



Evaluation in Norway: Historical developments and persistent tensions

The Norwegian Evaluation Conference | 21.09.23

Hilde Reinertsen, Ph.D.

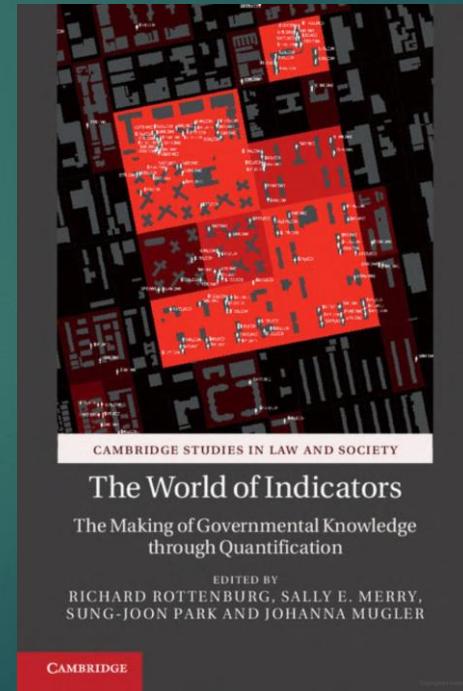
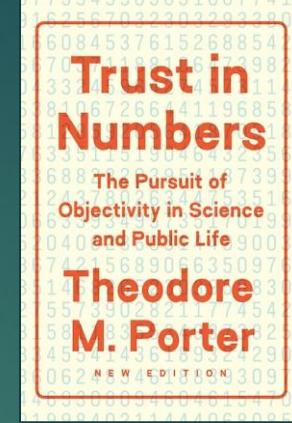
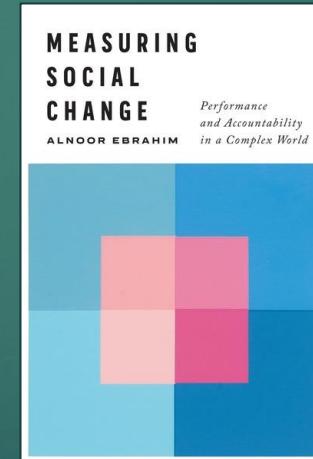
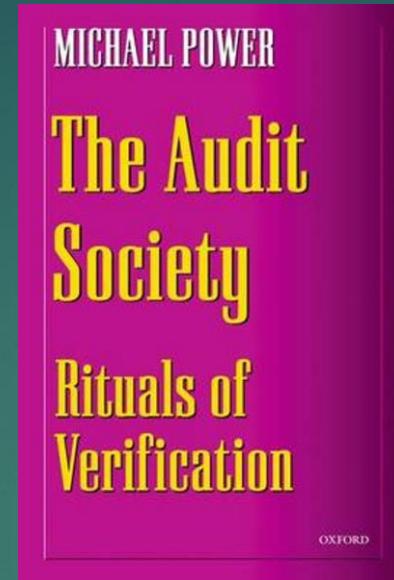
