

Evaluation as the Conscience of Freedom and Democracy

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It wasn't long ago that democratic political systems along with the free-market forces of globalization were generally expected to spread unchecked throughout the world. Only five years ago most would have found it unbelievable that the leading democratic free-market economies of the world would have significant trouble competing with non-democratic state-run economies and far flung terrorist organizations. Now this is obviously the case, and these competitors are aggressively spreading their influence around the world. This paper suggests the perhaps counter-intuitive notion that improvements to the theory and practice of evaluation can play a perhaps critical role in improving the relative performance of market-based democratic systems and explores what some of these potential improvements might entail.

This essay suggests that freedom and democracy will not be sustainable unless all participant groups, i.e. citizens, judges, legislators and executives 1) have the knowledge and motivation necessary to promote ongoing progress and 2) possess the integrity necessary to inspire public confidence. For example, a case could be made that each of these participant groups in the current American system seem to be missing at least one of these two requirements. What will it take to improve this situation? This essay suggests that improvements to the theory and practice of evaluation will not only be necessary to enable these two requirements to be achieved but also introduces some of the needed improvements.

The open question is whether these improvements will flourish fast enough to enable evaluation to play its vital role *as the conscience of free and democratic societies* before it is too late?

The Problem

No matter how high the integrity and expectations are of the participants in a democratic system, without a high level of consciousness of system performance and the effect of participant behavior on this performance, it is unrealistic to assume that the system will progress. Eleanor Chelimsky mentions that although "our government builds in democratic protections through tensions created by fragmented powers, checks and balances, agency independence and legislative oversight", "this structure depends for its authority on the support of a *well-informed public*: that is, an electorate that possesses the willingness and capability to debate, protest, and correct problems in government once they become known" (Chelimsky, 2006).

In the past when Americans have been empowered with meaningful evaluative information to guide their actions, including their votes, they have lived up to their responsibility to protect and serve the public good while also seeking to improve their own personal lives. As Thomas Jefferson said in 1816, after eight years as U.S. President, "The functionaries of every government have propensities to command at will the liberty and

property of their constituents. There is no safe deposit for these but with the people themselves, nor can they be safe with them without information. Where the press is free and everyman able to read, all is safe.”

But unfortunately this is not the way things have been working lately. Policy decisions are being made without public discourse or deliberation, an essential quality of democracy (House, 2006). Unfortunately, evaluation, as a force for accountability, learning and development has to some extent and for various reasons fallen out of favor and lost its potency in the US (Chelimsky, 2006). Chelimsky suggests some reasons why evaluation has not been able to facilitate a well informed electorate because: 1) performing evaluations is so arduous that most of the energy of evaluators is spent working in an inhospitable environment, 2) the legislature has traditionally held primary responsibility for informing the public, with just getting the results of evaluations in the public record requiring heroic effort 3) involving and relating the public to a particular evaluation, rather than the sponsor or immediate user of an evaluation, has only relatively recently been practiced, 4) dissemination of information has been left to the press. With the continuation of this inhospitable environment, the legislature not performing oversight or dissemination duties, the challenges of participative evaluation, and the press only interested in short dramatic sound bites with popular appeal, it is clear that the reason for the root problem, an uninformed public, is that the mechanisms for creating and disseminating important evaluative information in the United States are broken.

Therefore, the question to be answered here is, what will it take for evaluation to regain the strength to enable all participants in a democracy, including the executives, legislators and citizens to be more conscientious in seeking information, making decisions, and following up with appropriate action? If this problem can be solved and it is feasible to enable the solution to be implemented in a practical way, then

democracy will be more effective at producing positive outcomes and impacts, freedom will reign, and humanity will be able to seek and achieve true progress at all levels of society.

This essay not only explores what current thought leaders in the field of evaluation have to say on the role of evaluation in democracy, but also suggests that these thought leaders have made significant progress in coming up with new solutions. The essay also includes a review and critique of recent articles on the subject of governance, evaluation and democracy coming out of the European Evaluation Society. These articles are featured in the first issue of the journal of *Evaluation* in 2006. Some gaps in current evaluation models, tools and methods will also be mentioned, particularly those that will make the new contributions practical to implement. As a follow-on to this review, some potential solutions for better enabling the field of evaluation to practically implement the new solutions and to play its critical role as the conscience of democracy and the free market will be introduced.

