



Tendencies in the Danish Evaluation Field: The challenges we face – and ways forward

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Evalueringskonferensen 2023

Hva kan Norge lære av evaluering i EU?

Background

På sporet af
Vedungs
femte bølge

Tendenser i det
danske
evalueringsfelt
anno 2023

Læringsseminar 8. september
Årskonferencen 2023 i Dansk
Evalueringselskab

Stefan Brendstrup



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Evert Vedung



We conducted a small, explorative study amongst key commissioners and evaluators within the Danish field

We talked to representatives from:

- **The public sector (central administration):** The Social and Housing Agency, The Agency for Education and Quality, The National Board of Health, and The Danish Business Authority.
- **Civil society:** The National Association for Social Services, The Center for Voluntary Social Work, The Danish Sports Federation, and The Foundation for Social Responsibility.
- **Private, charitable foundations:** The Velux Foundation, The Obel Family Foundation, The LIFE Foundation, The A.P. Møller (Mærsk) Foundation, The Liljeborg Foundation, and The Foundation of the Industry.

...And we have added our own experience to this (from more years in the field and more than 140 ongoing evaluations).

The results – in sum (and slightly exaggerated for effect)

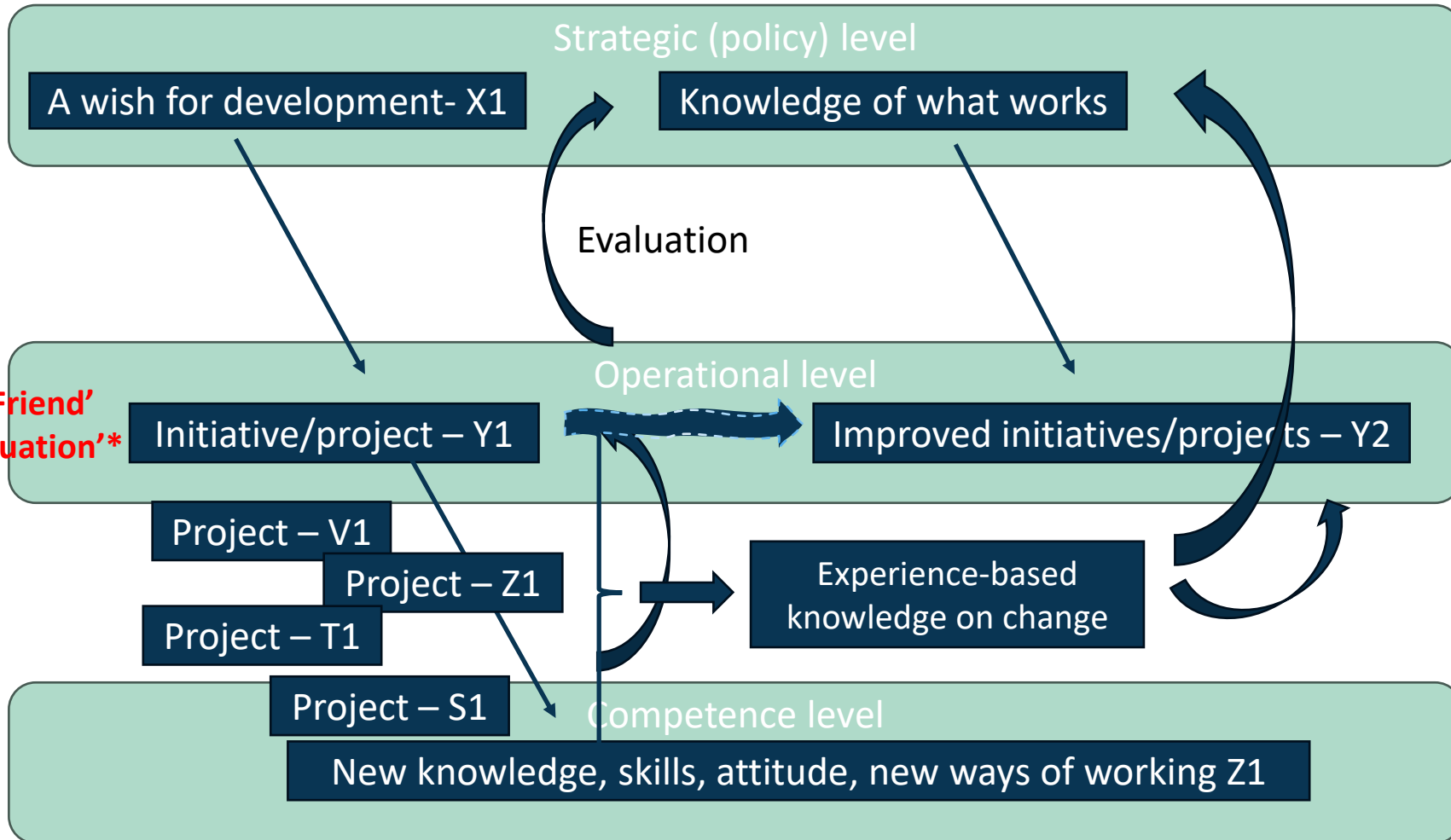
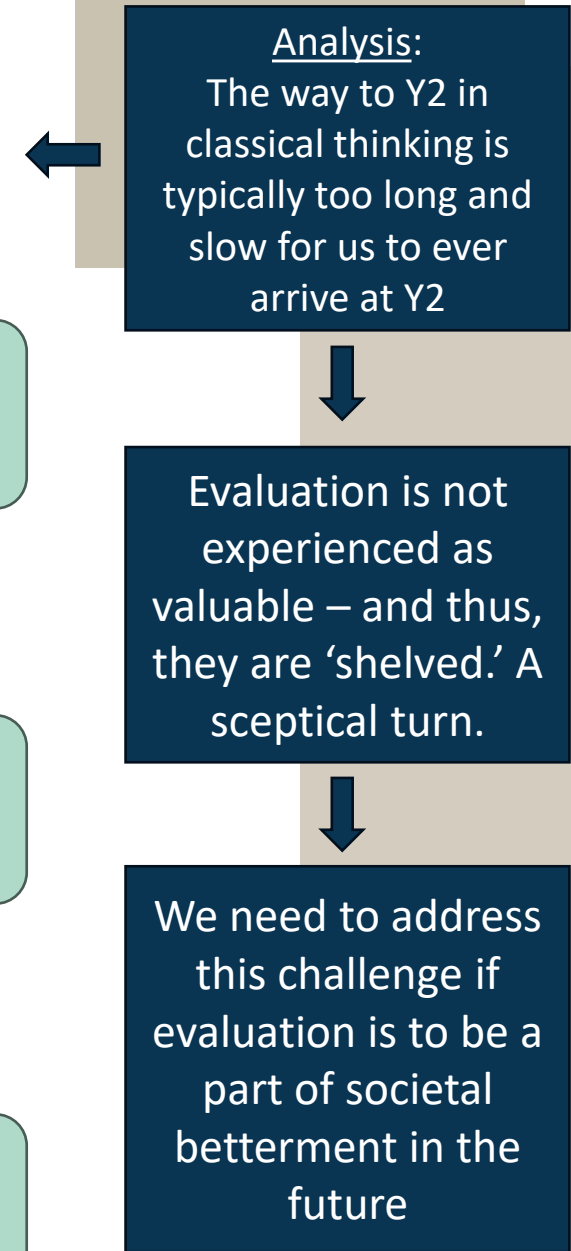
Evaluation as we know it, faces challenges in at least two areas