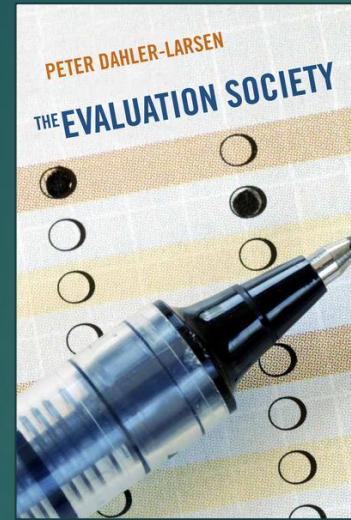
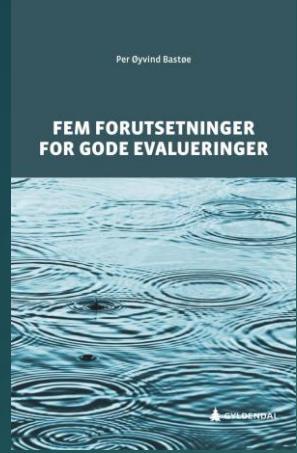
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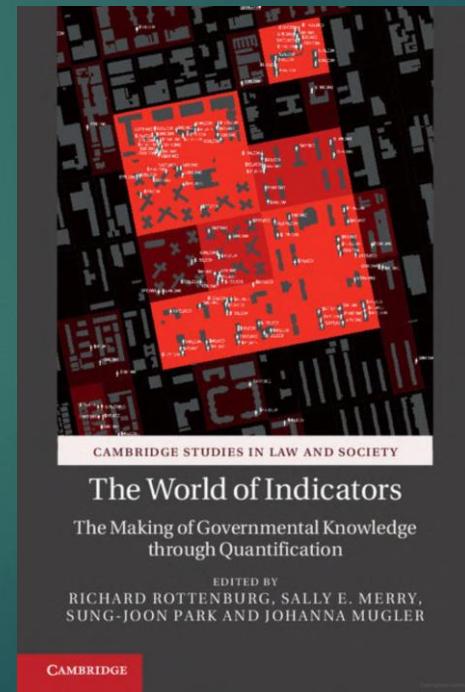
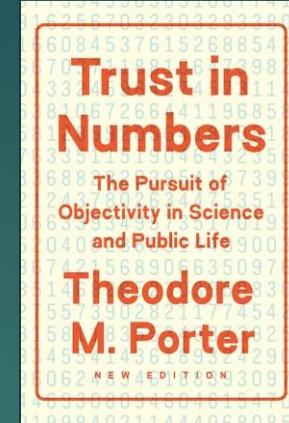
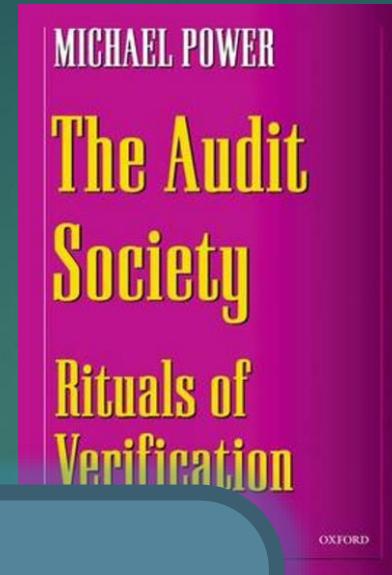
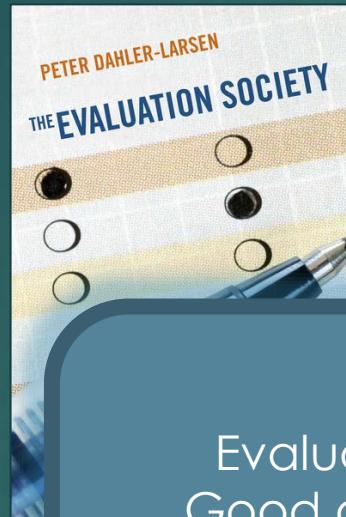
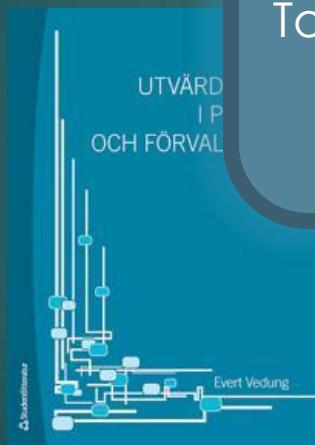


