Evaluating in complexity:
Nearly 20 years on what have we learned?
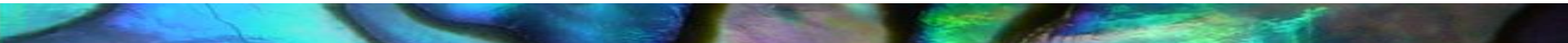
Judy Oakden : **Director, Pragmatica Limited – a member of the Kinnect Group**

Kinnect Group

Presented at Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association ,
Wellington, 18-20 July, 2016

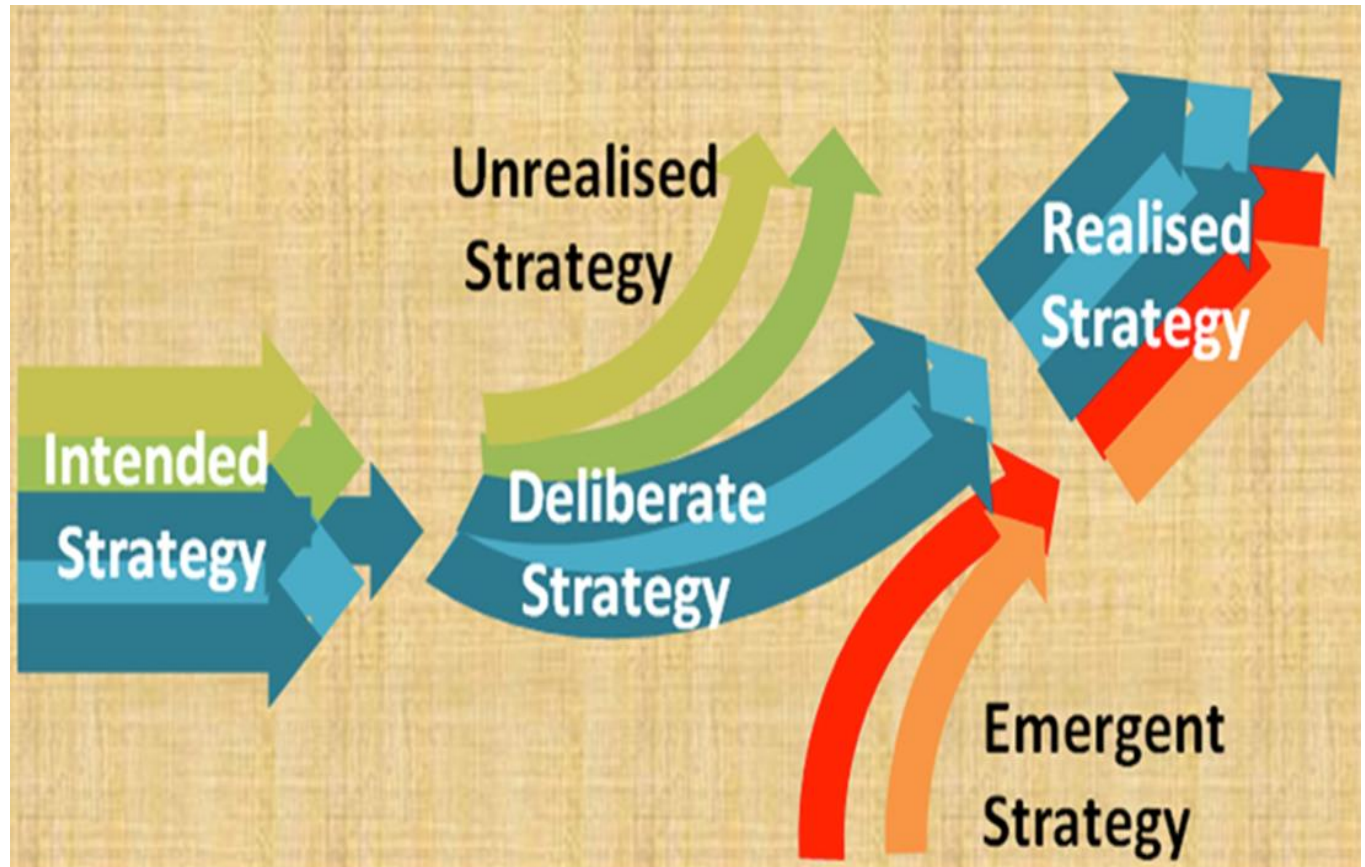**What we will cover today**

01   What grappling with?

02   Two approaches which aid evaluation in complexity

03   Challenges for our practice going forward

You will come away with…

➤ Two systems approaches :

