

# Institutional Analysis of Evaluation Policies in Quebec, Canada

Something you  
might not care so  
much about, and it's  
OK.

... as an excuse to talk about normative  
institutional analysis in evaluation

Something you should  
start to care about.

Evaluation Cafe

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## Part I

Considerations on institutional analysis  
in evaluation

...and a word about the evaluation  
production function in society

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Improving **evaluator's work** will only  
improve evaluations that are asked to be  
done and within the limits they're asked  
to be done.

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Society's **evaluation production function**  
is what we should really care about.

– what and how we do in terms of evaluation

We want (we need!):

– the most critical evaluations to be done and used

– with the right sets of questions

– by skillful evaluators that provide valid answers

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Based on society's need regarding  
evaluation production function as a whole,  
  
what are the needs regarding research on  
evaluation ?

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A sample of the conception of normative  
evaluation theory in the field:

« An evaluation theorist is someone who  
publicly advances a theory about  
evaluation with the prupose of **improving  
the evaluation practice** of others. »

Gargani, 2012

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A sample of the conception of normative  
evaluation theory in the field:

« ...purpose of program evaluation  
theory is to **specify feasible practices that  
evaluators can use** to construct  
knowledge of the value of social  
programs (...)»

Shadish, Cook, Leviton, 1991

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## Actual « dominant » perspective

- Evaluation is the work of the evaluator.

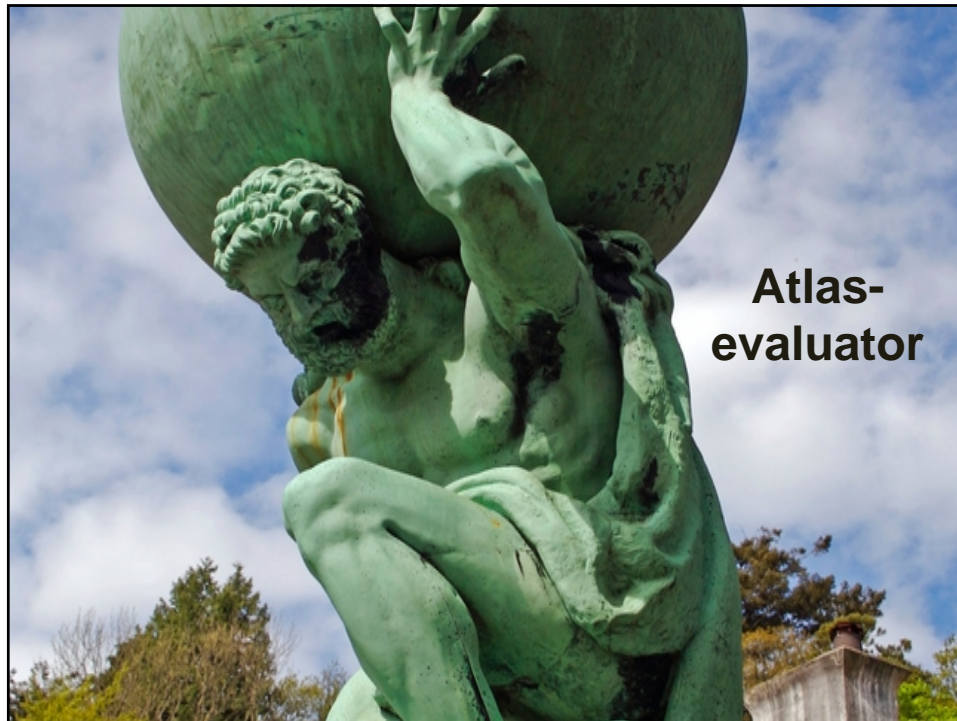
**NO.**

- To improve evaluation we have to improve  
evaluator's work and therefore study  
evaluation practice.

**NO.** (Well, yes actually, but not only that, in fact)

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## Institutional analysis perspective

- Evaluation is the combination of multiple contributors and institutional conditions.

**YES.**

- To improve evaluation we have to improve the quality of institutions and therefore study institutions.

