

Connectivity: the missing and essential element in evaluating climate and sustainable development

European Environmental Evaluators Network
Evaluating Climate Action for Sustainable
Development

Friday 16 September 2016, 09.00 – 10.30



Andy Rowe
ARCeconomics

Logic for this presentation

Premise

Connectivity is the antithesis of contemporary evaluation

Agenda

1. Why is connectivity a problem for evaluation?
2. Contemporary governance truncates connectivity
3. Evaluation reinforces the disconnects
4. Not tenable
5. Challenges on the road to incorporating connectivity
6. The moment is now – *evaluation evolves or declines*

Why is connectivity a problem for evaluation?

- Attending to and incorporating connectivity into evaluation is how we bring sustainability concepts to evaluation
 - Connecting interventions to each other and to the joint interests of the human and natural systems
- Challenges
 - Norms on the reach of evaluand
 - Accountability
 - Core evaluation questions and evaluation standards
 - Evaluator competencies

Cuts in postal deliveries

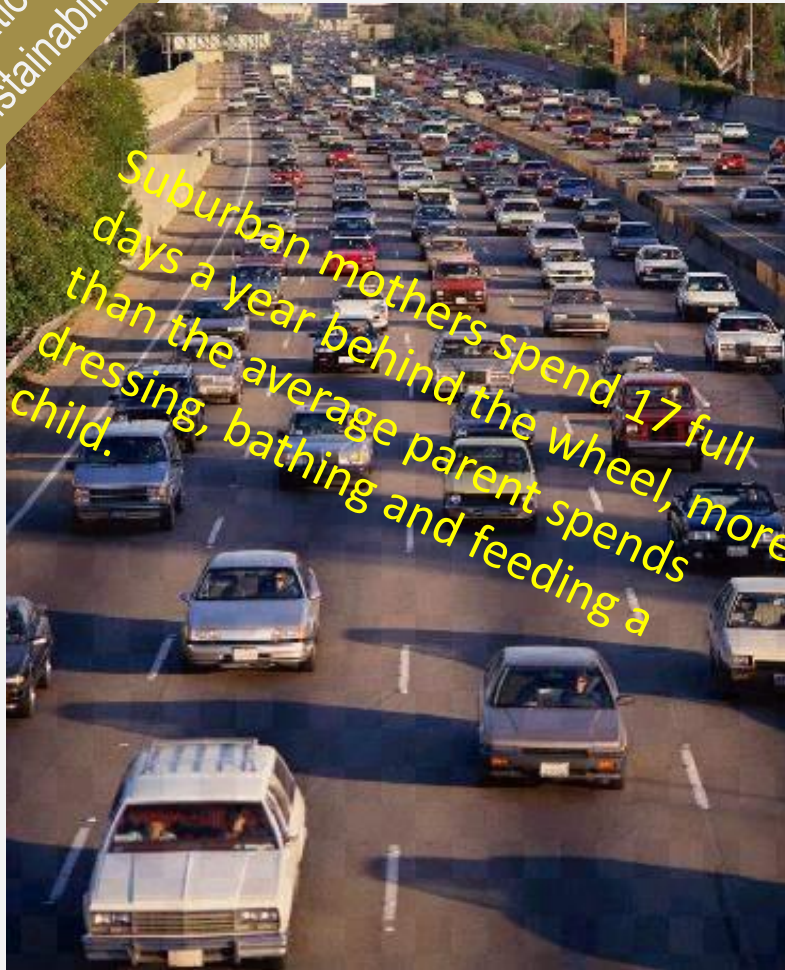


Planned 2014 reduction will cut an estimated 6-8,000 jobs at Canada Post.

Canada Post has reduced door-to-door delivery of mail at several points over the past few decades.

Letter carriers used to provide community safety monitoring, especially for the more vulnerable.

Some direct effects of school siting policies



Schools built closer to students reduce traffic, 14% increase in walking and biking, reduce emissions 15%.⁵

Contemporary governance severs connections and truncates accountability

School siting policies are the domain of the school board and provincial capital funders. They regard siting and construction decisions as matters of policy compliance and cost effectiveness noting the large long term capital costs.

- We know siting decisions are CONNECTED directly to very important health, air and water quality, community, climate change ...
- We know how to value natural capital, health, most community changes

Post office decisions are matters of cost effectiveness by a for-profit public corporation