The classical notion of evaluation as a catalyst for societal progress is challenging for us to make work. There is a shift in how we attempt to foster development, which challenges the traditional focus and classical evaluation methods.

There is a change in how we seek to generate societal progress that challenges our previous focus and classical evaluation methods.

On the nexus between knowledge and change

1. Discrepancy between the accelerated front-door and the slow, back-door politics
2. Lack of absorption capacity (appreciation, understanding, and ability to use knowledge)
3. Just poorly working initiatives and evaluations



**‘The Critical Friend’
‘Braided evaluation’***

*Braided evaluation (Vedung, 2017; 2019; 2023)

Some characteristics and methods:

- The evaluators contribute to the initiatives, efforts, and projects they evaluate. They might even take part in the work.
- The data collection for the evaluation is conducted by the users of the evaluation and people working on the initiatives, efforts, and projects
- The design plans and evaluation results are continuously fed back to all personnel working on the initiatives, efforts, and projects. The evaluation is ongoing.



Trying to look into the future

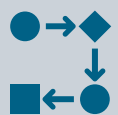
Three hypotheses: What will happen in the Danish evaluation field in the foreseeable future?



A shift in the targeted audience for evaluations – from decision-makers (strategic level) to those implementing change, projects, initiatives (operational level)



A change in the subject of evaluations – from interventions and isolated efforts to portfolios and systems



A shift in methodological efforts: From trying to perfect methods for illuminating progressive process (attribution – from left to right); to retrospective and evaluative processes (contribution – from right to left)

And this might call for a shift in our ideas of what valuable knowledge is



FROM A FOCUS ON PRECISION AND EVIDENCE (SCIENTIFICATION OF EVALUATION)

TO A FOCUS ON RELEVANCE AND ASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF EFFORTS TO AN OVERALL DEVELOPMENT ('DIRECTIONALITY').



OM PLUSS

Siden 2001 har vi bistået virksomheder, organisationer og samfundsinstitutioner i at udvikle og realisere deres potentialer. Det sker via udvikling af governance, strategi, ledelse og organisation, samt ved at skabe overblik, beslutningsgrundlag og læring gennem strategiske analyser og evalueringer. I vores adfærd og tænkning styres vi af tre værdier: Værdiskabelse, fairness og troværdighed. Konsulenterne arbejder over hele landet ud fra vores kontorer i Aarhus og København.