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# Evaluating in complexity :

*What have we learned about designing  
and running evaluations?*

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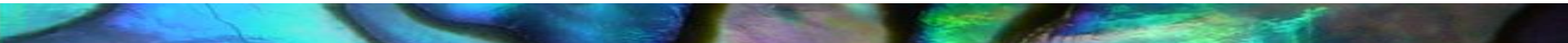
**Judy Oakden** : Director, Pragmatica Limited – a member of the Kinnect Group



*Presented at American Evaluation Association,  
Atlanta, 28 September, 2016*

## What we will cover today

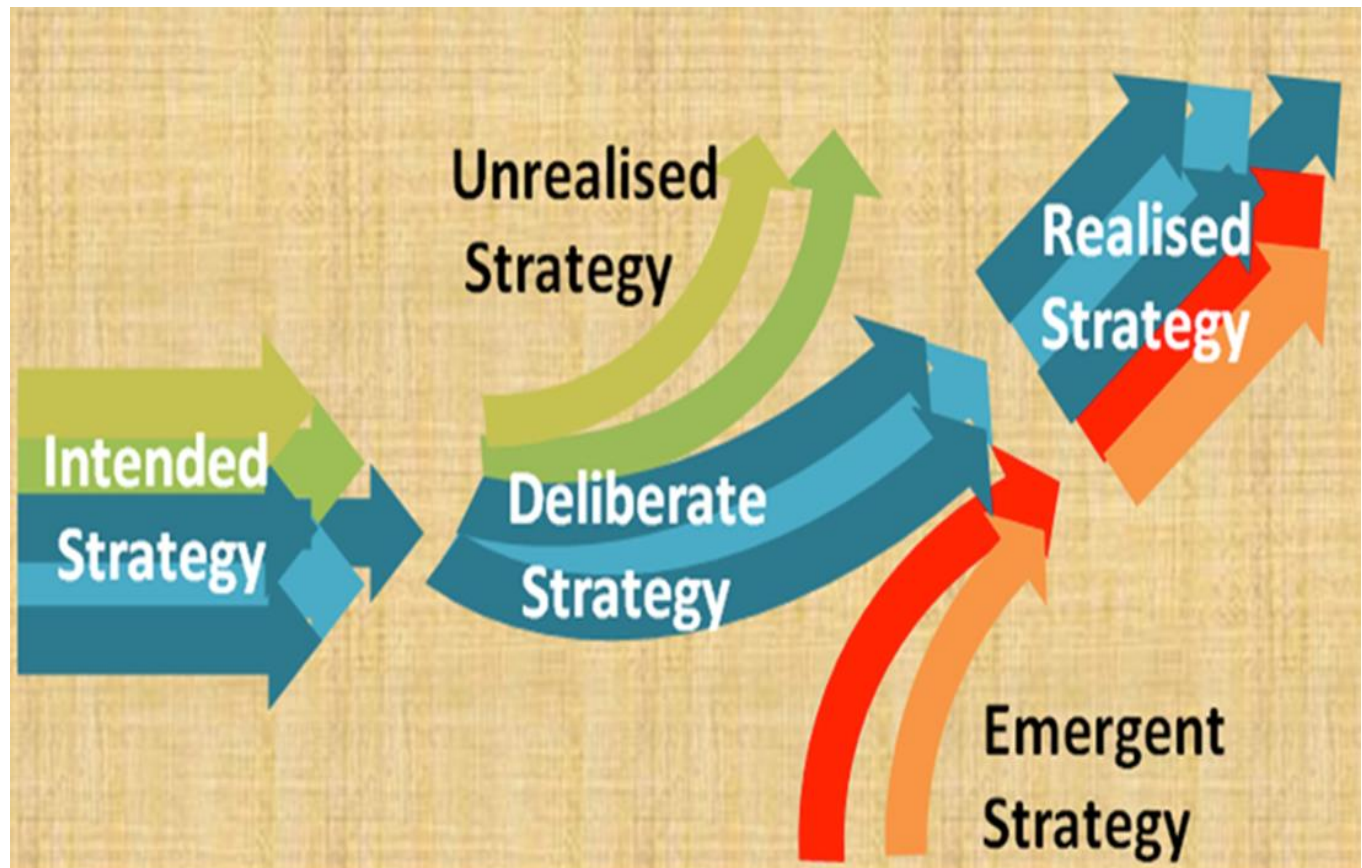
- 01** What is the challenge?
- 02** Case study: approaches that help evaluate in complex settings
- 03** Look to the future