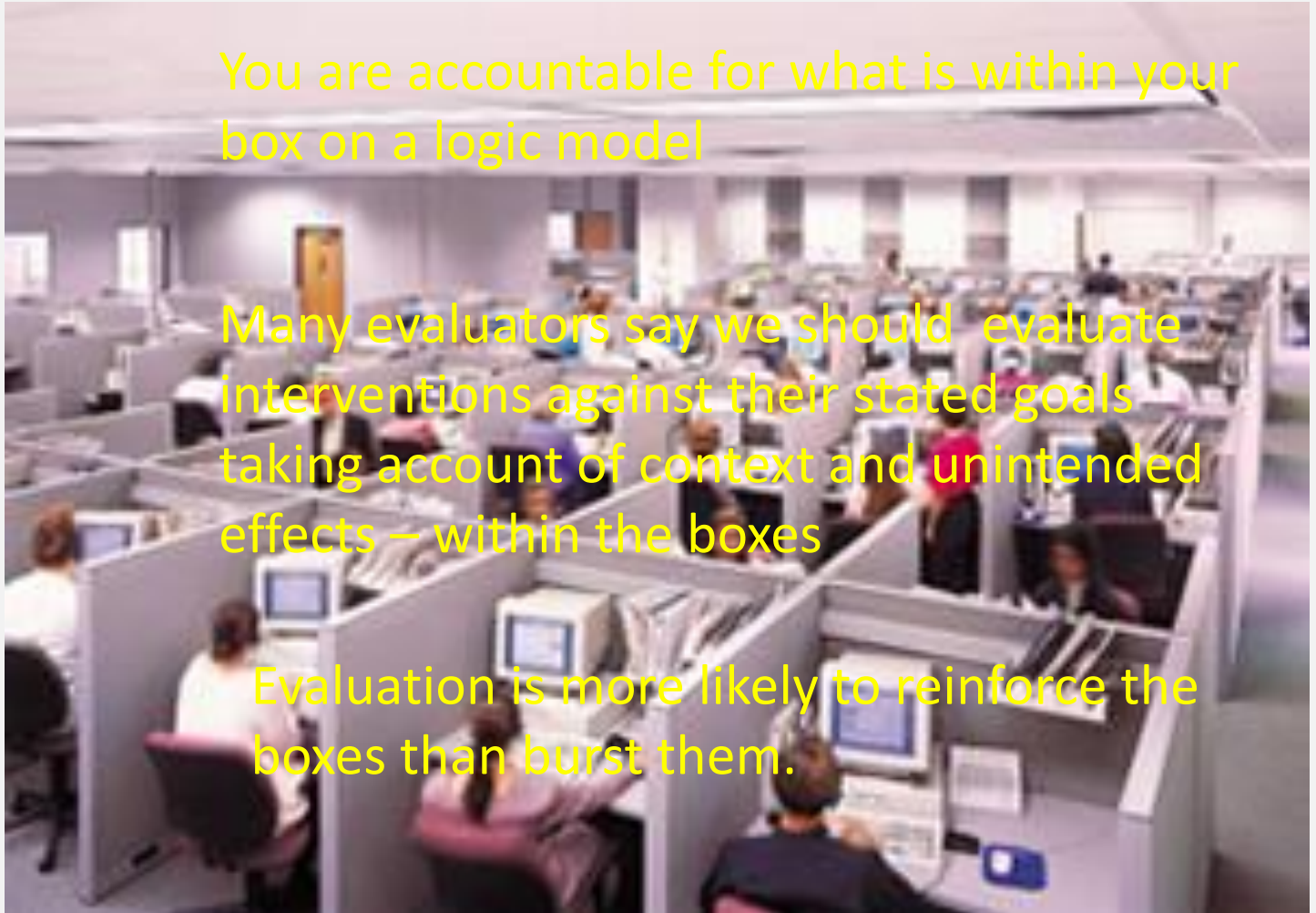
- Costs are Canada Post costs and only financial, but large. 2012 was a rare profitable year for Canada Post because of the resulting reduction in future pension liabilities (one time write off)
- We know how to value community safety

Partitioned governance encourages partitioned evaluation

You are accountable for what is within your box on a logic model

Many evaluators say we should evaluate interventions against their stated goals taking account of context and unintended effects – within the boxes

Evaluation is more likely to reinforce the boxes than burst them.



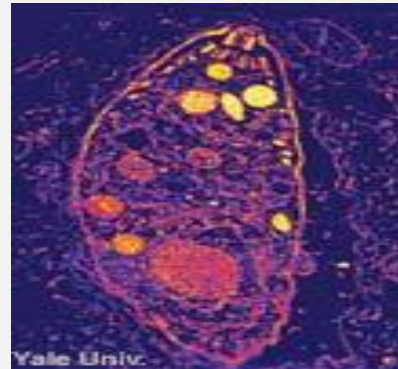
Cats, Sea Otters, Sea Grass and Global Warming



Humans domesticated cats which became most invasive species on earth



Cats annually kill an estimated 40% of the songbirds in North America



Cats get parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* from eating infected rodents, small birds or other small animals

Cats, Sea Otters, Sea Grass and Global Warming



JupiterImages

Cats poop in kitty litter, each deposit can contain up to a million parasites, litter now public transport for parasites



Litter flushed down toilets, disposed in other ways that takes parasites into municipal water and sewer systems, carried to near shore ocean waters



Mussels, crabs and other filter feeders ingest parasites that then become concentrated in these critters

Cats, Sea Otters, Sea Grass and Global Warming



Sea otters eat mussels, crabs and other filter feeders, parasites infect and kill sea otters

Sea otters play a critical role in seagrass health by consuming algae and marine insects growing (due to nutrient runoff from fertilizers and other sources) on seagrasses



Coastal seagrass beds store up to 83,000 metric tons of carbon per square km, mostly in the soils beneath them - a typical terrestrial forest stores about 30,000 metric tons per square km, most of which is in the form of wood.¹⁰

Connectivity as
mechanism of
change

Cats, Sea Otters, Sea Grass and Global Warming



Connectivity and contemporary evaluation

Usual theory of change



Unrestricted theories of change



Elsewhere
sustainability is
driving change

Who uses unrestricted theories of change?