Anyone attending the keynote speeches of Eleanor Chelimsky and Ernest House at the American Evaluation Association (AEA) conference in November of 2006 could not help but feel disturbed. They both mentioned mounting challenges that are making it increasingly difficult for evaluation to play its role in assessing government policy and programs and in informing the public. House warned of how increasing privatization and internalization of evaluation, e.g. the testing of drugs by their developers, is introducing unacceptable bias. Both suggested that as a result of a tightening in information flow, e.g. increasing amounts of information being classified as top secret and a biasing of evaluation results, the ability of evaluators to inform legislators and citizens has been greatly undermined. (Chelimsky, 2006; House, 2006)

Despite these disturbing trends, Chelimsky encouraged us to remain optimistic. She

reasoned that we are in an information-tightening phase in a repeating cycle that, as in the past, would begin to loosen again, particularly if evaluators stick to their professional and ethical principles. Chelimsky also said that since there is no question that evaluation of government exists to inform the public, the ultimate client or user, and that the current methods for doing so are broken that “evaluators, in the public interest, may need to think of new ways – and take on new duties – to ensure the appropriate dissemination of their findings.” She also mentioned a reason for hope that this was possible. This was her belief that evaluators will eventually get a tremendous boost in the ability to disseminate their findings if and when information communication technologies, e.g. the Internet and Web, reach their promised potential for personalized dissemination of meaningful evaluation results to citizens. Could it be that such a more ideal form of inter-networked communication, one that conveniently disseminates custom, concise, comprehensive and coherent evaluative information from and to each participant perspective, is within our grasp? For the sake of the health of democratic market-based systems, let us hope so.

Role of Evaluation in Democracy

With a healthy dose of both skepticism and hope, we must seek to find new solutions to the challenges of enabling evaluation to improve our broken democratic systems. This review of the first issue of the *Evaluation* journal in 2006, dedicated to the subject of governance, democracy and evaluation, has turned up some fresh approaches worth serious consideration. As seems to be the norm for this journal, the articles tend to be theoretical or descriptive in nature, so one cannot expect much beyond case studies in terms of empirical support. Nonetheless, these works are thought provoking and appear to represent advancements or contributions that the American evaluation community might benefit

from including in their toolkits. The bold idealism inherent in some of the proposed methods is admirable. But be forewarned that improved communication and information technology will be necessary to make some of the underlying assumptions more realistic. Only then will some of the methods scale as efficiently as would be necessary for the assumptions to hold. So although some of the proposed methods present problematic issues, most seem to have potential value in certain applications, and some have the potential to be combined with other methods and tools in building a more coherent and conscientious approach to evaluation.

Nicoletta Stame, the European Evaluation Society’s President for 2004-5, provided an excellent introduction to the topic within the European context in her leading article. Stame mentioned the goal in addressing this topic, both in this issue and at the annual EES conference, was to explain how evaluation could make government more democratic. Stame remarked that this goal would not be consider too ambitious as long as they were able to improve existing evaluation tools in order to meet the challenges of significant administrative reform taking place, particularly in the European Union. Although perfectly aware of the challenges ahead, Stame appears reasonably satisfied with the progress they’ve made thus far. (Stame, 2006)

Ernest House gave the keynote address at the European Evaluation Societies conference dedicated to the same subject, and his words were recorded in this issue of *Evaluation* along with the articles of other presenters. He starts out with a downright depressing account of evaluation and government in the US today and ends up with a recommended solution for current challenges in Europe. No one is better known for explicating the ties between evaluation and democracy than Ernest House (Alkin, 2004). In his address he gave a scalding assessment of trends in evaluation in the United States that have transpired under the current

George W. Bush administration. He chastised the way 'control of information beyond anything in my experience' has 'seriously eroded' 'the American tradition of open government'. He also criticized the 'methodological fundamentalism' that has been 'enforced by government edict' which basically says that there is only one right way to discover the truth, the randomized experiment. (House, 2006)

Perhaps the worst indictment comes when House cites numerous highly credible sources claiming that the current Bush administration 'manipulates (scientific) information to conform to policy'. Then he asked, 'in a world in which the government controls and distorts information, what is the role for evaluators? As propagandists?' This then leads to his primary warning, 'such control of information threatens not only evaluation but democracy itself.' (House, 2006) In contrast, House recognized a third wave of opportunity that was in the process of emerging for the evaluation profession in Europe. He mentioned how EU officials believe that in order to legitimize EU government they must demonstrate that their programs produce results. (House, 2006)