# You will come away with...

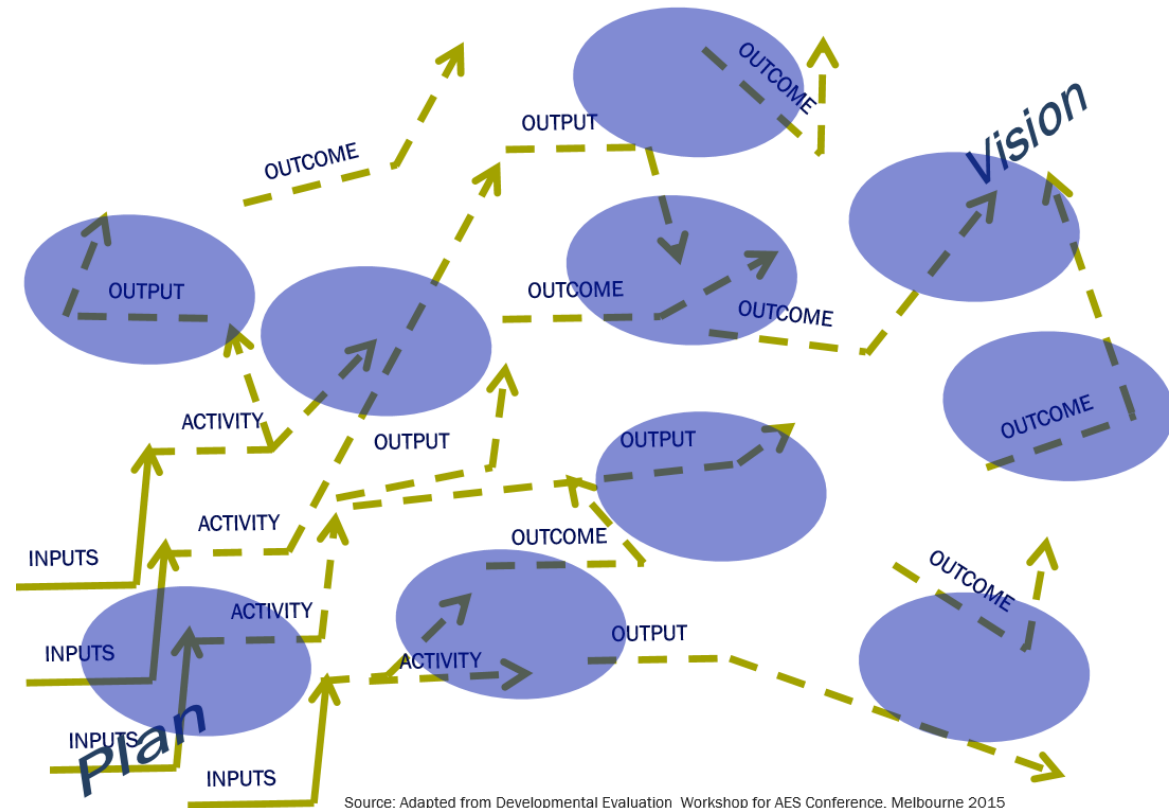
- Two approaches :
  - Adaptive rubric
  - Pattern spotting tool
- Know how and why these tools are useful
- Why Eoyong and Berkas still relevant today

# What are we grappling with?



Source: Henry Mintzberg, Sumatra Ghoshal and James B Quinn, The Strategy process, Prentice Hall 1998. [http://ssireview.org/up\\_for\\_debate/article/strategic\\_philanthropy](http://ssireview.org/up_for_debate/article/strategic_philanthropy)

# Which translates to this...



Source: Adapted from Developmental Evaluation Workshop for AES Conference, Melbourne 2015  
Presented by Kate McKegg, Judy Oakden & Michael Quinn Patton

