

## **Facilitating Evaluation of Metamorphic Transformation in Social Ecosystem**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the growing understanding of facilitating evaluation as an evaluation that facilitates. In social innovation and societal transformation processes, we learned that classical evaluations promote a predominantly project managerial approach to transformation and often get in the way of what the French philosopher Francois Jullien calls an organic, silent transformation. This paper shares the experience of how, from a safe and nourishing space, a humanizing society emanates. It embraces the experience of growing a shared understanding of the metamorphic transformation of social ecosystems from co-reflected lived experiences. It shares the experience of how this growing a shared understanding becomes an evaluation that facilitates the very process of the silent transformation of societal metamorphosis. We are looking at the processual unity of processes of metamorphic transformation and their evaluation.

### **Towards Evaluating Evaluation**

There is a difference between getting things done and letting things grow. When we want to get things done, project management offers, based on a comprehensive understanding of causal linearity, a rich portfolio of models, methods, and instruments. A project plan serves as a map to support the journey from milestone to milestone towards an aspired goal. Measuring achievements against a plan informs us about progress and performance. We call this a summative evaluation, and it serves quite well in engineering.

Project management, however, cannot be reduced to engineering. Two-thirds of projects, being measured against their plan, fail. Project plans unfold in a world that happens to be volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). The project management answer to a VUCA world is reflected in moving from a summative evaluation to a formative one. On the one hand, this means embracing not only quantitative measurements but also qualitative aspects, embracing the VUCAness of the unfolding project. On the other hand, a formative evaluation does not jump from milestone to milestone; it accompanies the process, providing ongoing feedback and allowing for gently adjusting the course of a project, like steering a bicycle.

If you want to amaze yourself, such goes an old Arabic saying, plant a garden. We are back to letting things grow, and this is where we need to leave project management as we know it. As reflected in summative and formative evaluation, project management has a destination and goal it aims for. The expectations are clear and fixed. Looking at the amazing garden or any

kind of innovation or research project, we have a direction, not a destination. The US-American evaluation scientist Michael Quinn Patton met these challenges in his seminal book on Developmental Evaluation (2011). He looks at innovation and learning processes, which are informed and formed by purpose, vision, and values. His questions transcend the project management frame altogether: "Are we walking the talk? Are we being true to our vision? Are we dealing with reality? Are we connecting the dots between here-and-now reality and our vision? And how do we know? What are we observing that's different, that's emerging?" (Quinn Patton 2011, 13)

How do you evaluate a process that is emerging and organic while sustaining the nature of the process? How can we evaluate a process that does not reside in aboutness, yet beyond participatory action research (Reason and Bradbury 2001), witnesses the witness in social ecosystems (Shotter 2011)? How can we evaluate a process that embraces the entanglement of 'spacetime-matter' (Barad 2007) and the differentiation tendencies of social systems (Luhmann 1984)? How can we evaluate a process of metamorphic transformation that is not aiming at a destination but orchestrates serendipity, realizing a direction in its very unfolding? How can we evaluate a silent transformation (Jullien 2009)?

For the last four years, we pursued these questions in a socio-systemic complexity evaluation (Klein and Kadaoui 2022) as a collaboration of the Tamkeen Community Foundation for Human Development in Tangier, Morocco, and the European School of Governance, Berlin, Germany. From co-reflecting on our lived experiences of metamorphic transformation in social ecosystems, we grew a shared understanding, leading to what we call facilitating evaluation.

### **The Tamkeen Experience**

Let's go back to the question of evaluating evaluation, yet take it from a different angle. Think of an intimate conversation with a good friend. You may sit in a café, a tea house, or any other comfortable place. In this conversation, you may share an experience that surprised you. Together with your friend, you talk about it. You co-reflect and grow a shared understanding of the lived experience and the surprise, emotionally and cognitively. You grow a shared understanding of what is and what could be. You may sense a next step. What kind of experience would this conversation be? Wouldn't it be an experience of a safe place, an experience of a deepening human relationship, and an experience that allows you to rest in it? Wouldn't it be an experience that holds you and nurtures you? Wouldn't it be an experience that invites you to sink in and allows you to go to your innermost? The intimate conversation with a good friend provides a safe and nourishing space where a shared understanding grows from co-reflected lived experiences. It is a love-nurtured and love-nurturing place.

The Arabic term *Makan Makeen* (مكان ماكين) allows us to express such a love-nurtured and love-nurturing place (Klein and Kadaoui 2021). It is the place providing favorable conditions for a seed to grow. The womb is *Makan Makeen*, where in the warmth and safety, love-nurtured and love-nurturing, new life grows. *Makan Makeen* is home to the conjunction of the seed and its favorable conditions. The Arabic word *Tamkeen* (تمكين) allows us to express the experience of the potential of the process of this conjunction of the seed and its favorable conditions. And likewise, *Tamkeen* allows us to express the experience of the potential of an intimate conversation with a good friend. It allows us to express the experience of the potential of growing a shared understanding from co-reflected lived experiences. It allows us

to express the experience of the potential of being amazed beyond expectations. This is the Tamkeen experience.