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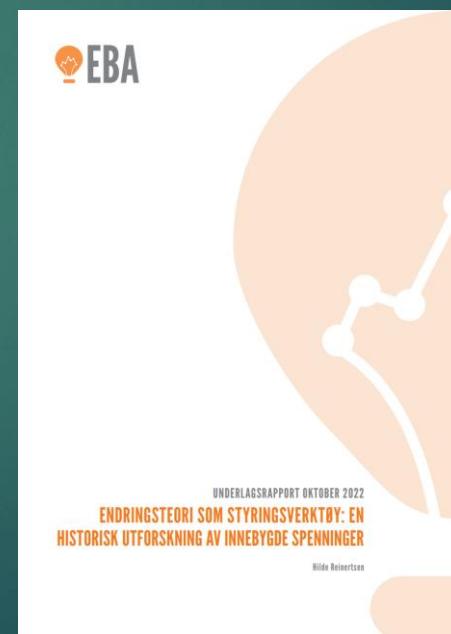
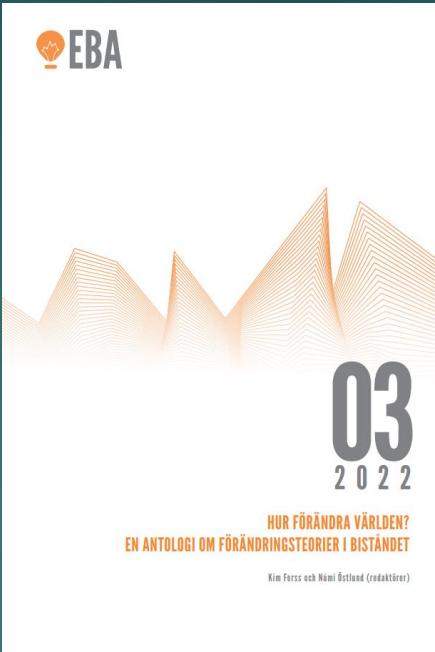
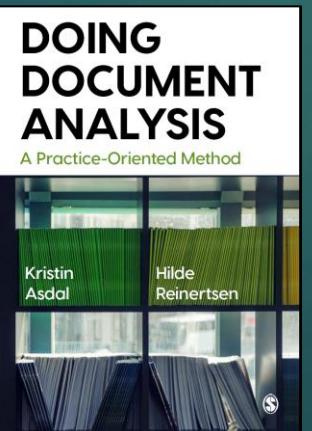
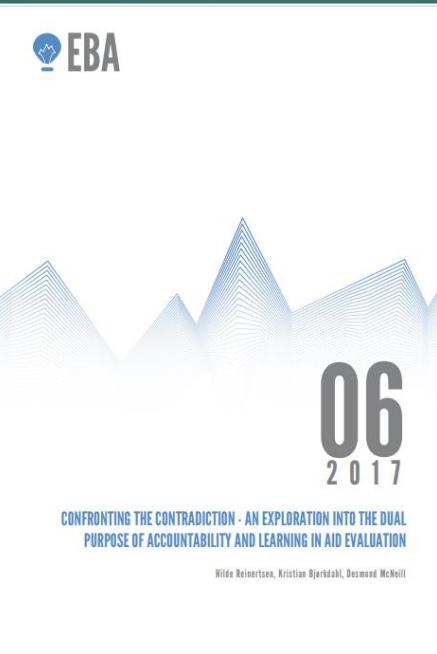
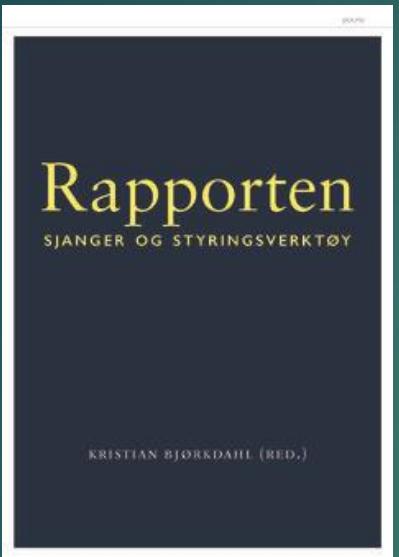
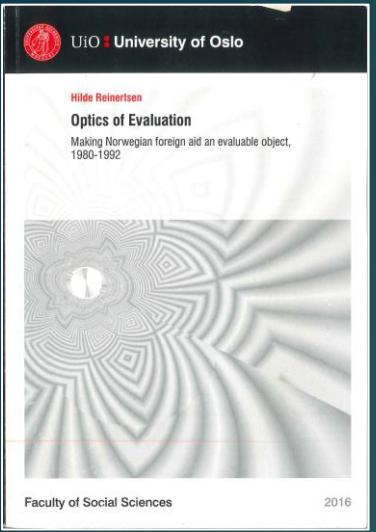


