Emergent Developmental Evaluation Developments

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Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Background: Developmental Evaluation (DE) continues to develop. After reviewing the niche and history of DE, this article identifies five new and emergent purposes for DE to add to the original five—and forecasts future developments for diverse, innovative, and adaptive DE applications. An extended example of DE in supporting pivoting in the pandemic illustrates DE as adaptation to crisis as distinct from supporting social innovation.

Purpose: To update DE.

Setting: Global.

Data Collection and Analysis: Not applicable.

Findings: The applications and uses of DE have expanded beyond the original framing.

Keywords: adaptation; developmental evaluation; pivot; social innovation

Introduction

Developmental Evaluation (DE) continues to develop. This article identifies five emergent purposes for DE to add to the original five—and forecasts future developments. Before delineating those emergent purposes and possibilities, I'll review the niche and history of DE.

The Niche of Developmental Evaluation

DE provides *evaluative* information and feedback to social innovators, and their funders and supporters, to inform adaptive *development* of change initiatives in complex dynamic environments. DE brings to innovation and adaptation the processes of asking evaluative questions, applying evaluation logic, and gathering and reporting evaluative data to inform and support the development of innovative projects, programs, initiatives, products, organizations, and/or systems change efforts with timely feedback.

The DE niche focuses on evaluating innovations in complex dynamic environments because that is the arena in which *social innovators* are working. Innovation as used here is a broad framing that includes creating new approaches to intractable problems, adapting programs to changing conditions, applying effective principles to new contexts (scaling innovation), catalyzing systems change, and improvising rapid responses in crisis conditions. Social innovation unfolds in social systems that are inherently dynamic and complex, and often turbulent. The implication for social innovators is that they typically find themselves having to adapt their interventions in the face of complexity. Funders of social innovation also need to be flexible and adaptive in alignment with the dynamic and uncertain nature of social innovation in complex systems.

Developmental evaluators track, document, and help interpret the nature and implications of innovations and adaptations as they unfold, both the processes and outcomes of innovation, and help extract lessons and insights to inform the ongoing adaptive innovation process. At the same time, this provides accountability for funders and supporters of social innovations and helps them understand and refine their contributions to solutions as they evolve. Social innovators often find themselves dealing with problems, trying out strategies, and striving to achieve goals that emerge from their engagement in the change process, but which they could not have identified before that engagement, and that continue to evolve as a result of what they learn. The developmental evaluator helps identify and make sense of these emergent problems, strategies, and goals as the social innovation *develops.* The emergent/creative/adaptive interventions generated by social innovators for complex problems are significant enough to constitute *developments* not just improvements, thus the niche for *developmental* evaluation.

Traditional evaluation approaches advocate clear, specific, and measurable outcomes that are to be achieved through processes detailed in a linear logic model. Such traditional evaluation demand for upfront, preordained specificity doesn't work under conditions of high innovation, exploration, uncertainty, turbulence, and emergence. Indeed, premature specificity can do harm and generate resistance from social innovators, as, indeed, it has, by constraining exploration, limiting adaptation, reducing experimental options, and forcing premature adoption of a rigid model, not because such a model is appropriate, but because evaluators, funders, or other stakeholders demand it in order to comply with what they understand to be good evaluation. DE emerged as a response to criticism of traditional evaluation by social innovators and their expressed need for an alternative way to engage in evaluation of their work.

DE involves evaluative thinking throughout. Judgments of merit, worth, significance, meaningfulness, innovativeness, and effectiveness (or such other criteria as are negotiated) inform ongoing adaptive innovation. Such evaluative judgments don't just come at the end of some fixed period (e.g., a 3-year grant); rather, they are ongoing and timely. Nor are evaluation conclusions reached and rendered by the evaluator independently. DE is a collaborative, interactive process. Being utilization-focused, and because DE unfolds in complex dynamic systems where the particular meaning and

significance of information may be difficult to pre-determine, making sense together of emergent findings involves the developmental evaluators interpreting patterns in the data *collaboratively* with social innovators, their funders, advocates, change agents, and systems change supporters. Through this empirically-focused interaction, DE becomes integral to the innovative process.