There does seem to be a tendency for present day Europeans to demand that politicians and government programs prove they meet expectations. Perhaps at this time in history this is something Americans can learn from their European counterparts. Although House prefaced his talk with the statement 'beware Americans bearing advice' as the current day corollary to the old European saying 'beware Greeks bearing gifts', House goes on to encourage his audience to consider many aspects of present day evaluation theory and technique prevalent in the US. He then encourages evaluators to actively engage with politics and in the process to adapt his Deliberative Democratic Evaluation principles of inclusion, dialogue and deliberation (House, 2006; House and Howe, 1999). European culture appears ripe for accepting and benefiting

from the augmentation of current European practices with such a method. The method would enable Europeans to build from what appears to be comparative strengths in dialogue and deliberation while emphasizing the potential for gains resulting from improvements in the area of inclusion.

In 'Evaluation of and for Democracy', Anders Hanberger of Umea University in Sweden recognizes that real world governments that aspire to be called democracies are not always 'of and for the people'. Hanberger provides a framework for broadly describing three distinct archetypes of democratic evaluations designed to reflect the distinctions found between different democratic philosophies: the elitist, the participatory, and the discursive. Different styles of democratic evaluations are proposed for each. The three archetypes not only recognize that all democratic systems are not based on the same philosophy and as a result are not implemented in the same way, but also suggests that, therefore, these different democracies should not be evaluated in the same way. The evaluation archetypes are each different in terms of evaluation use/function, focus, inclusiveness, dialogue and deliberation, as well as evaluator role. It is intended that this will enable evaluators to select the appropriate evaluation methods for a situation by matching the best fitting archetype name with the type of democratic situation being evaluated. It is my opinion that such a device might be useful in appropriately evaluating how a certain 'democratic' system meets its goals, but the results of some of these types of evaluation, particularly the elitist type, should not be misconstrued to always evaluate how well a government is meeting the needs of its people. Also care should be taken by evaluators using this instrument to not to assume that all aspects of a given approach are appropriate for a particular situation. (Hanberger, 2006)

In 'Economic Evaluation in an Age of Uncertainty' Giuseppe Pennisi of the Advanced

School of Public Administration in Italy and Pasquale L. Scandizzo of the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" in Italy outline their arguments for evaluating policies, programs and projects as economic options with different possible future effect, impact and value-creation potentials. They point out that evaluation of policies and programs is a primary task of evaluation, yet there is little consensus on how this should be done with traditional cost-benefit, checklist or stakeholder interview approaches all seeming to lack some credibility. Their proposed options-based evaluation method, derived from their discovery of recent economic work attributing value to 'rights', is discussed in the context of promoting good governance and evaluating opportunities. Their approach has merit as a method for augmenting existing evaluation techniques, particularly as a way to improve the way opportunity costs are handled. (Pennisi and Scandizzo, 2006). The implementation of options-based approaches can enhance the validity of evaluations by improving the way social benefit-cost methods reflect reality. The method requires substantially increasing the number of different options explicitly considered in an evaluation. As a result, the main concern with the method is the extent to which this expanded scope is practical given current tools. Nonetheless, since good evaluation requires opportunities (and risks) be considered, particularly in terms of their relative potential to positively or negatively affect evaluand resources and in turn affect the ability of the evaluand to create value for stakeholders, it should be done whenever practical. Treating opportunity as a resource or option rather than as a cost can improve evaluations and also encourage evaluators to give external factors in the environment the emphasis they deserve.

In 'Performance Information for Democracy- The Missing Link?' by Christopher Pollitt of Erasmus University in The Netherlands, Pollitt looks into the use of performance information by different actors in a democracy, specifically ministers,

parliamentarians and citizens. Pollitt points out how critical it is to consider these 'end users' when determining whether evaluation contributes to the quality of democratic discourse and decision-making. After conducting a literature review, Pollitt concludes that the research is incomplete and that the evidence that is available suggests that these 'end users' rarely value the results of evaluations. I didn't find Pollitt's research and analysis of 'end use' as helpful or potentially enlightening as it could have been. Perhaps Pollitt could benefit from researching and incorporating more insight into the 'subjective' aspects, rather than the 'objective' aspects, that determine usefulness of evaluative information. This issue seems to me to be more adequately covered by Bezzi as well as Pollitt's Erasmus University colleagues, Van der Meer and Edelenbos (see below reviews). Although Pollitt is obviously justified in being disappointed by the historical amount and quality of 'end use' of evaluation results, one supposedly negative finding, that as many as 12,000 British citizens were willing to spend almost \$6 each on a government issued evaluation report, actually could be viewed somewhat positively. Certainly timing and timeliness as distinguished and noted by Pollitt are both important impacts on usefulness. We would all do well to recognize the point that citizens do use performance information when it is convenient and relevant to immediate decisions at hand. With this in mind it is important to heed the recommendation of seeking "ways to deliver it to citizens 'just-in-time'". (Pollitt, 2006)