Evaluation as a **tool**

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

→ A tool for seeing
→ A tool for governing

→ **Optics of evaluation**



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Article

Accountability versus learning in aid evaluation: A practice-oriented exploration of persistent dilemmas

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Abstract
Learning and accountability are customarily defined as 'the dual purpose' of development aid evaluation, yet this notion is contested. Based on an overview of the existing literature, we identify four ideal type positions in this debate: (1) accountability and learning are complementary objectives, (2) there is a reconcilable tension, (3) there are problematic trade-offs and (4) the two are irreconcilable. Drawing on empirical evidence from Sweden and Norway relating to evaluation processes, evaluation reports and evaluation systems within the sector of development aid, we conclude that pursuing this dual purpose in practice involves trade-offs which need to be recognised. We end with implications for aid evaluation policy and practice.

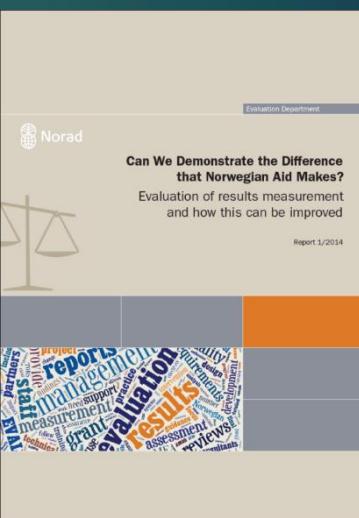
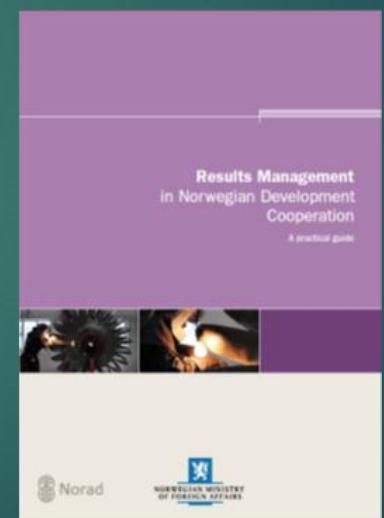
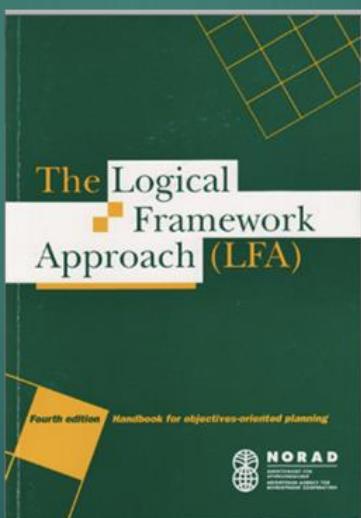
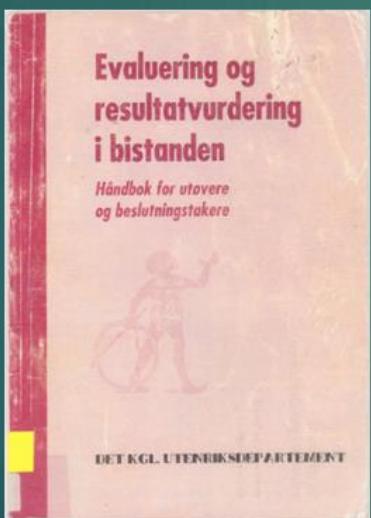
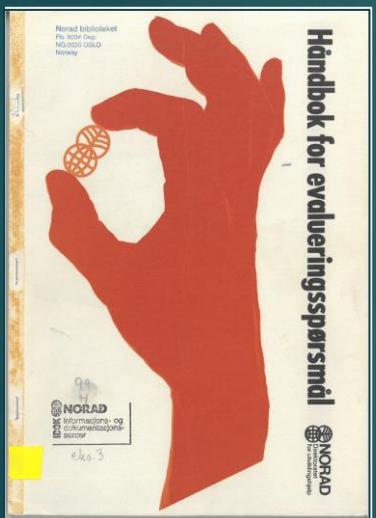
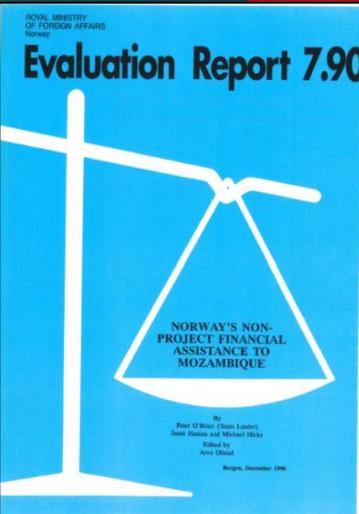
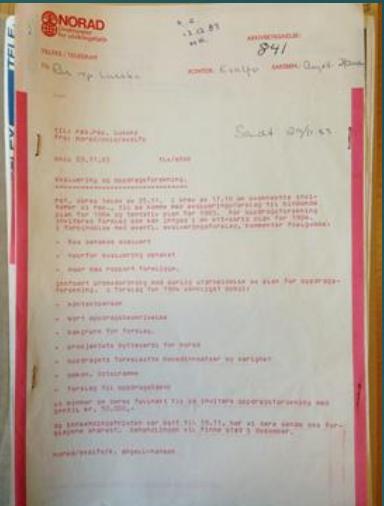
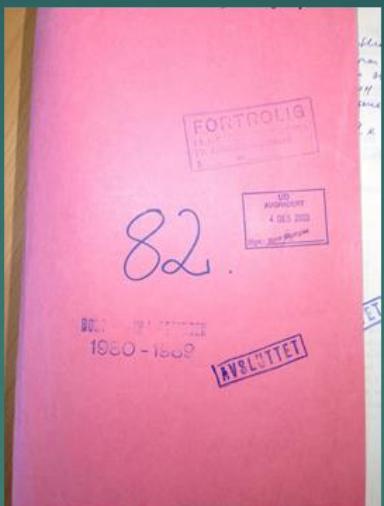
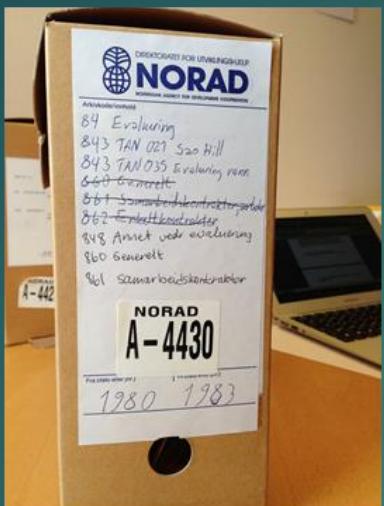
Keywords
accountability, development aid, evaluation practice, evaluation reports, evaluation systems, learning