  ➤ Generic rubric
  ➤ Pattern spotting tool

➤ Knowing how and why these tools are useful

➤ A brief update: Eoyang & Berkas 1999

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

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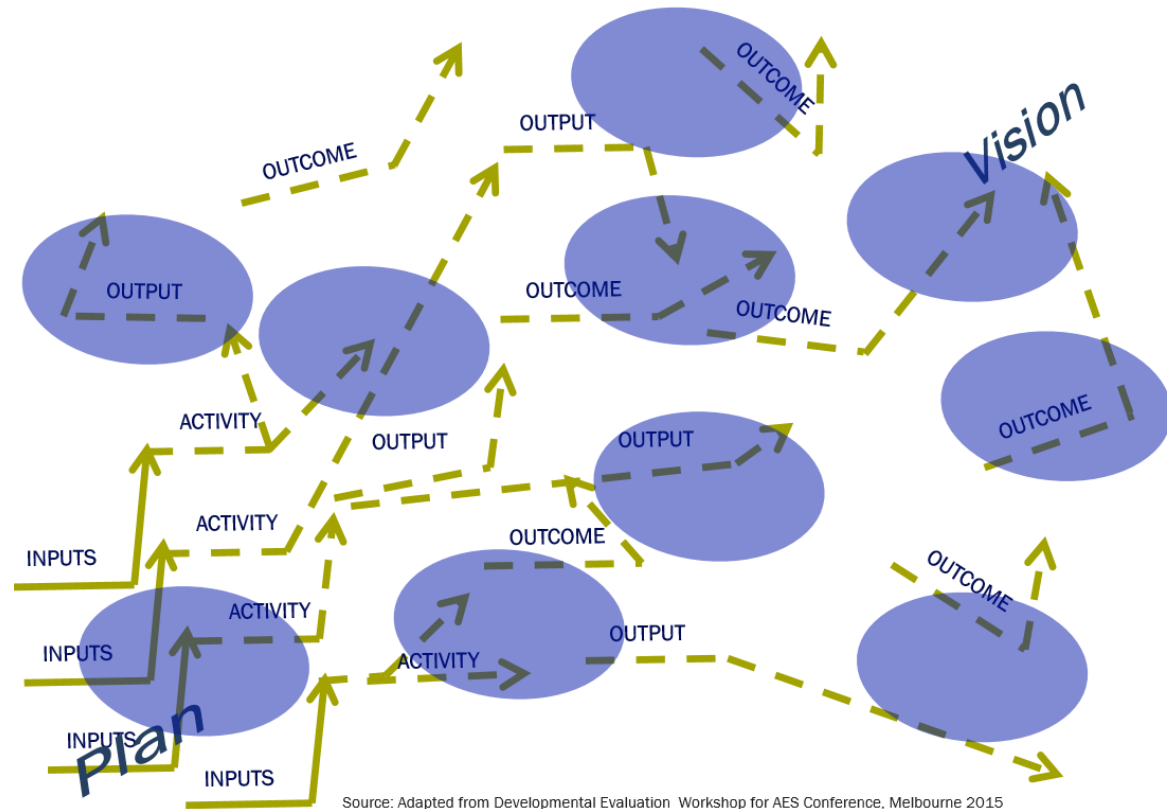
Source: Adapted from Developmental Evaluation Workshop for AES Conference, Melbourne 2015
Presented by Kate McKegg, Judy Oakden & Michael Quinn Patton