History of Developmental Evaluation

The first article describing DE as a distinct approach was published in *New Directions for Evaluation* (Patton, 1992) and described a DE of an experimental educational diversity initiative. In 1994, the predecessor journal to the *American Journal of Evaluation*, then called *Evaluation Practice*, featured twenty evaluation theorists and practitioners speculating on the future of evaluation. I wrote about DE (Patton, 1994) and predicted that in an increasingly complex world, DE would become an important evaluation option.

In 2006 I had the opportunity to coach a group of Canadian evaluators on DE in a series of workshop and consulting sessions sponsored by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation based in Montreal. That led to a primer on DE written by Jamie Gamble (2008), one of the participants in those sessions, published by the McConnell Foundation. That DE Primer has been revised this year (Gamble, McKegg, & Cabaj, 2021). The McConnell Foundation also supported and published a practitioner's guide to conducting DE (Dozois, Langlois, & Blanchet-Cohen, 2010; see also Langlois, Blanchet-Cohen, & Beer, 2012).). The first full-day workshop ever conducted on DE was in New Zealand in March, 2009, organized, sponsored, and co-facilitated with Kate McKegg. The first DE workshop in the United States was done for *The Evaluators' Institute* in San Francisco in 2010.

The first book-length description and explanation of DE was published in 2011 with the subtitle: *Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use.* In 2015, a book of DE exemplars was published (Patton, McKegg, & Wehipeihana, 2015). In the past decade, DE has become widely recognized as a distinct evaluation approach (Alkin & Christie, 2021; Anderson, Guerreiro, & Smith, 2016; Esper, Fatehi, & Baylor, 2021; Hayes, Witkowski, & Smith, 2016; Mitchell & Lemon, 2020; Preskill & Beer, 2012; Preskill & Gopal, 2014; Lam & Shulha, 2014; Ramirrez, Kora, & Sheprad, 2015; Dickson & Saunders, 2014; FSG, 2014; Stol, 2018).

Five Developmental Evaluation Purposes

In the original formulation of developmental evaluation, I identified and distinguished five distinct DE purposes:

1. *Ongoing innovation*, for example, a leadership development program that regularly revises its content and process based upon emergence of new issues and new ways of communicating.
2. *Scaling principles for adaptation to new locations,* for example, disseminating agroecological principles of a circular economy to areas dominated by industrial agriculture.
3. *Pre-formative evaluation*, for example, generating new ideas and designs to address problems and needs like a program connecting indigenous communities around the world in support of the United Nations rights of indigenous peoples declaration.
4. *Systems change*, for example, addressing homelessness as a housing systems problem as opposed to just providing project-based services to the homeless.
5. *Humanitarian aid*. DE as rapid feedback for adaptation in support of humanitarian interventions in the face of natural disasters (volcanoes erupting, tsunamis,) and political unrest (civil war, persecution of subpopulations, suppression of dissent).

New Applications of Developmental Evaluation: Five Emergent de Purposes

DE is still developing—and will continue to do so. Regularly I hear about new applications, new initiatives, and new insights being

generated by developmental evaluators as reflective practitioners. Here are five emergent purposes for DE to add to the original five.

1. The Pivot Purpose: Adaptation to Crisis

This is the big development in DE. The coronavirus pandemic has led to widespread application of DE to support pivoting and adapting to crisis. The coronavirus pandemic has forced programs to adapt their delivery methods, staff management practices, allocation of resources, and strategic priorities. Programs face cutbacks in staff and reduced resources to deliver programs. The necessity for these substantial and significant changes emerged quickly in March, 2020. Six months later it had become clear that the pandemic was not a temporary, short-lived challenge. It appears increasingly unlikely that there will be a return to "normal," whatever that might mean.

The term capturing program responses to the Covid-19 pandemic is "pivot." For example, universities had begun gradually increasing their online offerings, but the pandemic not only accelerated online teaching, but made it the primary, and in many cases the only, form of delivery. This meant pivoting from in-person teaching to online teaching as the dominant delivery medium in higher education. Elementary and secondary schools throughout the world have had to pivot. Public health outreach programs, prisons, anti-poverty, homelessness interventions, and the full range of interventions aimed at helping people have had to be reconceptualized, adapted, and evaluated differently given the effects of the pandemic.

What once was a narrow niche for DE, namely innovation, has become a much wider niche, namely, *adaptation to crisis.* The adaptation can take many forms: reconfiguring target populations, prioritizing services, changing the form of delivery from in-person interaction to what can be handled online, and moving from a practice-based model to a principles-focused model. Developmental evaluations under crisis situations involve the evaluator in helping to develop a response to the crisis. It requires ongoing situation analysis to find out what

information evaluation users need in the face of the crisis, in this case Coivid-19.