# Key aspects of evaluation-specific methodology

1. Establish criteria
2. Construct standards
3. Measure performance
4. Reach evaluative conclusions

Nunns, Peace, & Witten (2015)



# Case study



## Case study

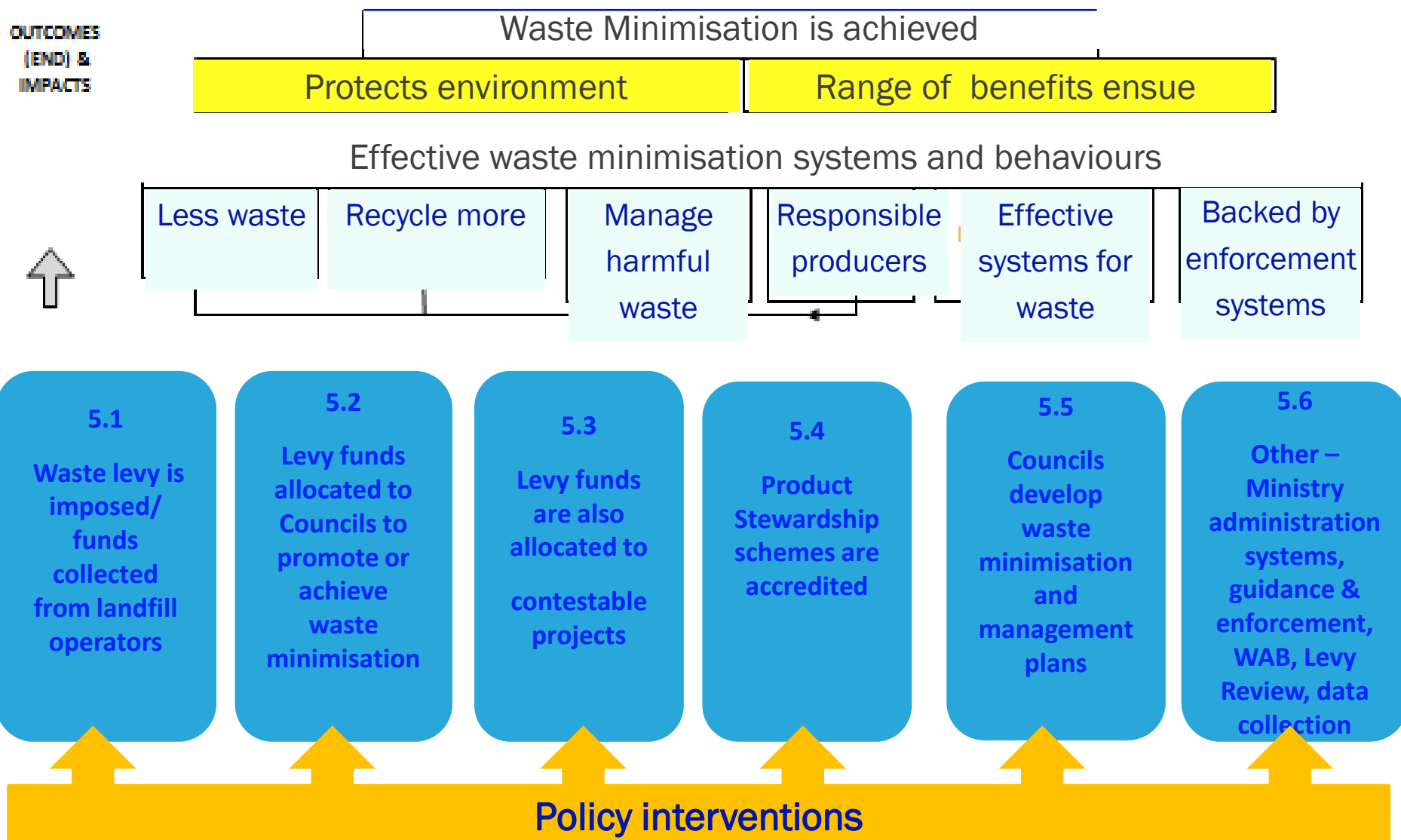
# Evaluating in uncertainty

- New Act implemented
- To understand implementation progress
- Stakeholders' perception of progress
- Many aspects



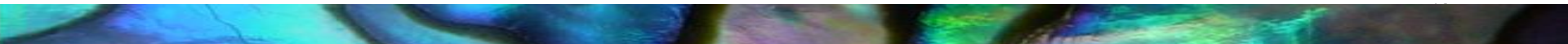


## Case study



Source: Oakden, J & Bear, C. (2011) *Managing complexity in evaluation*. Presented at ANZEA Conference, 7 August, 2011. Wellington.