### **The Tamkeen Process**

Tamkeen is not a concept; it allows us to express an experience. It allows us to express the experience of the potential of an emerging and organic process, ontologically and epistemologically. Recognizing and appreciating this experience informs and forms our understanding of development and transformation processes. In the mirror of the Tamkeen experience, the Tamkeen Community Foundation for Human Development in Tangier, Morocco, recognized and realized their understanding of an emergent and organic process of metamorphic transformation. The Tamkeen experience is experienced in the context of community work and school development. It is experienced in the context of the transformation of the Moroccan education system. It is experienced in processes of societal metamorphosis.

In 2021, we shared in our research note “Beyond the Magic – Growing Our Understanding of Societal Metamorphosis” (Klein and Kadaoui 2021) the experiences of metamorphic transformation in the Zouitina neighborhood and the Allal Al Fassi high school of almost 3000 students in Tangier. “The houses are the same, the streets are the same, and the people are the same, nothing has changed, and everything has changed.’ Abdeslam Benhamza does not contain his emotion when he shares the story of Zouitina, his neighborhood community on the outskirts of Tangier in the North of Morocco. ‘... before violence used to bring us together, now it is love, and we realized that all the community initiatives that we have co-created are nothing but a reason to remain together...’” (Klein and Kadaoui 2021)

In this experience and realization of metamorphic transformation, Tamkeen can be characterized as an experience-based, relationship-oriented process of inquiry, learning, and understanding embedded in epistemic humility, trusting our human potential, trusting our humanity, realizing the essentiality and existentiality of love. Metamorphic transformation expresses a transformation beyond the form. It recognizes and appreciates the experience of learning to see with different eyes. It recognizes and appreciates the experience of growing a shared understanding from co-reflected lived experiences.

In this reflection and a growing understanding, the Tamkeen process recognizes and realizes itself as its own metaprocess. It can be seen as a development process as much as the governance process of this development. The Tamkeen process recognizes itself as its own governance process, growing in the co-reflection of lived experiences and a shared understanding of what is and what could be. The Tamkeen process recognizes itself as its own research process, growing in the co-reflection of lived experiences and a shared understanding of a focus of attention. The Tamkeen process grows a shared understanding that allows, following the sensed propensity, to navigate the complexity of social ecosystems softly, kindly, and gently.

As much as it is its own development process, governance process, and research process, the Tamkeen process is its own evaluation process. In this processual unity of the development, governance, research, and evaluation process, the Tamkeen process does not lead into a tautological circle. It is not proving itself. It remains in epistemic humility. It appreciates and recognizes the various manifestations that grow from a shared understanding. It grows an embodied understanding. The Tamkeen process is an ongoing autotelic process that widens

our gaze and grows our understanding of our understanding as a growing understanding of a growing understanding.

### **Facilitating Evaluation**

Tamkeen offers an answer to the question of how to evaluate a process that is emerging and organic while sustaining the nature of the process. The Tamkeen process dissolves the distinctions of development, governance, research, and evaluation. In its processual unity, it is a process and its own metaprocess of growing a shared understanding from co-reflected lived experiences. It facilitates the continuous growth of our understanding that informs us of what is and what could be. The Tamkeen process is autotelic, and it is consubstantial. It walks the talk. It is trusting our human potential, trusting our humanity, and realizing the essentiality and existentiality of love.

The consubstantiality of the Tamkeen process realizes an inherent critical perspective on the recognition and appreciation of manifestations of the process and the process itself. To what extent are the process and its manifestations expressions of trusting our human potential, trusting our humanity, and realizing the essentiality and existentiality of love? This may be called a vision. This may be called value-driven. Yet, this criticality does not address any normativity. It is an expression of the Tamkeen experience. It is a matter of trust.

Trusting the Tamkeen experience, we are back to intimate conversations with a good friend. We trust that we have the human potential to have a conversation where a shared understanding grows from co-reflected lived experiences. We trust that such an intimate conversation with a good friend is safe and nourishing, deepening our human relationship, an expression of our humanity, and realizing the essentiality and existentiality of love. In this, we trust our human potential and our humanity as we trust our hearts to beat. Though we know that there can be complications and even a stroke, and though we know that our hearts will eventually cease to beat, we do not pay permanent attention or doubt that they are beating. We trust.

Being autotelic and consubstantial, the Tamkeen process facilitates the evaluation of a process that is emerging and organic while sustaining the nature of the process. The Tamkeen process is as much facilitating evaluation as it is as an evaluation facilitating a process of metamorphic transformation. This capacity of the Tamkeen process does not replace the different kinds of evaluation. It embraces and transcends them. There is a place for a summative evaluation, for a formative evaluation, and certainly for a developmental evaluation. There is no need to abandon quantitative indicators at all. The gardener's experience tells us that in a garden, a lot of things need to be done to let things grow. The Tamkeen process invites us to embrace the 'what' and to facilitate a transformation of the 'how.' This how of the Tamkeen process is an expression of trusting our human potential, trusting our humanity, and realizing the essentiality and existentiality of love. It is a manifestation of societal metamorphosis. It is living the future of a humanising society already in the present.

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