Evaluators also have had to pivot. An evaluation designed under the expectation that a program would have stable delivery of its intervention is quite different from one where everything is in play for reconfiguring and adaptation. On March 23, 2020 I wrote a blog on "Evaluation Implications of the Coronavirus Global Health Pandemic Emergency." [i] It began:

1. Adapt evaluation plans and designs now. *All evaluators must now become developmental evaluators,* capable of adapting to complex dynamics systems, preparing for the unknown, for uncertainties, turbulence, lack of control, nonlinearities, and for emergence of the unexpected. This is the current context around the world in general and this is the world in which evaluation will exist for the foreseeable future.

2. Be proactive. Don't wait and don't think this is going to pass quickly. Connect with those who have commissioned your evaluations, those stakeholders with whom you're working to implement your evaluations, and those to whom you expect to be reporting and start making adjustments and contingency plans (Patton, 2020c).

This basically means that DE has expanded from an innovation niche to a larger, more all-encompassing *adaptation niche,* which includes but is not limited to innovation. An in-depth example will illuminate the significance and nature of this development.

A pivot purpose extended example with DE lessons: The World Food Program. The World Food Program (WFP) has undertaken a DE of WFP's response to COVID-19 and already important lessons are being learned that are likely to be relevant to other organizations. I've had the opportunity to advise on the evaluation, read background documents, and participate in some early evaluation team meetings. The WFP evaluation manager and the external evaluation team leader have been especially reflective and forthcoming about how the evaluation is unfolding. As I listened to the inception discussions and the early data

collection experiences, it struck me that what they were experiencing and learning would be of value to evaluators worldwide as well as organizations that can benefit from WFP's evaluation approach, even at this early stage of its implementation. They agreed that I could share what was unfolding.

To appreciate the significance and stakes involved in this evaluation of WFP's response to COVID-19, a bit of context is necessary. The UN's WFP is a major actor in the international response to the pandemic. As the world's largest humanitarian organization, it plays a lead role in the UN's $2 billion Global Humanitarian Response alongside responding to the needs of partners and beneficiaries in the 88 countries it serves. By the end of 2020, WFP had received US$8.5 billion of confirmed contributions for 2020 against a total requirement of US$13.73 billion (WFP, 2020).

Globally, at the beginning of 2020, almost 168 million people required humanitarian assistance and protection, a 15 percent increase since the beginning of 2019. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, violent conflict, climate change and other human-made and natural disasters were increasing the number, scale, and complexity of humanitarian crises. With global humanitarian financing of $40 billion required for 2020, including responses to COVID-19, the humanitarian funding gap is growing (WFP, 2020). At the same time, expectations by donors and politicians for transparency, accountability, and value for money of humanitarian assistance have been increasingly demanding.

Due to the impact of the pandemic, for the first time in over 20 years, poverty levels are increasing. The World Bank (2020) estimates that, as a result of the pandemic, an additional 88-115 million people will slide into extreme poverty by 2021, with income inequality increasing at the same time.[ii] Already acutely food-insecure people in need of humanitarian assistance—estimated at 149 million by WFP in June 2020—are most vulnerable to the pandemic's consequences, due to their limited coping capacity for both the health and socioeconomic aspects of the pandemic as well as their enhanced exposure to human rights violations and other protection risks. An additional 121 million people are at risk of becoming acutely food-insecure before the end of the year as jobs are lost, remittance flows slow, and food systems are stressed or disrupted. The potential effects of the pandemic are likely to negatively impact on food security well into 2021 and beyond.

The Nobel Peace Prize 2020 was awarded to World Food Program "for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict" (Nobel Prize, 2020).

The DE of WFP's response to COVID-19 generated 12 insights and lessons.

DE Pivot Insights and Lessons: *Lesson 1.* The time for DE is now, not when the pandemic is over. Past WFP reviews (Lessons Learned exercises) and evaluations of humanitarian responses have pointed to the loss of information and knowledge that is disseminated in the early stages of a crisis response, but not adequately captured and stored for future use. This includes qualitative data and tacit knowledge used to inform decision-making. This brings to mind a learning exercise some years ago at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) headquartered in Ottawa in which the evaluation unit conducted a study of when, in a five-year program, the most important learning occurred. The results showed that, overwhelmingly, the greatest amount of significant learning occurred during the first nine months of a new 5-year initiative, well before the first formal midterm reporting on progress halfway through the program. The IDRC key informant interviews substantiated that a great deal of that early learning was never captured.

