

Evaluation & Learning AEA 2007

Precarious Balance

**Educational evaluation capacity
building in the era of
globalization**

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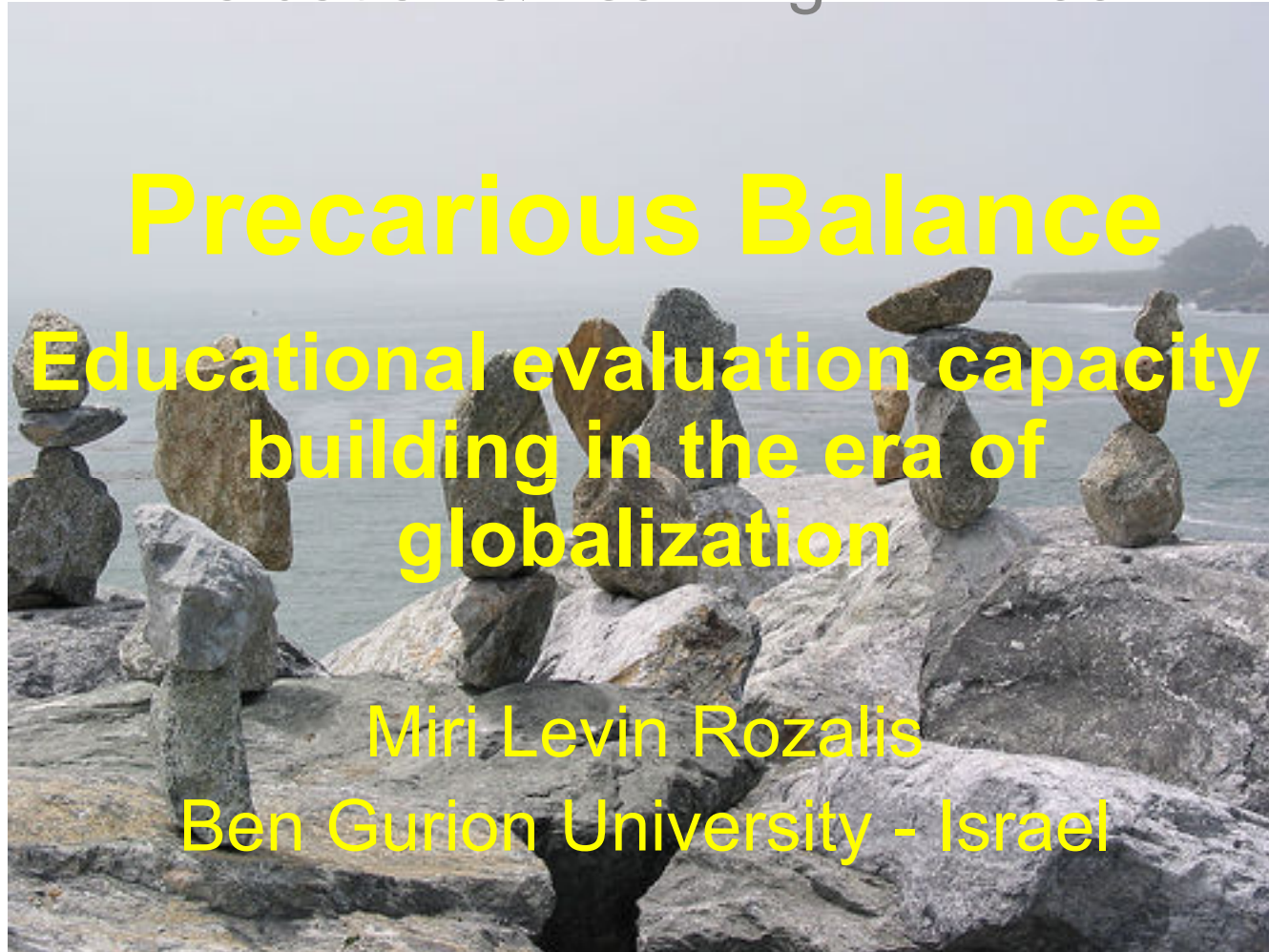
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The tension

Cultural context and background is viewed today as being central to evaluation as such and especially in the globalization era that forces agencies and evaluators to function in unfamiliar environments.

On the other hand the demand for 'rigorous' methods, experimental, quasi experimental and pure quantitative approaches remains.

The duality

The pendulum is moving between two main ontological approaches that we can name roughly as “structure” versus “human-agency.”

Counting the pros and cons will not convince anybody. The discussion touches much deeper levels of world view, beliefs and ideologies.

Criteria	The 'structure' approach	The 'human agency' approach
Function	Control and supervision	Learning
Goal	Standardization	Looking into variance, differences and diversity
Frame	The structure as a whole	Diagnostic (distinguishing between pupil, teacher or school)
Focus	Products	Processes
Benefit	Sorting	Strengthening
Outcomes (educational)	Knowledge	Skills
Methodology	RCT (randomized controlled treatment)	Responsive
Inquiry	Analytical	Holistic or naturalistic or systemic
Locus	External	Internal

All these tensions caused by the duality of perceptions, are more significant in the face of globalization.

Criteria	The 'structure' approach	The 'human agency' approach
Purpose	Universal	Particular
Frame	The Big Picture	The Confined
Focus	Conceptual Definitions (Etic)	Local Definitions Of Situation (Emic)
Locus	External	Internal
Benefit	Accountability	Autonomy
Outcomes	Professionalism	Politics And Tensions Between Different Stakeholders And Interests

The challenge

To be able to work within a specific culture with all its characteristics, values, norms and social representations (and that might take a lifetime to learn) and still be able to connect to standards and demands that are rigorous "universal", or "Western".

Both are a must if we want ECB of the evaluatee, a valuable evaluation and evaluation findings to be communicable to the world, to be compared to findings from other places or to norms.

Does it mean that our professional knowledge of collecting data, analyzing it, conceptualizing it and so on is worthless?

Not at all, it is just insufficient .

How can that be remedied?

1. **A**bduction - the logic of discovery
2. **C**ybernetics - non linear exchanges and processes of change
3. **T**eleology – a purpose rather than a cause

Criteria	The 'structure' approach	The 'human agency' approach	The third way
Function	Control and supervision	Learning	Teleological (having a purpose)
Goal	Standardization	Looking into variance, differences and diversity	Systematizing variances
Frame	The system as a whole	diagnostic (distinguishing pupil, teacher or school)	The concrete field/evaluatee
Focus	Products	Processes	Outcome of Local-Processes in local terms
Benefit	Sorting	Strengthening	Transformation
Outcomes (educational)	Knowledge	Skills	Adjustments
Methodology	RCT	Responsive	Cybernetics
Inquiry	Analytical	Holistic or naturalistic or systemic	Abduction
Locus	External	Internal	From the inside out