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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

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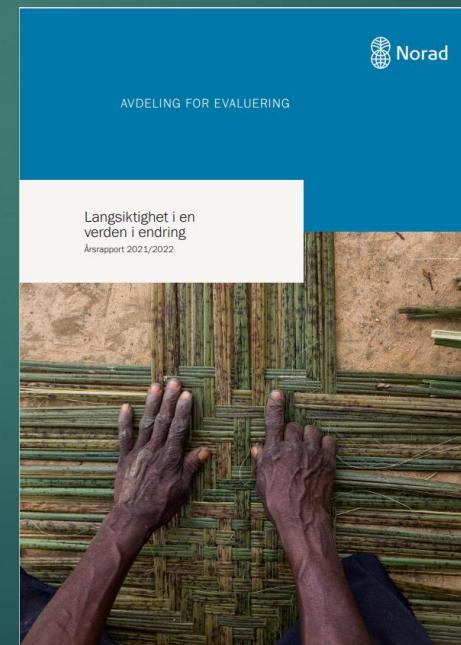
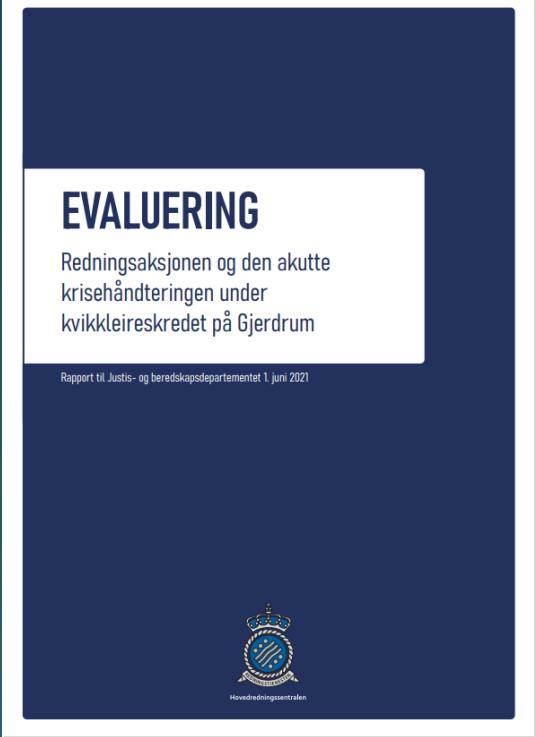