Lesson 2. Synthesis evaluation is crucial to make sense of and capture important lessons of diverse efforts and reviews. A number of internal learning and review exercises regarding the COVID-19 response were underway within the many units and programs of WFP. The external and independent COVID-19 DE presented an opportunity to bring forward, synthesize, spotlight, make explicit, and make available cross-cutting lessons and insights.

Lesson 3. Complex systems understandings and thinking are critical. A DE of responses in a turbulent, uncertain,

rapidly changing, and increasingly dangerous worldwide crisis requires a complex dynamic systems perspective to frame the evaluation. Knowledge gaps are emerging as WFP is called upon to deliver against more and more complex responses across the range of COVID19 affected contexts. The DE, therefore, has provided an opportunity to bring together learning across the corporate environment, from both programmatic and systems perspectives, and from the global to the country level, to identify major strategic achievements, challenges, and concerns.

Lesson 4. Evaluating adaptive capacity is a DE central focus. A framing question is: How have WFP capacities, systems, structures and procedures been able to adapt and respond to the demands posed by the COVID-19 pandemic? Adaptation has become the clarion call of response to the pandemic. Adaptive management. Strategic adaptation. Organization and programmatic adaptation. Budgetary and financial adaptation. Workforce and personnel adaptations. Work and life adaptations. Because the return to some kind of pre-COVID "normal" appears highly unlikely, and with the climate emergency looming large over the pandemic and well into the future, understanding, building, and evaluating adaptive capacity will be a core challenge for the foreseeable future.

Lesson 5. DE is well-matched to the evaluation challenges. In languages where the term "developmental" proves difficult to translate, I substitute Adaptive Evaluation. Approaches to evaluation have proliferated in the last 20 years. The key is selecting the approach that fits the evaluation situation and circumstances. The evaluation design has adopted elements of a DE paradigm for the following reasons: (a) The distinguishing characteristic of DE is 'contributing to something that is being developed'. WFP's COVID-19 has required major corporate adaptations which are not likely to come to a close in the near future; the scoping phase for this evaluation found consensus among informants that changes implemented may lead to longstanding shifts in how WFP both continues to respond to the medium and longer term impacts of the crisis but also to its wider business model. The presumption within DE of a high degree of flexibility and adaptation, and a focus on emergence, is

therefore appropriate. (b) The COVID-19 response in WFP functions in a systemic manner, taking place across corporate structures, systems and operations. As discussed in point 3 above, this makes systems thinking and complexity theory—both central to the DE paradigm—highly relevant, particularly as WFP corporately undergoes transformation. As I noted in my March 2020 blog on the evaluation implications of the coronavirus pandemic, we are all developmental evaluators now. But DE has had a hard time breaking through in large bureaucratic organizations that tend to have rigid, standardized, mandated, and top-down evaluation protocols and processes. WFP is therefore on the leading edge of experimenting with adapting DE to evaluate adaptive programmatic and strategic responses to COVID-19. In the previous point, I suggested that the future will demand more attention to adaptive capacity and what is learned from WFP's DE experience will inform how to embed DE into large, complex global organizations.

Lesson 6. Focus on evaluation use undergirds DE. DE is situated within the wider context of utilization-focused evaluation. Evaluating WFP's responses to COVID-19 began with a focus on what the organization needed rather than being guided by standard evaluation formats in WFP or, indeed, a predilection toward any particular type of evaluation. Ongoing learning for management was voiced in consultations as a critical WFP organizational need going forward. DE emerged as the approach that best fit the situation and needs of the organization. One important consideration was that a DE which is explicitly geared to providing useful evaluative input to support corporate learning, as WFP's COVID-19 response evolves, can add value at multiple levels across the organization. Both the WFP's internal Office of Evaluation and the external evaluation team are well-versed in what the evaluation use literature generally and utilization-focused evaluation particularly have learned about making evaluations useful. This includes (a) a high level of engagement with management and staff (HQ, Regional Bureaus, and Country Offices as appropriate), throughout data collection, and ensuring regular feedback loops to promote ongoing learning; (b) adopting an approach of openness,

receptiveness and flexibility, and willingness to adapt the evaluation process where needed; (c) building a high level of ownership and decision-making, with findings, conclusions and implications for next steps presented by the evaluation team and collectively discussed in feedback events with learning groups throughout the evaluation; (d) a collegiate approach between the evaluation team, involving regular discussions and open communications, to harness collective expertise and experience of both evaluation commissioners and the evaluation team; and (e) attention to process management collaboratively between the WFP's Office of Evaluation and the external evaluation team.