In 'Evaluation Pragmatics' Claudio Bezzi, an evaluation consultant in Italy correctly points out the importance of considering the context of the program and each stakeholder in determining the meaning and significance of a program. Bezzi fully recognizes the difficulty of understanding an evaluand in all of its complexity (the 'Black Box' problem) and addresses the issue by suggesting, particularly at the 'fundamental evaluation point', when the

purpose of the evaluand and the evaluation are defined, that it is important to let these definitions be established according to *local* perspective. Bezzi suggests this focus on context makes evaluation less ambiguous and more useful, enables evaluation to be more of a 'learning organization's tool' instrumental in enabling stakeholders to share in creating future reality, including the success of the evaluand. I consider this work a valuable contribution for its emphasis on considering subjective perspective, for identifying the significance of 'evaluation pragmatics', and for clarifying in a non-technical way what goes on inside the 'black box' of the evaluand at evaluation time. Despite Bezzi's suggestion that there are plenty of places to refer to for learning the methods one might incorporate in practicing pragmatic evaluation, the recognition of the social (participative) complexity involved in such an endeavor and the unstated but implied reservations about the adequacy of existing tools for handling this complexity suggest that there is ample opportunity to further elucidate and facilitate the practice of pragmatic evaluation. (Bezzi, 2006)

In 'Chasing a Ghost' Kim Forss, of Sweden, Stein-Erik Kruse of Norway, Sandy Taut of the USA and Edle Tenden of UNESCO in Vietnam provide a case analysis and lessons learned in a evaluation focused on using participative methods to develop internal organizational evaluation capacity at UNESCO. Although learning did occur, it was not where expected and to the extent hoped. Despite good intentions, this happened because of practical issues, such as timing, skills, team composition, structure of budgets, and incentive systems. They contend that the methods for handling these issues must be designed with capacity development in mind so that learning becomes an explicit and realistic goal even when other perhaps inevitable conflicting pressures arise. (Forss, Kruse, Taut and Tenden, 2006)

In 'The Modus Narrandi' Joos Gysen, Hans Bruyninckx, and Kris Bachus all of the Catholic

University of Leuven in Belgium describe a modification of the Modus Operandi methodology developed by Michael Scriven (Scriven, 1991) for evaluating cause and effect relationships. They contend that effectiveness can only be evaluated and determined with evaluation methods that can stand up to criticism in the policy field in which the evaluation takes place. As a result of their work in environmental policy they envisioned the need for an evaluation method that would allow them to take into account the key characteristics in this field. They created the modus narrandi method incorporating causal narrative story reconstruction to satisfy this need and enable effectiveness evaluation that considers main effects and side effects within situations where there is causal uncertainty. In addition to providing specific suggestions for conducting the narrative aspect of this method, the authors appear to be claiming other differences (advantages) versus the modus operandi method. They claim to be able to isolate the analysis of side effects within the context of goals and criteria of the evaluand, of other related policy fields, and also of stakeholders, each in a stand-alone way. In this way they claim to be able to autonomously consider side effects, without tradeoffs, in a preliminary step prior to synthesis. The main problem I have with this claim is that it is based on the assumption that the evaluand is aware of all the goals and criteria of all those that could possibly be affected by evaluand actions. In our complex and highly interconnected world this is unrealistic without a super-enhanced communication and cooperation network. Although way beyond current system capabilities, it is not impossible. (Gysen, Bruyninckx and Bachus, 2006)