# 1. Establish evaluative criteria



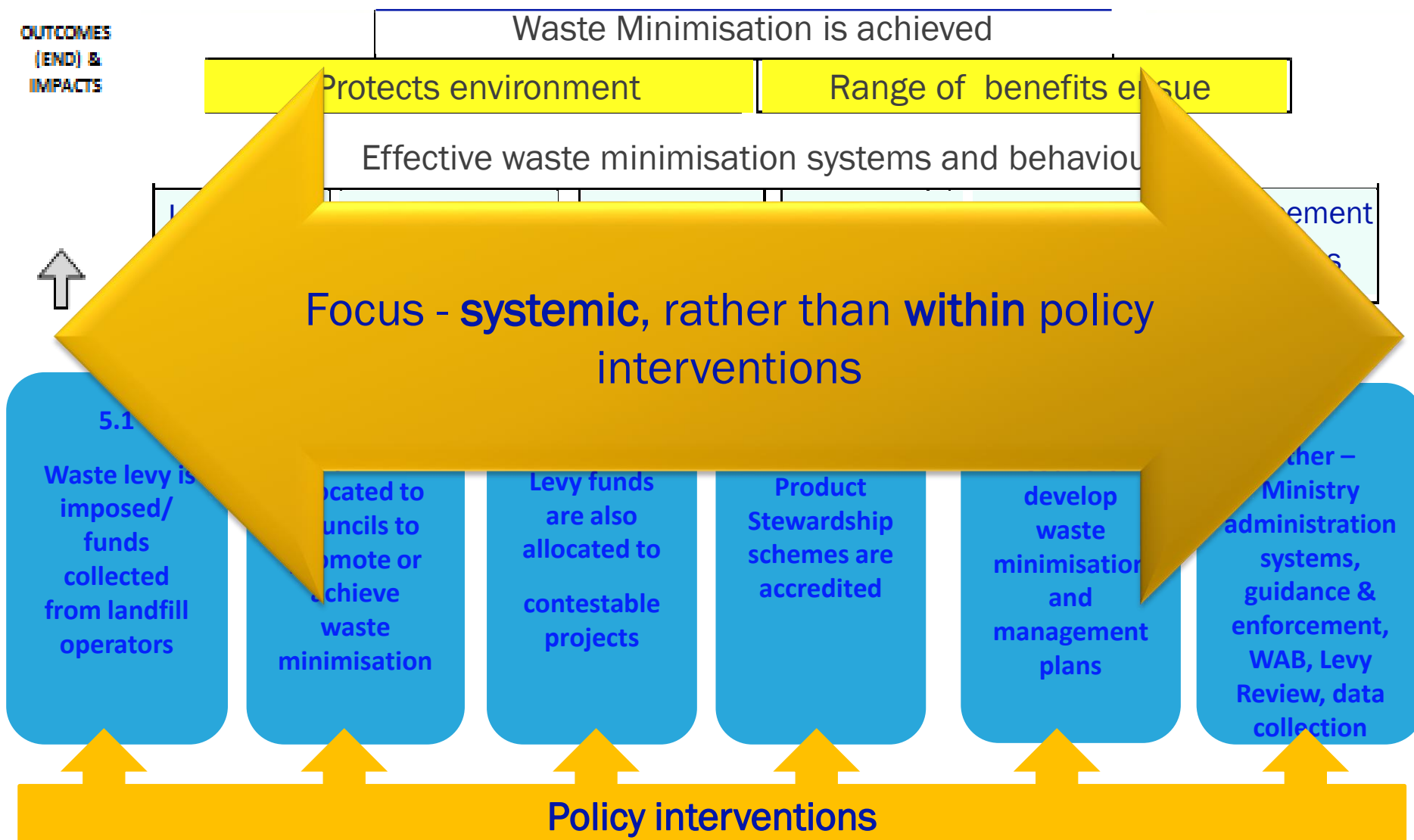
## Case study

# In a nutshell

- New business systems
- Processes for funding
- Working in different ways
- Different expectations (operational & planning roles different from in the past)
- New reporting and evaluation roles