Håndbok for evalueringsspørsmål

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

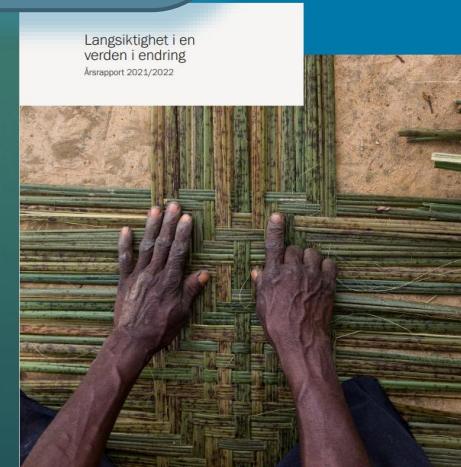
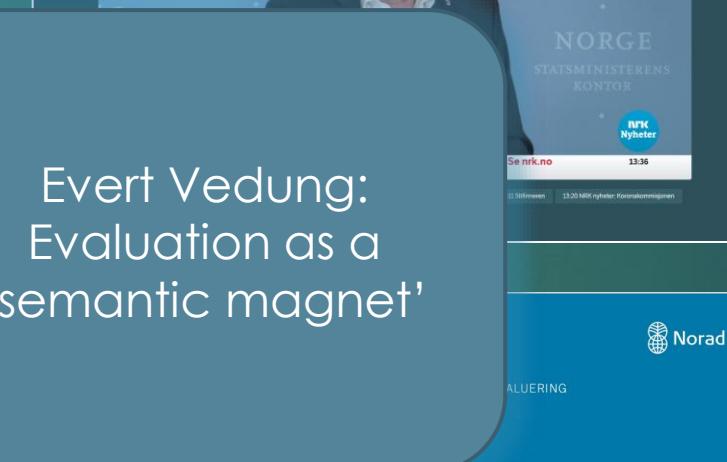
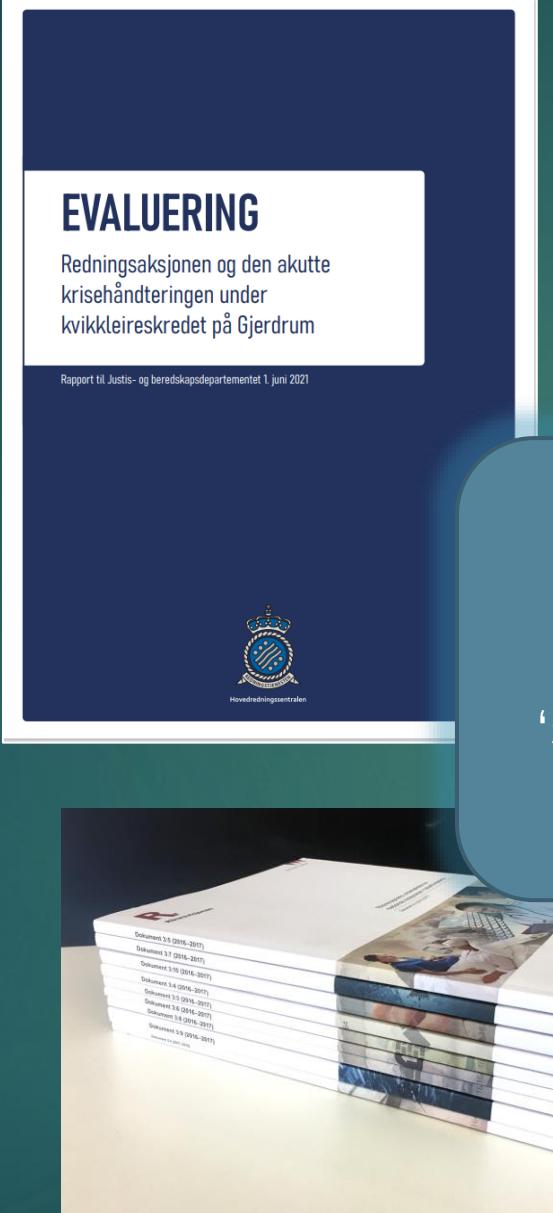
Evaluation Department,
Norad, 1981



Riksrevisjonen

Riksrevisjonens undersøkelse av Forsvarets informasjons-systemer for kommunikasjon og informasjonsutveksling i operasjoner