In their article entitled, 'Evaluation in Multi-Actor Policy Processes', Frans-Bauke Van der Meer and Jurian Edelenbos of Erasmus University in The Netherlands point out the added challenges involved in evaluating complex multi-actor policy processes, a

common occurrence in the multi-sector (horizontal) and multi-level (vertical) European system of governance. They state that although the two main functions of evaluation in the policy process are accountability and collective learning, these functions are difficult to achieve as a result of additional complications in a complex multi-actor context. They suggest that policy evaluation, and the complex multi-actor policies being evaluated, will succeed only by adding a third main function of co-operation to the other two main functions in an evaluation. They do a nice job of explaining how and why this is true by way of a case example that is dear to the Dutch psyche, spatial planning policy. Before getting to their suggested solution, they posit some theoretical ideas on when, why and how evaluation contributes to complex multi-actor policy processes, specifically when it is effectively 'used'. They are particularly strong in making the point that it is not sufficient to consider 'objective' characteristics of evaluation to determine if they are useful in such cases, but rather that it is necessary to reflect each actors ideas and experiences in the evaluation in order for it to be successfully used. They attempt to answer *how* and *by whom* evaluations are used and valued by theorizing that evaluation generates impact as an outcome of actors collectively making sense of patterns or actions in a social context or multi-actor network. They then make suggestions for how the different aspects of evaluations and actors that make up this collective sense-making effort should be linked in a network or 'Evaluation Arrangement' that ideally will be flexibly adapted by the involved actors as their particular context warrants. I find their theories and approaches quite attractive, and would recommend their use when confronted with the challenges of a complex multi-actor policy making process. But again, the network communication requirements to support such an approach in a complex setting are beyond the capabilities of current technology. (Van der Meer and Edelenbos, 2006)

In summarizing her views on the subject Stame explains that 'governance' can be taken to mean either 'the process of governing' or 'the institution of government' with the former where evaluation might enhance democracy through more participation, transparency or public benefit. In terms of the later, governance as the institution, evaluation might better enhance parliament and/or citizen decision-making or better inform constituents about results of policies and actions.

Challenges Resulting from New Forms of Governance

The new more complex multi-level and multi-actor forms of governance provide additional challenges to evaluators. Stame also points out that the performance or effective use of evaluation in governance has been dismal, and suggests that, for this reason, work refining various models along the level-of-participation continuum should be done. This continuum runs from distanced or elite approaches with minimal participation on through moderate levels of participation to more extreme collaborative, empowerment and/or deliberative approaches. She also points out some of the more progressive ideas of governance in multi-actor networks of public and private entities interacting in joint negotiation and implementation. She mentions that these networks were first envisioned as a reaction to the weakness of traditional hierarchical models in overcoming innate inefficiency and lack of transparency. These models have transformed the field of government studies over the last two decades, with the hope of providing new approaches to satisfying the need for better ways to deal with complex environments. Along with this there has been a shift of responsibility for guidance, design, implementation and evaluation from public to private entities in these networks.

Stame mentions the results of a study that makes two striking observations, first, that these reforms haven't come close to overcoming the

challenges of evaluating public programs and officials, and, second, that little systematic evaluation of the reforms has been attempted. This is particularly surprising since these innovations were designed to improve public sector effectiveness (Peters, 1996). As a result of this perplexing situation, Stame suggests a public debate to try to get at and understand the reasons for this, including whether there is some underlying mechanism in these new network forms of government that might actually be inherently anti-evaluation.

If you take the negative view a case could be made that certain aspects of the reforms might be anti-evaluation merely because of a desire to avoid being accountable. As Stame points out, government officials have historically tended to avoid being evaluated if possible. What about the private sector? Stame and Peters mention that the new innovations such as privatization were designed to improve effectiveness, but ironically there has been little evaluation of the evaluation of the impact of these policy changes. Since the 1980s it has merely been assumed that if government can't efficiently handle a certain task, the answer is to turn the task over to the private sector. But who can guarantee that large bureaucratic private sector organizations are any more efficient? Without evaluation being done it is hard to know. One thing I do know from my twenty years of experience providing management systems to the private sector is that they are not much better at managing and evaluating complexity in networks than government. And it appears from these articles that this is precisely what needs to be done. The systems just haven't existed to enable doing this well. Also, it is simply more possible to require organizations in the public sector to be more open and accountable than those in the private sector. As a result of these factors, it is entirely possible that there are huge amounts of waste going on in areas outsourced to the private sector that the public is powerless to discover. Could it be that the private sector is anti-evaluation, both

wanting and able to avoid being accountable because they know they can hide their inadequacies under the veil of privacy? Perhaps this is a fallacy of government outsourcing to the private sector that should be more seriously evaluated?

So not only is there the possibility that private sector outsourcing is not necessarily an efficient solution, but it has also proved more difficult to evaluate the private sector and hold them accountable. As reiterated by House in his recent AEA keynote, Stame suggests that the power of the private sector to undermine evaluation has grown beyond comfort levels. Despite these problems the new networked forms of government that emphasize market models, the participatory state, flexible government and deregulated or privatized government have taken shape. What should be done to rejuvenate the role of evaluation in these circumstances so dependent on efficient and effective coordination of complex distributed networks of interacting organizations?