Lesson 7. A collaborative design process established collaborative norms for working together throughout the DE. The process of designing the evaluation was highly interactive and collaborative, bringing together stakeholders across WFP, the independent Office of Evaluation, and the external evaluation team leader. The collaboration deepened as the nature and design of the DE evolved through several items—Concept Note, Approach Paper, Terms of Reference—all of which made steps forward in thinking about, understanding, and clarifying DE and its relevance for the task at hand. Once established in the design phase, the trust and mutual respect carried forward to undergird the implementation of the DE on a collaborative manner.

Lesson 8. Evaluation leadership is essential for evaluation innovation and adaptation. A substantial literature exists about the importance of effective, visionary, and risk-taking leadership for organizational success over time. In contrast, directors of evaluation offices are typically thought of as managers rather than leaders, at least that's been my experience. Yes, evaluation offices and evaluations have to be well-managed. But leading-edge evaluation approaches, like DE, require visionary and committed evaluation leadership. That leadership begins with the decision to adapt and innovate in trying out DE. Then, ongoing leadership is needed to explain, advocate for, and work through barriers that can emerge in the face of resistance and skepticism. As former American Evaluation Association president Kathryn Newcomer says in her Foreword:

We all recognize that cultures are shaped by leadership. Leaders who embrace and reward learning, and walk the talk through visible allocation of their time and attention, and of their agencies' resources are needed to empower leaders throughout their organizations to learn. Leadership—both political and career—presents the essential ingredient needed to enable evaluation to support and improve the work of public bureaucracies. (Newcomer, 2021, p. 5)

Evaluation leadership requires more than methodological knowledge and management excellence; it also requires astute political judgment to navigate organizational mazes; a commitment to and knowledge about how to build on existing evidence to further organizational buy-in and learning; interpersonal skills to establish and nurture the relationships critical to utilization-focused DE; and the courage to stay the course when doubts and challenges arise as they inevitably do. For all these reasons and more, a critical factor in the success of DE is leadership. Evaluation leadership is essential to finding the appropriate balance between diverse evaluation needs and approaches in an organization, including, especially, what often emerges as a seeming tension between learning and accountability.

Lesson 9. Balance learning and accountability purposes. Evaluators regularly confront tensions between learning and accountability. Accountability mandates and criteria can produce aversion to risk taking and give rise to fear of failure. Learning requires openness, trust, and honest interactions. It therefore becomes important when both learning and accountability are to be served by an evaluation to distinguish what is required to support each. To support learning consistent with DE, consultative groups within WFP have been created to engage findings and promote cross-institutional learning. Consultative groups comprise a cross-section of technical staff and management from headquarters, regional, and country offices, to ensure that findings and the dialogue emerging from them permeate across WFP.

To address accountability, the DE has given attention to assessing adherence to

humanitarian principles, protection issues and access, accountability for affected populations in relation to WFP's activities, as appropriate, and on the differential effects of the response on men, women, girls, boys with and without disabilities, and other relevant socio-economic groups. Among the most significant aspects, the DE has focused on assessing if and how programmatic adjustments contributed to beneficiaries' safety, dignity and integrity. Accountability includes whether WFP adequately managed to overcome/mitigate humanitarian access issues that have been either introduced or exacerbated by the pandemic to reach beneficiaries. The tone and tenor of DE is to support accountability for learning while learning how to address accountability concerns in ways that produce useful findings rather than just compliance (or noncompliance) judgments.