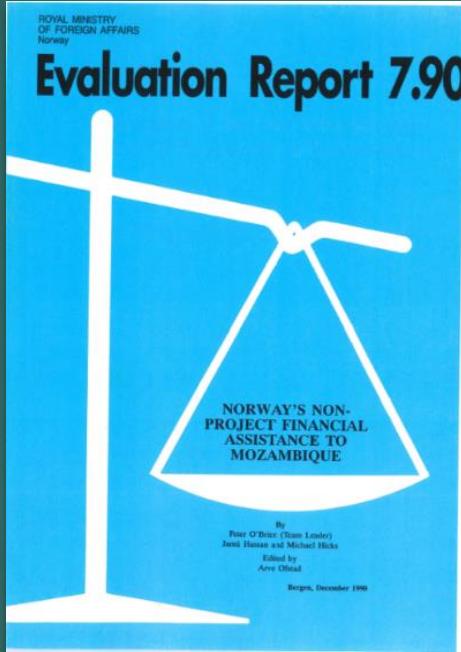
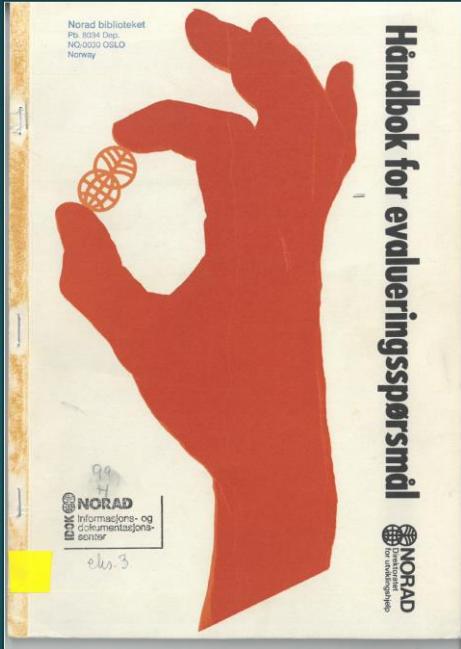
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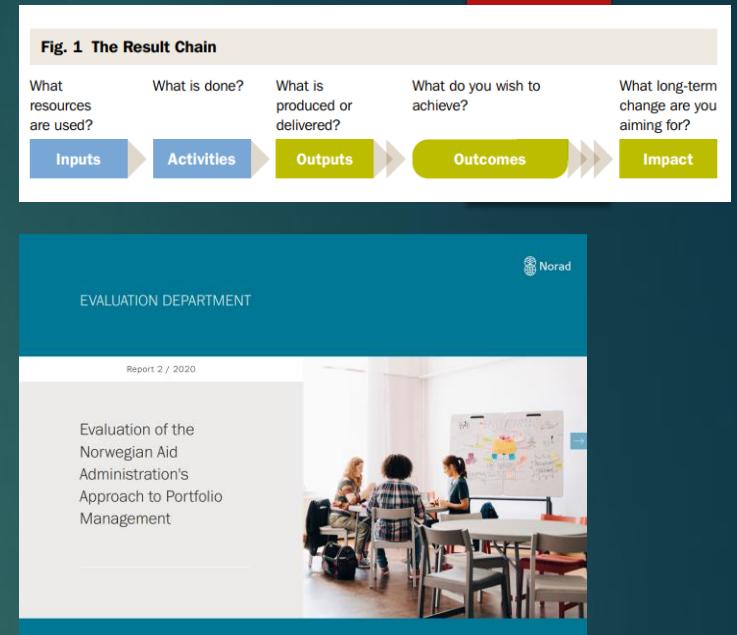
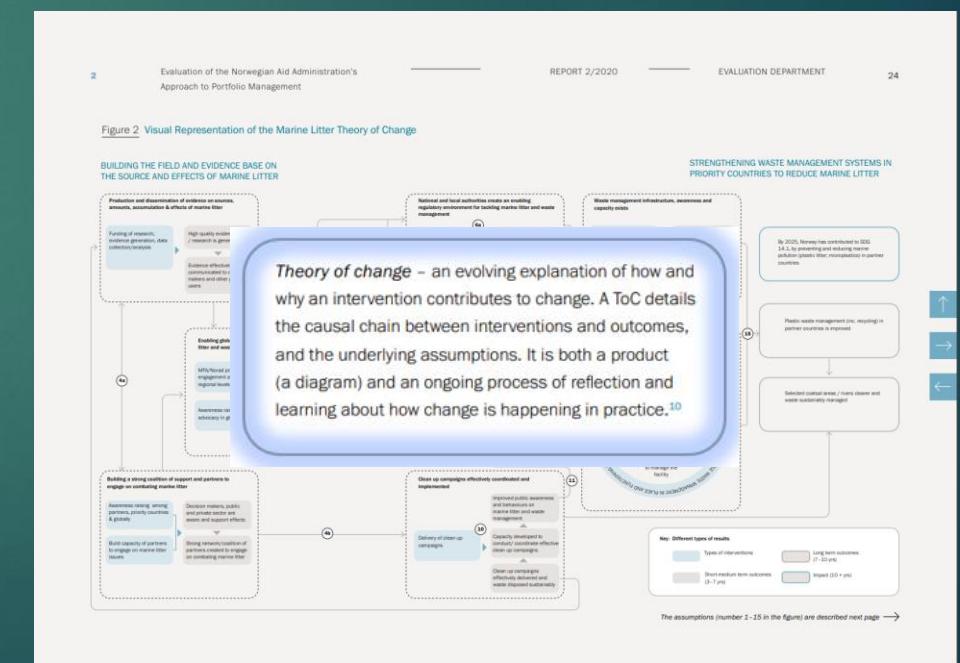
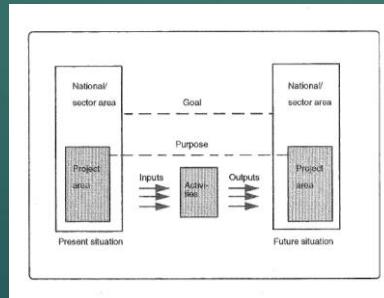
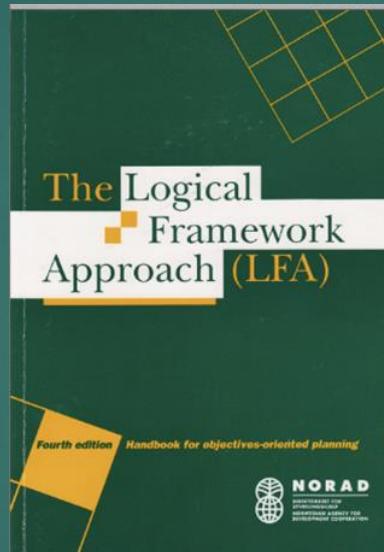
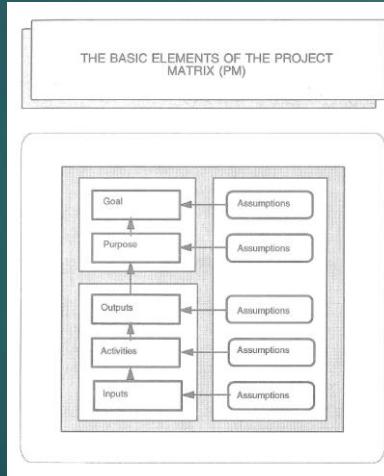
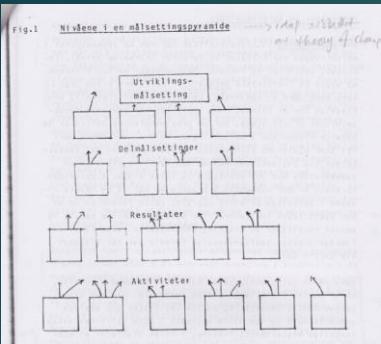
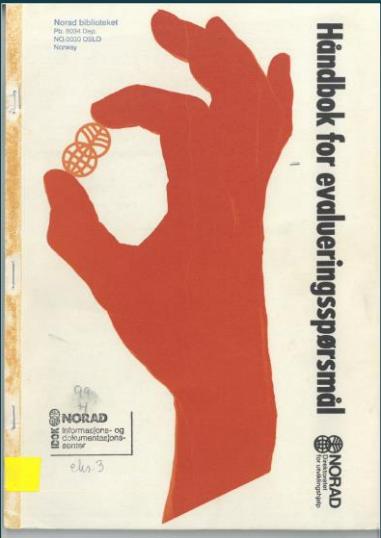




Built-in tensions
and persistent
dilemmas

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?



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Thank you!
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