Rather than being inherently anti-evaluation, a more positive case could also be made that the new more distributed and complex structures are simply more difficult to monitor and therefore more difficult to evaluate. If so the argument could be made that this does not mean they are inherently anti-evaluation. Perhaps it is not the case that everyone wishes to hide from evaluation and accountability, but rather that the effectiveness or impact of these new forms of government are not being evaluated because of the sheer complexity and difficulty of doing so. Perhaps a primary issue in solving the evaluative information gap problem is in fact the technical difficulty of closing the information gap between government service providers (in both the public and private sectors) and the people who are supposed to control government in a democratic system. If it were more technically possible to close this information gap, at least it would then be technically feasible to solve this problem. Not

only would this enable the government to know and reward what is working, but it would also make it less possible to abuse the information gap and the limit this gap places on evaluation and accountability. There will likely always be other challenges, but obviously without achieving technical feasibility there is little hope of a real solution.

Regardless of all the potential causes of the lack of outcome and impact evaluation of the new forms of government, once it is more technically feasible and convenient to foster evaluation of these relatively new distributed and complex forms, i.e. the supporting tools or information technology capable of making evaluation practical in these settings is available, evaluation will regain its stature. If there was new technology capable of evaluating such complexity and the benefits of this technology were shown to distribute equitably, then the actors in these new forms of government, particularly those with regulatory responsibilities such as the legislature and citizenry would welcome such capabilities.

The bottom line is that present day social network monitoring and evaluation technology doesn't meet the additional challenges and requirements of these more complex forms of government. Despite the human tendency to avoid evaluation, it is also true that technology currently in use is has not been shown to be capable of supporting the smooth self-organization and evaluation of the individual and aggregate affects of such complex inter-embedded amorphous network structures. Nonetheless, it is suggested that to satisfy these new requirements and enable free and democratic systems to continue be the most preferred and likely political and economic way to achieve human progress, these challenges must be overcome. The challenges can only be overcome by 1st addressing the instrumental need for systems capable of enabling evaluation of these complex new forms of government. If it is simple and convenient to get timely actionable evaluative information to and from

all stakeholders then this instrumental need will be satisfied. In this way, evaluation will be able to play its essential role as *the conscience of democracy*.

The Proposed Solution

What type of new technology would be needed in order for us to be able to better support and evaluate such complex new governance structures? Taking a look at the evaluation methods the Europeans are suggesting are necessary to effectively evaluate policy, program and projects in this complex environment will provide a hint. What type of networking technology would be required to implement Van der Meer's 'constructive evaluation arrangements', Gysen's 'modus narrandi side effectiveness', Pennisi's 'options-based economic evaluation' and Bezzi's 'evaluation pragmatics and participative co-construction'?

They are all dependent on the co-construction of sophisticated evaluative networks that consider the subjective as well as the objective perspectives of multiple stakeholders on various levels of analysis. In other words each actor needs to be able to view evaluative information about themselves and the other evaluands they interact with from their individual perspectives as well as be able to co-contribute these individual perspectives to be automatically synthesized into more all-inclusive aggregate or holistic evaluations of various multi-level and multi-actor collaborations in which they participate. Only then would all participants or stakeholders in complex democratic systems be able to gain a pragmatic understanding of how all the interactions, including their contributions, work together to impact each level of society from individual through increasingly larger, more inclusive and more holistic forms of organization.

If such a system could be implemented it would appear that the sophisticated requirements of all the new evaluation methods reviewed above would be able to be practically met. For example virtually all options could be

known, their values estimated (ex-ante), choices made and actual value determined (ex-post). This would enable evaluators to better measure the impact of projects, programs and policies. It would make it practical to measure the general value of certain design characteristics in particular contexts. It would enable both improved competitiveness and increased sensitivity to the greater good that mutual accountability or responsibility (positive and/or negative) for results can achieve. It would enable collective learning, with continuous improvement in accuracy and validity of attribution. For example evaluation results could more fluidly feed generalized lessons learned from actual experience forward to modify the models used to make upcoming design and implementation decisions throughout socioeconomic networks. This would then also improve the learning and collaboration benefits of evaluation. Then we would have real reason for hope that evaluation could succeed in its role as the conscience of freedom and democracy.

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