

# The Evaluative Inquiry: Engaging research evaluation analytically and strategically

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# Outline

- The evaluation research literature
- The Dutch context
- Three issues within the current evaluation protocol
- The evaluative inquiry in practice
- Discussion



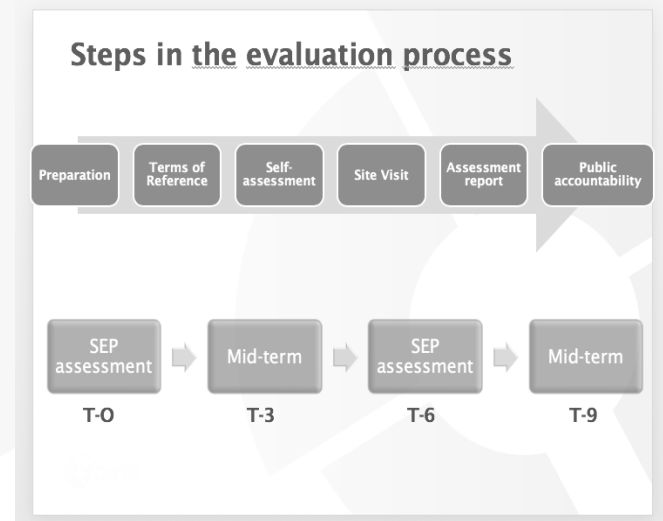
# Fit with mainstream evaluation literature

- Growing focus on
  - ... mixed methods and triangulation
  - ... complex systems with room for organisational learning
  - ... involving stakeholders
  - ... developing an intervention logic



# The Dutch context

- Evaluation results have no direct implications for funding (“weak evaluation system” according to Whitley (2007))
- Improvement use of evaluation results (as opposed to a distribute or controlling use (Molas-Gallart, 2012))
- National evaluation of all research units every 6 years (peer review combining personal site visits, interviews, qualitative and quantitative assessment of output)
- Regular self-assessment half-way between national evaluation rounds





# The Dutch context

- Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) stipulates that institutions provide: Formal documentation of output and “performance indicators”, a description of the financing of a given research unit, a qualitative narrative summarizing the results and societal relevance of the research
- The 2015 iteration of the SEP introduces a stronger emphasis on “societal relevance” of research, i.e. engagement with non-academic audiences and partners

Description of unit's organisational structure	Most important (and relevant) performance indicators
Description of unit's financing	Results research and societal relevance past 6 years (latter in a narrative)
Strategy past 6 years	link results to SEP criteria (quality, relevance, viability)
Targets past 6 years (research, societal relevance)	Strategy and targets next 5-10 years
Relevant environmental factors and developments past six years	PhD Program(s)
SWOT analysis and benchmarking	Research Integrity



# Three issues within the current evaluation protocol

- The academic excellence vs societal relevance divide
- The quantitative vs qualitative way of assessing academic quality
- The detached analyst vs engaged analytical collaborator



# The Evaluative Inquiry at CWTS

- Rethinking research excellence and academic quality.
- Research quality is not just an academic issue, but relevant to policy, professional networks and societal domains.
- Metric analyses offer particular understanding of academic quality. A portfolio of different methodologies offers additional perspectives.
- Evaluations are often used as accountability tools. As such they don't prompt organizational learning. The evaluative inquiry aspires to both.



# Exploration

- What are the central issues and questions of the project?  
Document analysis and conversations with client.
- Design of research approach and specification of combination of methods.

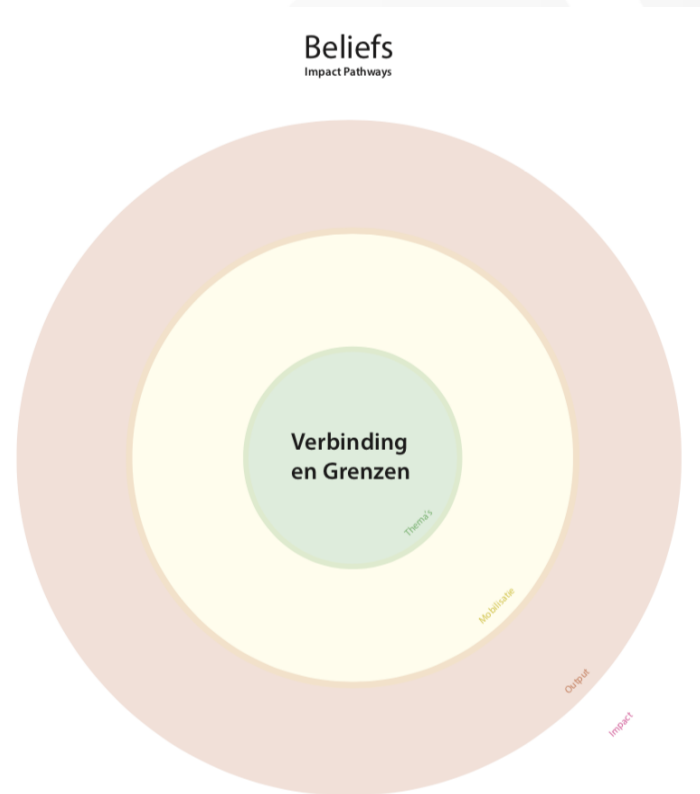


# Data collection and analysis

- Contextual Response Analysis (Prins, n.d.); contextual scientometrics (Waltman & van Eck, 2016); bibliographic coupling; co-citation analyses; Area Based Connectedness (Noyons, 2018)
- Impact pathway analysis; Interviews with researchers and stakeholders about institutional organization, academic themes, output and impact.
- Workshops – data collection for SWOT analysis and/or testing of hypotheses.



# Impact pathways: lively themes connecting academic and societal domains



## Thema's

Bekering  
Transgender  
Ontmoetingen tussen islam en Christendom  
Wetenschap & religie (in West-Afrika)  
Church in "The Borderland"

## Mobilisatie

Partners (wetenschappelijk, maatschappelijk, kerkelijk, professioneel, lokaal en internationaal)  
Geldtroom (NWO, kerkelijke fondsen, H2020)  
Stalleden (alleen, met collega's PThU)

## Output

Academisch  
Professioneel  
Populariserend  
Hybride  
Platforms (wetenschappelijke conferenties, discussies in kranten, praatprogramma's RTV, tentoonstellingen, kerkdiensten, blogs, internetfora)

## Impact

Blijken van gebruik (wetenschappelijk, maatschappelijk, kerkelijk, professioneel, lokaal en internationaal)  
Erkenning



# Example of integration of CRA



University staff connected in co-citation map



# Reporting

- Analysis of institutional organization as well as the relations between academic themes, output and impact. SWOT. Suggestions for self-assessment.
- Report is point of departure for conversation about ambitions and the organization of quality, internally and externally. Workshop can be additional tool.



# Discussion

The evaluative inquiry is an approach to rethink academic value analytically and strategically. What do you think?