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The Special Issue's wider objective or aim

In recent decades, we have witnessed an increase in different forms of evaluative practices in the public sector of nations in Europe and around the world (Jacobsson, Pierre, & Sundström, 2019; Rijcke, Wouters, Rushforth, Franssen, & Hammarfelt, 2016; Vedung, 2010). However, there is not only an increasing number of evaluations conducted, but also a more fundamental discursive spread of evaluation as it becomes embedded, naturalised, and institutionalised across organisations, societies, and in everyday lived experience. At its broadest, this development has been described as a mega-trend or even an evaluation (and audit-) society (Dahler-Larsen, 2012; Power, 1997).

The purpose of this special issue is to discuss issues of power in relation to the various forms and functions of 'evaluation' and how it is manifested in the public sector. We define evaluation at its broadest and include phenomena such as auditing, revision, certification, quality management, big data and evidence-based practice and other valuing practices labelled evaluation (as a tool for control, development and/or theory building).

The different evaluative practices are in various ways infused with issues of power. They are powerful in the sense that they affect and influence on an individual, organizational and system/societal level, whether it is about assessing accountability and produce legitimacy, support organizational improvement, democratic dialogue and learning processes or more generally produce different kinds of knowledge. Actors are affected by the different evaluative practices either as subjects of evaluations, audits, revisions etc, or as an instigator of the same or even as a self-governing mechanism extracted from possible future assessments. We also find evaluative issues of power at a system level, within system- and/or policy design for instance, where systems, policies, programs and projects already from the outset are designed to be measurable and evaluable.

The power of evaluation is conditioned by power relations within the context of evaluation. Who is allowed to be involved in the evaluation, who controls and allocates the resources for evaluation, who makes the decisions about what is to be evaluated, who is the evaluator and how are implicit and explicit values and criteria manifested and negotiated – these are some of the power infused issues that shape processes of evaluation and the conditions for knowledge use and ultimately the possibilities for organizational and societal impact. Practitioners of evaluation are faced with these challenges in everyday practice, making them a part of a political context.

The Special Issue's scope

For this special issue, we invite scholars to submit abstracts for papers on topics related to the organization, governance, regulation and practice of evaluation, which are related to power issues in evaluation. We are inclusive in our use of the concept of power, where we refer to both the use, influence and consequences of evaluation on different levels of society, as well as issues of

resource allocation and negotiations, dynamics and competing perspectives of and between actors within an evaluation context. Contributions may thus relate to literatures and research traditions beyond research on evaluation, such as organisational theory and critical management (Alvesson, Bridgman, & Willmott, 2009; Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006), research on pilots and projects (Bailey et al., 2017; Hodgson, Fred, Bailey, & Hall, 2019) as well as research related to the evidence movement and/or New Public Management (Boaz & Davies, 2019; Hood, 1991; Karlsson, 2017).

Examples of research questions that would meet the objective of the Special Issue

Suggested, although not exclusive, research questions to be addressed in the special issue are:

- What are the intended and unintended consequences (uses, influences and impacts) of different evaluation practices on individual, organizational and system/societal level, and how do different actors deal with such consequences?
- Who are the powerful and less powerful actors of evaluation on the evaluation field today, and how do they operate?
- How is evaluation policy, evaluation practice and evaluation results negotiated among actors in an evaluation context or on the evaluation field? What are the implications for relations between actors?
- What are the conditions for evaluation use within evaluation practice, and how and by who are they determined?
- How can evaluation be organized in order to acknowledge and deal with power asymmetries (e.g. in terms of gender, ethnicity, class) and issues of democracy and trust?

We welcome empirical, methodological, theoretical, and conceptual papers related to these questions, wherein focus could be on transnational, governmental, regional, or local levels.

In order to further relate the accepted papers to evaluation practice and/or an ongoing evaluation debate outside of academia, each paper will be commented on by an evaluation practitioner/professional. This commentator will be chosen by the guest editors when papers approach finalization.

Guest Editors

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A deadline for submission of papers

A letter of interest in participating in the special issue together with an abstract (approx. 400 words) of the proposed paper should be sent to the guest editors by May 30, 2020. All papers will be subject to regular double-blind peer review. Deadline for submission of full paper: December 30, 2020.

1. **January 2020:** Call for abstracts
2. **30/5 2020:** Deadline for abstracts of approx. 400 words
3. **30/6 2020:** Decision on which abstracts proceed to full paper
4. **30/12 2020:** Deadline for full paper
5. Review
6. **30/5 2021:** Final accepted papers

Literature

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