**YES.**

*(not mutually exclusive with the study of practice)*

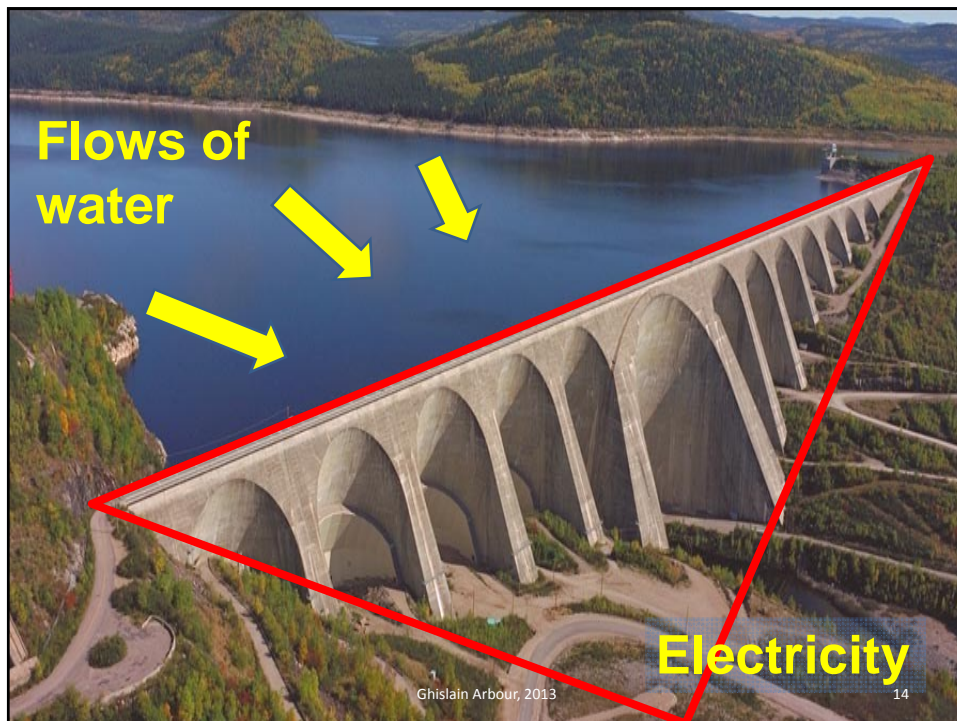
## After 12 slides

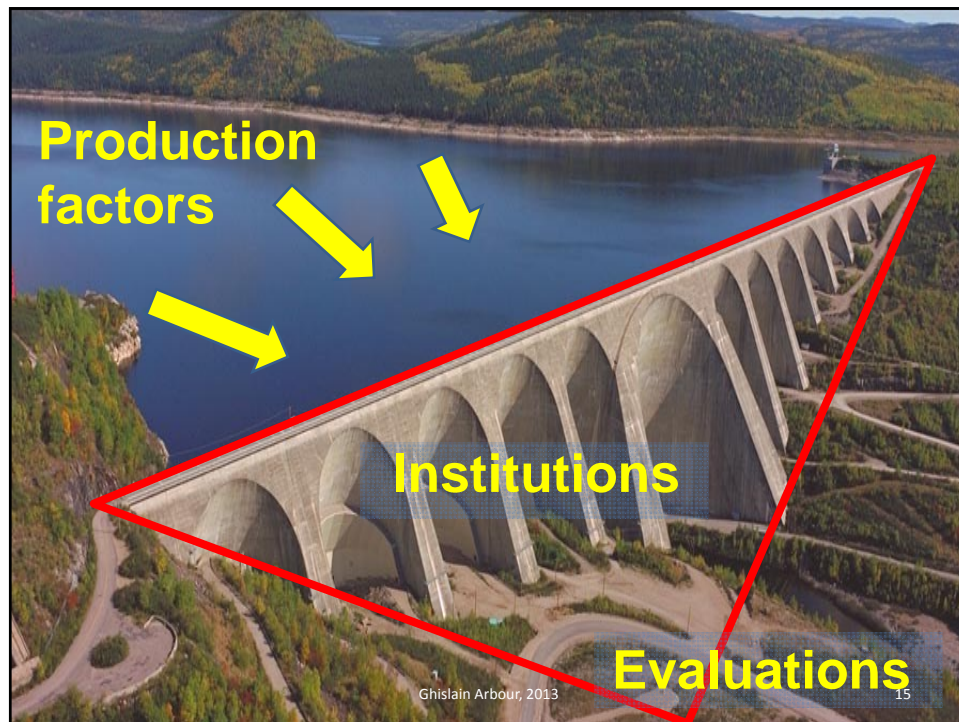
Could you finally tell us what do you  
mean by institutions ?