## Case study



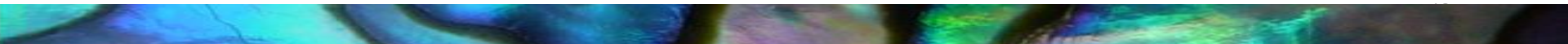
Source: Oakden, J & Bear, C. (2011) *Managing complexity in evaluation*. Presented at ANZEA Conference, 7 August, 2011. Wellington.

Eoyang and Berkas suggest...

## Simple rules

“A short list of simple rules gives coherence across scales of a complex system”

Eoyang and Berkas 1999



## Case study

# Basic 'rules' underpinning implementation

- Share information to build awareness and compliance
- Efficient administrative processes in operation
- Effective relationship building to support collaboration in the sector
- Use of good practice to build capability and capacity (including infrastructure) across the sector

## Reflection

# Could be expressed as 'simple rules'

### Evaluative criteria

- Information to build awareness and compliance
- Administrative efficiency of the Act (Ministry's performance)
- Effective relationships – collaboration in the sector
- Good practice – building capability and capacity (including infrastructure) across the sector

### Simple rules

- Share information that builds awareness and compliance
- Administer efficiently
- Create and sustain collaborative relationships
- Build capability and capacity to minimise waste

Source: Oakden, J & Eoyang, G (2015) *Evaluation rubrics look easy but can be hard to do well: lessons from the field*. Presented at AEA conference, 13 November, 2015. Chicago

Eoyang and Berkas suggest...

## Use inclusive process

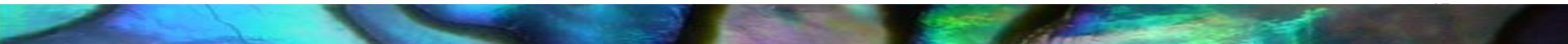
- Co-evolve and design evaluation plan with key stakeholders where it is to be used
- Involve participants in design
- Match the evaluation to the developmental stage of the system

Eoyang and Berkas 1999





## 2. Construct standards

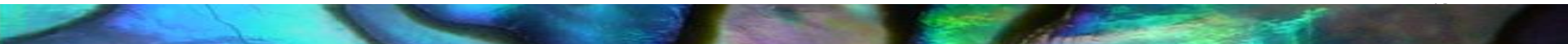


## Case study

# Generic performance rating

Rating level	Description
Excellent (Always)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear example of exemplary performance or very good practice in this domain: no weaknesses.</li></ul>
Very good (Almost always)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very good to excellent performance on virtually all aspects; while strong overall not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence.</li></ul>
Good (Mostly, with some exceptions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses, but nothing serious.</li></ul>
Emerging: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fair performance, some serious, but non-fatal weaknesses on a few aspects.</li></ul>
Not yet emerging: (Barely or not at all)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No clear evidence has yet emerged that the aspect of performance has taken effect.</li></ul>
Poor: Never (Or occasionally with clear weakness evident)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board or on crucial aspects.</li></ul>

### 3. Measure performance



## Case study

# Data collected mapped to evaluative criteria

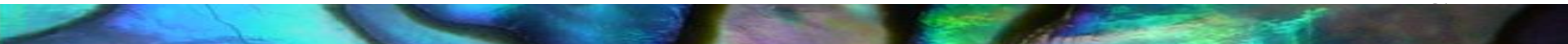
	Overall rating	Online survey	Stakeholder focus groups	Individual in-depth interviews	Administrative data
Administrative efficiency		X			X
Effective relationships		X	X	X	
Good practice		X	X	X	
Information, awareness and compliance		X	X	X	

Eoyang and Berkas suggest...

