Monitoring and Evaluation for Responsible Innovation  
19-20 March, 2015, The Netherlands  

A conference on taking responsibility in M&E for systemic change  
Wageningen University and Research centre  

Expectations about evaluation\(^1\) are shifting away from mainly assessing goal achievement to asking if the goals themselves can be considered responsible and how can we become more aware and critical of unexpected effects. Triggered in part by the undeniably urgent social and environmental crises, this shift asks of those involved in monitoring and evaluation to be clear which questions must be asked, what competencies are needed to do this, which conversations with who matter, and who is accountable for transformative innovation. The concept of ‘responsible innovation’ can help inspire those engaged in monitoring and evaluation to contribute responsibly for a sustainable and equitable future.

**Urgency of Responsible Innovation**

> “... we are ....undermining our well-being along with nature’s ability to provide for us. We need to fundamentally transform the way we produce, consume and live. We need to green our economy and the transition needs to start today.” Bruyninckx 2014\(^2\)

Collective responsibility is needed to advance on critical and urgent issues that affect the sustainability of our planet and inequality. Inequality is rising rapidly: ‘The world is more unequal today than at any point since World War II’ (UNDP, 2013\(^3\)). 162 million young children are chronically undernourished and in developing regions some 1 in 5 people still live in extreme poverty (MDG Report 2014). Planetary boundaries are being exceeded at alarming and accelerating rates.

Meanwhile, a new landscape of development\(^4\) is emerging in which old funding flows and relationships are being superseded by novel ways of engaging and financing through, for example, foundations, prizes, crowd funding, new insurance products and social impact bonds.

These issues in this new landscape require collective action in innovation. “Innovation becomes an imperative when problems are getting worse, when systems are not working, or when institutions reflect past rather than present problems.” (Mulgan et al 2007). These challenges highlight the need to act with greater focus and faster on all fronts. Great investments are being made in transformative innovations of all kinds.

Innovation can manifest as new relationships, for example, more accountable governance with budget transparency and citizen engagement through initiatives such as ‘Making All Voices

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\(^3\) Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries. UNDP, November 2013.

\(^4\) MacPherson, Rockefeller Foundation, keynote presentation AEA, 2014.
Count’ and Twaweza. New partnerships between multinational corporations and NGOs, such as Mars and smallholder-focused VECO, are rethinking cocoa production relations. Swiss Re and Oxfam America collaborate in Bangladesh to generate novel programmes and products, with farmers paying premiums with labour in local climate adaptation measures or flood insurance. In Colombia, innovation is institutional through territorial development programmes embedded in ongoing peace negotiations. Entire organisations such as Ashoka and Acumen are devoted to identifying and investing in leading social entrepreneurs that ‘go where markets have failed and aid has fallen short’.

‘Responsible innovation’ offers a powerful perspective to encourage explicit concern for (ethical) acceptability, sustainability and societal desirability of the innovation process and its intended and unintended products. Mainly known within the European science and technology context, the concept of ‘responsible innovation’ offers insightful values, principles and approaches for transformations in international development that further equity and sustainability. More information on responsible (research and) innovation: https://renevonschomberg.wordpress.com/implementing-responsible-research-and-innovation/

Implications for Monitoring and Evaluation

“It is now up to the evaluation community to show whether evaluation can be part of the effort to save humanity or if evaluation only can make the journey to its doom marginally better” (Mickwitz 2014).

Our monitoring and evaluation efforts can support the kind of transformative and responsible innovation needed to tackle critical questions for society.

Monitoring and evaluation for innovation that supports systemic change asks more of the evaluation profession than monitoring and evaluation of innovation. How do we – as commissioners and evaluators – support a shared responsibility for systemic changes? What evidence would we need to be confident that efforts are contributing to systemic transformation? What would evidence of successful responsible innovation look like? Who can be held accountable for these changes whether positive or negative?

Core questions that conference participants will discuss in keynote presentations, case clinics, roundtable discussions, and mini workshops to deepen their work are:

1. How can M&E responsibly support the management and governance of innovation processes towards a sustainable and equitable future?
2. How can M&E contribute to deeper reflexivity and transparent decision making?
3. What are the prerequisites for taking responsibility for systemic change in terms of:
   - M&E professional’s roles & responsibilities; values and principles; competencies
   - M&E process design, focus and approach
   - institutional changes needed to support M&E for responsible innovation.

More information (call for papers, roundtable discussions, workshops, case clinics; registration) about the conference can be found here: http://tinyurl.com/o3oucnz

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5 http://www.makingallvoicescount.org and http://www.twaweza.org/