Yes, but this is just one perspective on  
institutions, derived from Public choice theory.

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## Institutions as rules

- Rules are prescriptions commonly known and used by a set of participants to order repetitive, interdependent relationships.
- Prescription is about what is required, prohibited or permitted.

Perspective inspired from political economy, especially E. Ostrom (1986).



## Institutions as rules

- Rules are the « **social dam** » that change the structure of incentives in situations.
- Rules aren't necessarily « official rules » and all « official rules » aren't rules.
- Rules are « effective rules », known, admitted, **enforced**.

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## Rules act in combination

- (r1) scope of decision (objects ruled)
- (r2) permitted action regarding resources use
- (r3) sequence of actions
- (r4) descriptions of roles
- (r5) selection of participants

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- (r6) how can participants can associate
- (r7) what information is available to who
- (r8) decision rules (agregation)
- (r9) distribution of the outcome of decision
- (r10) modification of rules
- (r11) enforcement

(Landry, 1984)

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## Decision nodes

Interaction of several rules that leads to a decision/action , an intermediate or final results in a given production function.

It is the convergences of several and sometime contradicting incentives.

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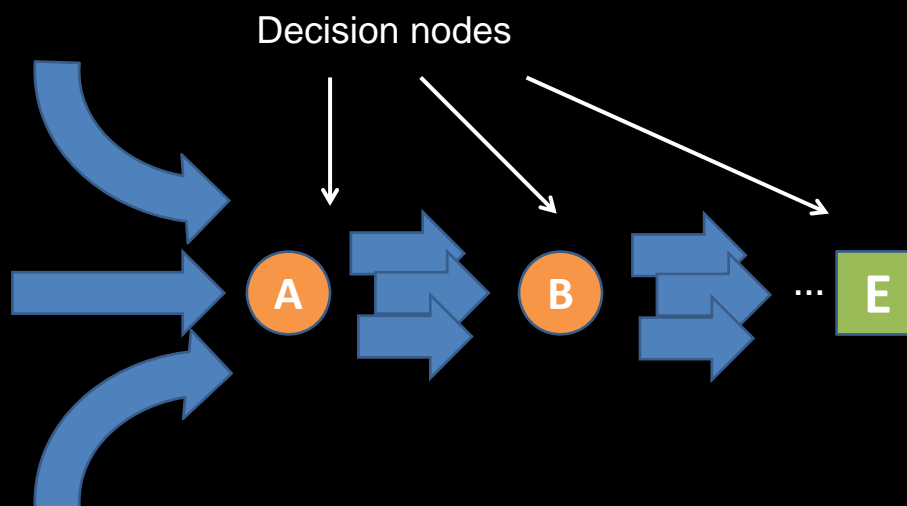
## Examples of decisions nodes in evaluation

- Decision to evaluate (what, when to evaluate)
- Evaluation question (prog. an. or eval ?)
- Methodology
- Financing of the evaluation (s)
- Which evaluator ? Internal/external ?
- Payment of contributors
- Dissemination of the evaluation
- Approving report, on what ground ?

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## System of multiple rivers and dams



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## Multiple **set of rules** from multiple **layers of rules** for a single decision node

- Federal law, regulation and policies
- State law, regulation and policies
- Public bodies internal regulation and policies
- Contracts
- Professionnal deontology

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- Judging evaluation institutions would require  
3 theoretical kinds of knowledge :
  - Understanding of what are institutions ✓  
(ex: **Ostrom and Public choice**)
  - Understanding of the way institutions interact  
with the human behavior, i.e. our *rivers* ✓  
(ex: **Rational choice**)
  - Normative understanding of what evaluation  
ought to be to serve society ?

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## References

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- Ostrom, E. (1986). "An agenda for the study of institutions." *Public Choice 48(1): 3-25.*
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