

Connecting Foresight and Evaluation

Description

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This posting has been prompted by an email shared by Petra Mikkolainen, Senior Consultant – Development Evaluation, with [NIRAS](#), a Finnish consulting firm. It follows my attendance at a UNESCO workshop last week that also looked at bridging Foresight and Evaluation

A good place to start is this NIRAS guide: [14 mental barriers to integrating futures-thinking in evaluations and how to overcome them](#)

A new trend is emerging simultaneously in the field of evaluation and foresight: combining foresight with evaluation and evaluation with foresight. Evaluators realise that evaluation must become more future sensitive, while futures thinking experts consider that foresight should use more lessons from past events to strengthen the analysis of possible futures. This new mindset is useful, given that evaluation and foresight complement each other like two pieces of a puzzle. However, before we can move on with the debate, we must clarify what we mean by each concept and related key terms. This discussion paper serves as your quick guide to evaluation and foresight terminology.

Then there is [“Evaluation must become future-sensitive” easy to implement ideas on how to do it practice](#)

Evaluation “by definition” assesses past events to give recommendations for future action. There is an underlying assumption that what has (or has not) worked in the past will also work (or will not) in the future. In other words, it is supposed that the context in which the past events occurred will remain the same. This idea seems problematic in the current world, where volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) are the new normal. One solution is to integrate methods of foresight into the evaluation project cycle. This idea of combining evaluation and foresight is relatively new and untested in the sector. This discussion paper proposes ways this integration can be done in practice in different steps of the evaluation project cycle.

Then there is: [14 mental barriers to integrating futures-thinking in evaluations and how to overcome them](#)

There are two types of basic human reactions to new things: (1) “Yes, let’s try it!” and (2) “No, I don’t want that!”. We might observe one of these experiences in our minds when thinking about integrating foresight concepts and tools into development

evaluation to make it more valuable and responsive to support transformative change. The danger with the first response is a lack of critical thinking about whether the approach is relevant to the situation. On the other hand, the second response might prevent reaching new levels of learning and co-creation. In this blog, I explore 14 types of resistance to applying futures-thinking in evaluation and suggest solutions with an attitude of positive curiosity.

One of the foregoing methods mentioned on page 10 of the second document is ParEvo:

The [ParEvo](#) tool developed by Rick Davies is a web-assisted programme for building future (or past) scenarios in a participatory manner (Davies, 2022). It has been used in evaluations, and as described by Davies “When used to look forward ParEvo can be seen as a form of participatory exploration of alternate futures. When used to look back it can be seen as a form of participatory public history”. [The website](#) includes plenty of information on its applications.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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