Generic rubrics aid evaluation in complex and uncertain environments

Simple rules

➢ Alignment
➢ Cohesion
➢ Separation

How do Boids Work? A Flocking Simulation
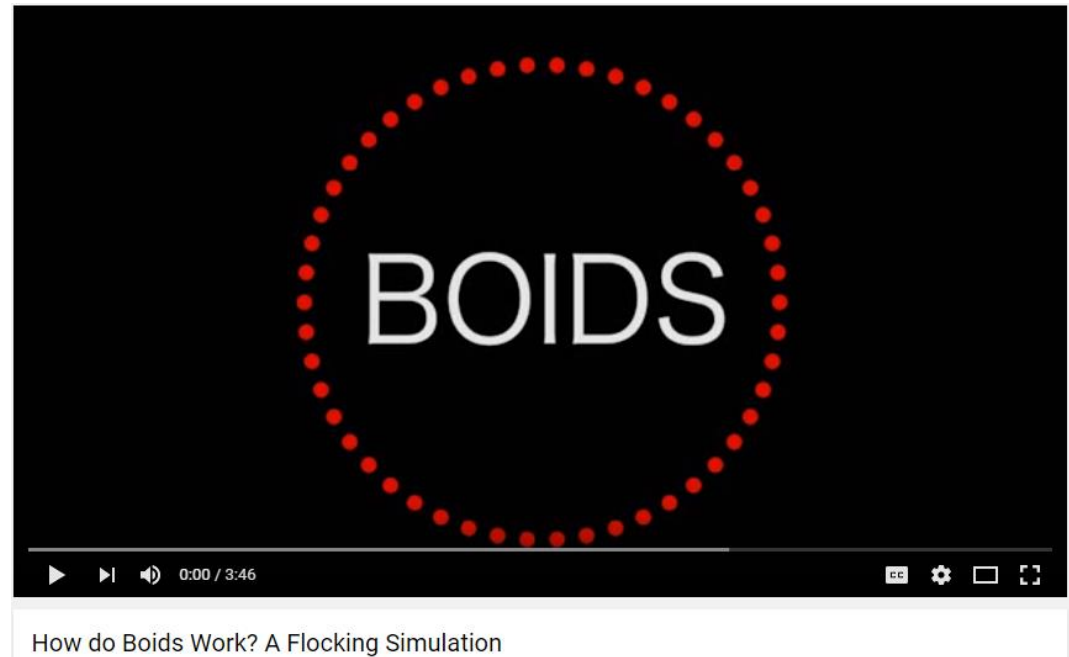
Evaluation equivalent is generic rubric

- ➢ Flexible
- ➢ Adapt to change
- ➢ Relevant to context

To address merit, worth and significance in uncertainty

Three parts to a generic rubric

1. Evaluation criteria or aspects of performance

2. Generic performance rating
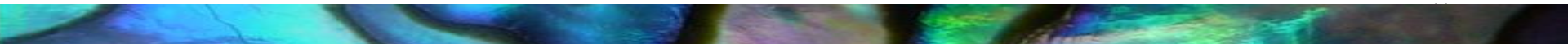
3. Levels of importance
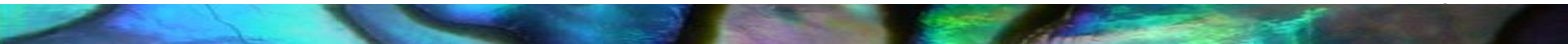
Case study

1. Developing evaluative criteria

Evaluating in uncertainty

➢ New Act implemented

➢ To understand implementation progress

➢ Stakeholders' perception of progress

➢ Many aspects

Case study

Waste Minimisation is achieved

Protects environment	Range of benefits ensue

Effective waste minimisation systems and behaviours

Less waste	Recycle more	Manage harmful waste	Responsible producers	Effective systems for waste	Backed by enforcement systems

5.1 Waste levy is imposed/ funds collected from landfill operators	5.2 Levy funds allocated to Councils to promote or achieve waste minimisation	5.3 Levy funds are also allocated to contestable projects	5.4 Product Stewardship schemes are accredited	5.5 Councils develop waste minimisation and management plans	5.6 Other – Ministry administration systems, guidance & enforcement, WAB, Levy Review, data collection

