project planning*. [Nye utgaver i 1999, 2004]. Oslo: Norad.
- Norad 2008. *Results Management in Norwegian Development Cooperation. A practical guide*. Oslo: Norad.
- Norad 2013. *Evaluering av norsk utviklingssamarbeid. Årsrapport 2013*. Oslo: Norad.
- Norad 2020. *Evaluation of the Norwegian Aid Administration's Approach to Portfolio Management*. Report 2/2020. Oslo: Norad.
- Reinertsen, Hilde 2008. *Norge til verden eller verden til Norge? Utviklingsforskning, ikke-europeiske studier og bistandsforvaltningens kunnskapssyn i Norge, 1960-1980*. Masteroppgave i historie, Universitetet i Oslo.
- Reinertsen, Hilde 2016. *Optics of Evaluation. Making Norwegian Foreign Aid and Evaluable Object, 1980-1992*. Ph.D.-avhandling, Samfunnsvitenskapelig fakultet, Universitetet i Oslo.
- Reinertsen, Hilde 2018. 'Aldri nok rapporter? Evaluerings optikk og bistandens resultater.' I Kristian Bjørkdahl (red.): *Rapporten: Sjanger og styringsverktøy* Oslo: Pax.
- Reinertsen, Hilde 2022. 'Hur kan man styra med en semantisk magnet? En historisk utforskning av förändringsteorins inneboende spänningar'. I Númi Östlund (red): *Förendringsteori*. Stockholm: Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys (EBA).
- Reinertsen, Hilde, Kristian Bjørkdahl & Desmond McNeill 2017. *Confronting the contradiction: An exploration into the dual purpose of accountability and learning in aid evaluation*. EBA Report Series 06/2017. Stockholm: Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys (EBA).
- Reinertsen, Hilde, Kristian Bjørkdahl, & Desmond McNeill 2022. 'Accountability vs. learning in aid evaluation: A practice-oriented exploration of persistent dilemmas.' *Evaluation*, 28(3): 356–378.
- Vedung, E. 2017. *Public Policy and Program Evaluation* (2.ed). London: Routledge.