Lesson 10. Be prepared to address anxiety, resistance, skepticism, and "evaluation fatigue." DE, like all evaluation, can produce anxiety, resistance, and skepticism. Given the pandemic crisis and accompanying stresses, it was expected that some, perhaps many, would be dubious about adding evaluation inquiries onto already overburdened staff. WFP engages in a lot of ongoing evaluation and to initiate yet another evaluation evoked concerns about being tired of evaluation: "evaluation fatigue." Access to documents and staff can be resisted, delayed, and even denied. WFP's Office of Evaluation and external evaluation team leader worked together to overcome barriers and communicate the rationale for and potential benefits of conducting the evaluation in the midst of the pandemic response. Getting buy-in is important. Top-down mandates to comply with the evaluation can undermine evaluation credibility and utility. Taking the time to negotiate cooperation and access pays off in better data and greater utilization.

Lesson 11. Frontline staff proved open to sharing and reflecting on their experiences. Once access to the field was gained, the evaluators found frontline staff eager to have their stories heard. Interviews in the first phase evaluation that were scheduled for 45 minutes would often last more than an hour, even an hour-and-a-half. Of course, this requires skilled interviewing and an adaptive approach to interviewing that follows the lead of interviewees about what's on their mind and what they want to share. DE requires developmental, adaptive, flexible, agile, and emergent interview protocols and interviewers.

Lesson 12. Interviews in the midst of stress can be therapeutic, but great sensitivity and empathy are needed to avoid potentially deepening stress and trauma. Many frontline staff work under highly stressful conditions in conflict-laden contexts. Travel bans, quarantines, mandated sheltering in place, and restricted social interactions have meant for many long separations from families, friends, and support networks. These are stressful jobs to begin with, so adding pandemic restrictions only deepened the stress. The evaluation interviewers have had to build their capacity to conduct trauma-informed interviews in ways that can release stress and offer some comfort for interviewees in being heard and understood, and have their stories valued. The human story behind Covid 19 in the lives and work of frontline staff has come through as really important.

These are early, still emergent lessons. But that is the nature of learning in complex dynamic systems where real-time understandings and insights can make an immediate difference. Just as now is the time to engage in DE of responses to the pandemic, now is also the time to be reflecting on and learning from those evaluations.

2. Supporting Systems Transformation

The second new and emergent purpose of DE is to support major systems transformations. The original framing of the systems evaluation purpose in DE was to support systems change as opposed to judging the effectiveness of projects and programs. What has emerged in the context of the global climate and pandemic emergencies is a distinction between systems change and systems *transformation.* Systems change tends to involve implementing projects to make targeted systems more equitable or sustainable, *incrementally.* An affirmative action program might engage in institutional systems change, or a developing a recycling program would involve enhancing and organizations contribution to sustainability.

In contrast, transformation involves major and dramatic development of a significantly

different system than the one operating at baseline. Attacking systemic racism, or structural racism, evokes transformation in power relationships and redistribution of societal resources beyond incrementally changing regulations and policies, or better implementing appropriate policies and regulations. Incrementally improving a system to better serve those in need involves testing a theory of change. Fundamentally altering and reforming a system requires a theory of transformation. Thus, the scale, depth, and breath of change is greater with transformation them with improvement-oriented systems change (Patton, 2021, chapter 14).

DE can and does serve both these purposes, but the purposes are different enough that it is worth making the distinction. The climate emergency has led to calls for transformation as have the social justice uprising since the murder of George Floyd in June 2020. The failure of the United States to cope effectively with the coronavirus pandemic has led to calls for transforming the public health system, not just improving it. Developmental evaluators need to know whether they are in the incremental change or transformation arena, which also may mean that they help facilitate this distinction among those involved in bringing about change. Evaluating transformation means transforming evaluation *developmentally* (Patton, 2021).

3. Developing Networks, Alliances, and Collaborations

Efforts at systems change and transformation increasingly involve multiple actors across different organizations and programs, forming networks, alliances, and collaborations aimed at collective impact. The processes of forming, nurturing, developing, energizing, engaging, sustaining, and adapting networks of people is a distinct and increasingly critical DE purpose. The Global alliance for the Future of Food is such a network, an alliance of some 30 philanthropic foundations working to transform food and agriculture systems based on sustainability principles. An effective, and sustainable network or alliance must do three things: (1) provide value to participating members, (2) add value as a group acting together rather than beyond what they could accomplish individually, and (3) expand their influence through their multiple, distinct, individual, and collective networks outside the network being developmentally evaluated.