Connectivity is now a driving concept for the private sector



Many corporations have determined that their business models were unsustainable:

- Unstable and declining supply of cocoa, natural plants for pharmaceuticals, chemicals
- Costs of logistics and non-renewable energy
- Market and knowledge opportunities

Elsewhere
sustainability is
driving change

Look who is meeting the demand for evaluation of sustainability



Member organisation of sustainability certification ngos and firms. Has developed impact standards and verifiable measurement methods.



The Sustainability Consortium founded and supported by major corporations and closely tied to Walton family connected universities. Research and communications assistance for sustainability.



Launched in June 2011 as a global, multi-stakeholder initiative, GISR is creating a standard for sustainability (or ESG) ratings, rankings, and indices that outlines the core principles, issues, and indicators that define corporate excellence in the 21st century.



Meanwhile back at the evaluation farm

Evaluation tends to evaluate interventions
against stated objectives

Severs what we evaluate from its public
interest rationale

**Connectivity joins what we evaluate to
the public interest**

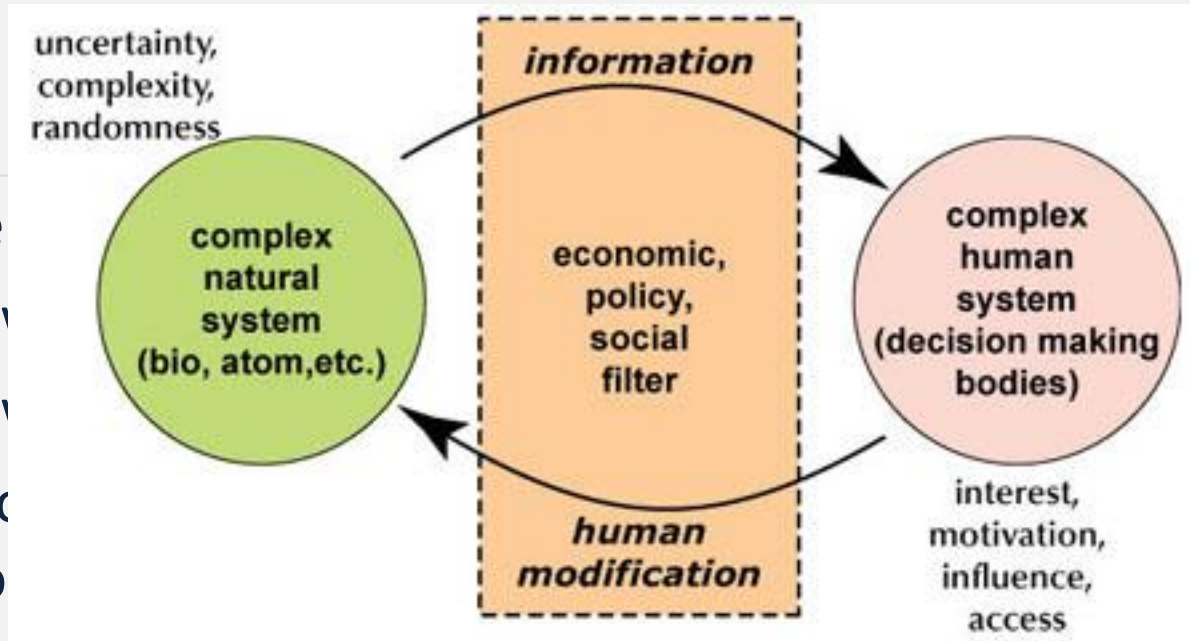
Evaluators will need to work with those who do not speak social science

Excellent and innovative approach, impressive validity and reliability scores, makes total sense.

But I need a scientist to assess the impacts on salmon before I will use it.

(High level science manager comments on evaluation of the *Rapid Impact Evaluation* approach workshop at 2012 Environmental Evaluators Network conference)

Weak intellectual infrastructure for evaluation at the nexus



with little or

- Ve
- Fe
- Fe
- Mo
- no
- Leading intervention organisations value natural over social science
- Or for the SDGs, human without considering natural



Sustainability Should be a Required Part of Evaluation Standards and Practices

If the National Academy of Science gave Sustainability Science a *Room of its Own* in Science

If humans only constitute a trace of life on earth

Why can't evaluation at least identify sustainability as a required element?

It is hard to imagine a human intervention that does not potentially affect natural systems

Feedback please!

Thoughts?
Ideas?
Opinions?
Questions?