Policy interventions

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

OUTCOMES (END) & IMPACTS

Waste Minimisation is achieved

Protects environment | Range of benefits ensue

Effective waste minimisation systems and behaviour

Focus - **systemic**, rather than **within** policy interventions

5.1

Waste levy is imposed/ funds collected from landfill operators

...ocated to ...uncils to ...omote or ...chieve waste minimisation

Levy funds are also allocated to contestable projects

Product Stewardship schemes are accredited

develop waste minimisation and management plans

...ther – Ministry administration systems, guidance & enforcement, WAB, Levy Review, data collection

Policy interventions

15

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

# 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

2. Generic performance rating
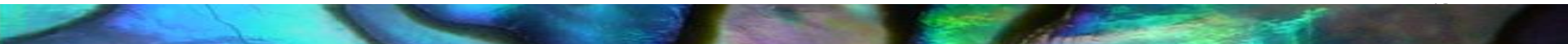
Generic performance rating

Rating level	Description
Excellent (Always)	• Clear example of exemplary performance or very good practice in this domain: no weaknesses.
Very good (Almost always)	• Very good to excellent performance on virtually all aspects; while strong overall not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence.
Good (Mostly, with some exceptions)	• Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses, but nothing serious.
Emerging: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions)	• Fair performance, some serious, but non-fatal weaknesses on a few aspects.
Not yet emerging: (Barely or not at all)	• No clear evidence has yet emerged that the aspect of performance has taken effect.
Poor: Never (Or occasionally with clear weakness evident)	• Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board or on crucial aspects.

Source: Adapted from Davidson, E. Jane (2005) *Evaluation Methodology Basics, The Nuts and Bolts of Sound Evaluation*, Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage

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	

Data collected mapped to evaluative criteria (Simplified examples not actual data)

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

3. Levels of importance
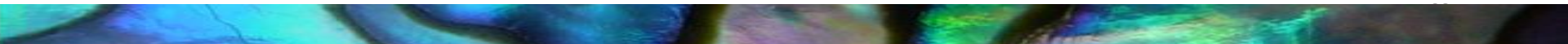
When undertaking data synthesis...

➢ 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

What's important may change over time

Introduction

- Implement Act
- People know about it and start changing behaviour
- Administrative processes set up

Growth

- Focus on developing relationships
- Collaboration starts to occur
- Administrative processes honed

Maturity

- Learn what best practice looks like and start to document this

Decline

- Aspects of process no longer fit for function – amendments adjustments made

Example

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

How we made the judgements: pattern spotters

Generalisation:	In general I noticed …
Exception	In general…except…
Contradiction	On the one hand…but on the other hand…
Surprise	I was surprised by…
Puzzle	I wonder…

Adaptation of Pattern Spotters from HSD Wiki 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

Example of making overall judgements (Simplified examples not actual data)

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

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			🟠			

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

Wide range of systems approaches & methods now used in evaluation

Purpose	Approaches and methods	
Describing and analysing situations	➢ Causal loop diagrams ➢ System dynamics ➢ Social network analysis ➢ Outcome mapping	➢ Process monitoring of impacts ➢ Strategic assumption surfacing and testing
Changing and managing situations	➢ Strategic areas assessment ➢ The CDE Model ➢ Assumption-based planning	➢ Cynefin ➢ Solution focus ➢ Viable system model
Learning about situations	➢ Cultural historical activity theory ➢ Soft systems methodology ➢ Critical systems heuristics	➢ Scenario technique ➢ Systemic questioning ➢ Circular dialogues ➢ Dialectical methods of inquiry

BUT... still challenging terrain for evaluators

"It's hard to 'talk systems' to most people without losing them immediately."

Source: AEA Systems TIG. (2015) *Summary proceedings 2015 Systems (Un)conference*. American Evaluation Association. (p. 12)

Photo source: http://www.shiftworkplace.com/your-accent-shrinking-the-elephant-in-the-room

Summary

- Systems thinking approaches of benefit - practical ideas:

    - Generic rubrics

    - Pattern spotters

- Approaches work for Government and NGO's

- Eoyang & Berkas 1999 advice still holds.

Questions

To contact

You are welcome to cite this work.

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For further reference...

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