DE informs the action and alignment of these three arenas of action. They are mutually reinforcing such that misalignment among them can undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of the network or alliance itself. The DE, then, gathers data about how members are experiencing the network, what the aggregate efforts of the network are yielding, and the ripple effects of the network beyond members. More generically, then, DE, can have a distinct purpose of supporting the development of collective action as a distinct approach to systems interventions.

4. Developmental Evaluation Support for Capacity Building

A fourth new direction that has emerged for DE in the last decade is building organizational and program capacity to engage in evaluation. This often involves supporting organizational leadership in efforts to embed evaluation in the work of the organization as a way of doing business. This is where DE meets OD (organizational development) with OD highlighting the importance of ongoing organizational development and DE highlighting the importance of basing that ongoing organizational development on evaluative thinking, processes, and use.

5. Developmental Evaluation for Research and Evaluation

DE as originally conceptualized focused on enhancing innovation and use. The focus, as has been traditional, was on supporting the development of interventions and initiatives aimed at innovation and systems change. However, in addition to those roles, and the ones already described above, the last decade has seen the emergence of a DE function in support of the development of research and evaluation. Rey, Tremblay, and Brousselle (2014) applied DE to development of research projects. Research designs and measures

often need to be adapted once data collection and fieldwork begin and DE can guide research adaptations. A leading-edge example is developmental trajectories for blockchain research (Tseng, Gil, & Lu, 2021) that identifies four stages in the development of subfields of blockchain research, each stage representing both innovation in the face of what is emerging and adaptation to what has emerged in prior stages that open up new pathways and trajectories.

DE has also supported development of evaluation. DE as a manifestation of utilization-focused evaluation has given rise to *Evaluation Science* (Patton, 2017), *Principles-Focused Evaluation* (Patton, 2018), and *Blue Marble Evaluation* (Patton, 2020a). As new approaches to evaluation emerge, as evaluation itself arises to meet those challenges, evaluation is being transformed to better evaluate transformation. New evaluation criteria for evaluating transformation have been developed (Patton, 2020d). This is a developmental process where evaluation theory and practice develop and adapt. DE can guide and assess those evaluation developments.

A prime example of DE for evaluation is the development of a *Guide for Remote DE* by USAID (2021). That Guide opens as follows:

> Developmental evaluation's (DE) focus on adaptation and flexibility makes it well-suited for complex environments, innovative programs, and untested approaches. Since 2010, DE has gained popularity due to its learning-focused approach, and its use continues to increase worldwide. Traditional DE relies on the evaluator(s) being embedded physically with program teams, using that presence to build trust, communication, access to information, and opportunities to support learning and adaptation within the program. As such, remote DEs were considered exceptionally challenging. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced an unprecedented global shift to remote work, pushing DE implementers to do what they do best—adapt and innovate—to face the challenges of continuing remotely. (USAID, 2021, p. 1)

Summary and Conclusion

DE continues to develop. This article has identified five emergent purposes for evaluation to add to the original five:

1. The purpose pivot: adapting to crisis (not just innovation)
2. Supporting systems transformation (beyond incremental systems change)
3. Developing networks, alliances, and collaborations (beyond projects)
4. DE support for capacity building
5. DE to guide research and evaluation

What these emergent purposes have in common is adaptation as much as and often more than innovation. DE has expanded from an innovation niche to a larger, more all-encompassing *adaptation niche*, which includes but is not limited to innovation. DE originally focused on support for social innovation influenced by social movement analyses in *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed* (Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006). Over time, applications of DE have increasingly served reactive adaptation to turbulent conditions as much as proactive social innovation. The pandemic brought the reactive adaptation function and purpose of DE into high relief, indeed, into the spotlight.

While this article adds five new purposes to the original five (Patton, 2011), the larger conclusion is that categorizing types of DE purposes and applications may no longer be useful. Originally, identifying discrete types and purposes was meant to help guide evaluators and social innovators in considering possible applications. The five original types became both a menu and a teaching tool. Identifying new and emergent applications reflected the increased uses of DE. Those applications and uses are now increasing in so many ways and directions that further classification may be more constraining than generative. Imagine trying to delineate a definitive typology of the types of program improvements one might make (formative evaluations) or major judgments one might render (summative evaluations). DE is its own purpose and niche. Enough said. That may well be sufficient without trying to identify specific sub-niches. That's what I take away from this endeavor. Let a thousand DE flowers bloom. Henceforth I'll enjoy the

beautiful and diverse DE garden without classifying and counting the distinct varieties.

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