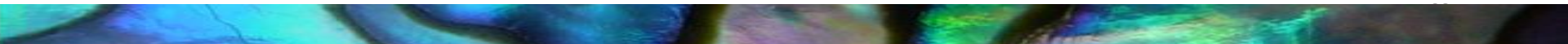
# Data collection

- Use mixed method approach
- Track over time
- Capture noise

Eoyang & Berkas 1999



## 4. Reach evaluative conclusions



## Reflection

# When undertaking data synthesis...

- What's more important?
- How to capture this?
- Deal breakers?

**All aspects of performance are not created equal – if we treat them as equal this leads to judgments that don't give us the best result**



## Case study

# What's important may change over time





## Case study

# Example

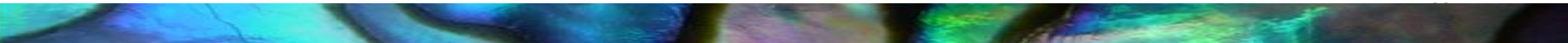
Evaluation of stakeholder perceptions of implementation of Act	Level of importance during the evaluation	
	At start	By the end
Extent to which there is....		
Administrative efficiency	Moderate	High
Effective relationships	Moderate	High
Good practice	Low	Low
Information, awareness and compliance	High	Moderate

Eoyang and Berkas suggest...

# Keep design current

- Be explicit about findings and meanings of findings in various contexts
- Evaluate and revise design often

Eoyang and Berkas 1999



## Case study

# How we made the judgements: pattern spotters






Generalisation:	In general I noticed ...	For an overview
Exception	In general...except...	Outliers?
Contradiction	On the one hand...but on the other hand...	Disturbances?
Surprise	I was surprised by...	Noise?
Puzzle	I wonder...	Alternative explanations?

Adaptation of Pattern Spotters from HSD Wiki [http://wiki.hsdinstitute.org/pattern\\_spotters](http://wiki.hsdinstitute.org/pattern_spotters)

Also see: Capper, P. & Williams, B. (2004) *Enhancing evaluation using systems concepts CHAT*. Presented at the American Evaluation Association Conference, November, 2004, City [http://www.bobwilliams.co.nz/Systems\\_Resources\\_files/activity.pdf](http://www.bobwilliams.co.nz/Systems_Resources_files/activity.pdf)

## Case study

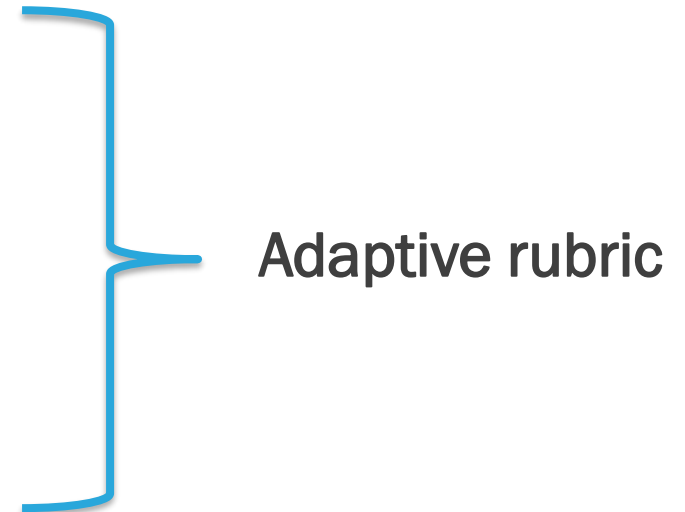
# What the final reporting looks like

Evaluation of stakeholder perceptions of implementation of Act  Extent to which there is....	Rating					
	Poor	Not yet emerging	Emerging	Good	Very good	Excellent
Administrative efficiency						
Effective relationships						
Good practice						
Information, awareness and compliance						
Overall rating						

## Reflection

# Power comes from combining

- Evaluative criteria
- Generic performance rating
- Level of importance in context
- With the pattern spotting tool



# Summary - we've come a long way....

Eoyang & Berkas  
1999 provided a  
guide for:

- evaluating in  
uncertainty
- evaluator role in  
this context

Much holds true  
today



# Questions



# To contact

You are welcome to cite this work.

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rubrics as 'simple rules' and  
evaluating in uncertainty.**



# For further reference...

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