



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Questions and Answers

An ethnography of evaluation in Afghanistan

Holtrop, T.J.

Publication date

2017

Document Version

Other version

License

Other

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Holtrop, T. J. (2017). *Questions and Answers: An ethnography of evaluation in Afghanistan*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Holtrop, T.J. (2016) *On Writing an Evaluation Report in Afghanistan: Making Heterogeneity Cohere through Writing Infrastructures, Format and Authorship. Proceedings of the 49th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Science (HICSS) pp. 2007-2016. doi 10.1109/HICSS.2016.253*

Holtrop, T. J. (forthcoming) 6.15%. Taking numbers at interface value. *Science & Technology Studies*

Holtrop, T. J. (2016) Crafting coherence. On writing an evaluation report in Afghanistan. Under review.

Holtrop, T. J. (2016) Meeting with success and failure. Presenting Afghanistan in The Netherlands. Under review.

Holtrop, T. J. (2017) Asking again and again. Moving between questions in development research in Afghanistan. Under review.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project started a decade ago with a haphazard move to New York to attend graduate school at the New School for Social Research. I thank Ann Stoler, Hugh Raffles, Hylton White, Lawrence Hirschfeld, Vijayanthi Rao, Janet Roitman, and Miriam Ticktin for four years of instilling in me a profound desire to think and write some actual things and finish this project even in times of desperation and madness. I thank my extended/cohort members for being a grad student with me: Vasiliki Touhouliotis, Rhea Rahman, Gabriel Vignoli, Jason Lau, Kadija Ferryman, Grzegorz Sokol, Emily Sogn, Nicole Labruto, Mark Theunissen, Suraiya Anita Jetha, Alexios Tsigkas and Katyayani Dalmia. If life wouldn't have come in between I would have continued to struggle alongside you at Bobst.

But life did come in between among other things with the collapse of the Dutch cabinet over the extension of the military mission in Uruzgan in 2010. All of a sudden the PhD project I had started at the NSSR – about the Dutch soldiers in Uruzgan – walked out of Afghanistan. Fortunately, I was introduced to the Afghan research organization that I call MR in this thesis. Despite some rough patches, my times in Kabul and Uruzgan were among the happiest in my life. I thank everyone, especially the Uruzgan team, for allowing me to number, write, meet and ask questions with you. It was at the New School for Social Research that Annemarie Mol held a talk and before I knew it I was walking the Utrecht walk with her and she agreed to writing an NWO proposal with me so I could continue my PhD at the University of Amsterdam. I consider myself enormously lucky. Annemarie is a true *Doktermutter*, practicing the care she theorizes. I am thankful to the Eating

Bodies team for further extending the distributions of care: Emily Yates-Doerr, Rebeca Ibañez Martin, Sebastian Abrahamson, Cristobal Bonelli, Jeltsje Stobbe, Filippo Bertoni, Else Vogel, Anna Mann, Carolina Dominguez Guzman, Hasan Ahsraf, Justine Laurent, Oliver Human, Ignace Schoot, Annelieke Driessen, Swasti Mishra, Marianne de Laet and Wakana Suzuki. They have been like family, generous, critical, argumentative, loving, fun, helpful, smart, and eloquent.

Many thanks also to the larger AISSR, such a special and lively environment. I want to mention my two co-supervisors Oskar Verkaaik and René Gerrets, who I wish I had made part of the project earlier on. Janus Oomen, Muriël Kiesel and Danny van der Poel took care of the often invisible but crucial administrative infrastructures. Then Amade M'charek, Jeanette Pols, Mattijs van de Port, Alexander Edmonds, Anita Hardon, Maria Jose de Abreu and a long list of fellow PhD students were there for invaluable questions, critique, discussions, support and new directions. The same goes for a list of visitors: Atsuro Morita, Haruko Inoie, Matei Candea, Antonia Walford, Joseph Dumit, Simon Cohn, Nicholas de Weydenthal and many more.

Over the years I have done several inspiring visiting fellowships and workshops. First in 2014 to the Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation where I worked on the writing chapter with great help from David Pontille and Jérôme Denis. Many thanks also to Alexandre Mallard, Brice Laurent, Liliana Doganova, Fabian Muniesa, Madeleine Akrich and Antoine Hennion and among the many PhD students Vera Ehrenstein and Thomas Vangeebergen. Collectively they made me aware of the need to be very precise in my ethnographic descriptions. In the spring of 2015 I visited the Digital Cultures Research Lab at Leuphana University in Lüneburg where Paula Bialski, Goetz Bachmann, Paul Feigelfeld, Armin Beverungen, Boris Traue, Nina Wakeford and Florian Sprenger were amazing hosts while I worked on my meetings paper. In the summer of 2015 I visited the Museum für Naturkunde where Tahani Nadim taught me about cosmic dust particles and stuffed birds from the 18th century while I was working on my questions paper. I want to also mention one of the many workshops that I attended, on numbers, in Bochum, hosted by Estrid Sørensen and Helen Verran in 2012. I want to thank especially Helen Verran for putting me on to numbers as a research object in her enigmatic way.

Since the end of 2014 I have been engaged with the Evaluation Practices in Context working group, led by Sarah de Rijcke, at CWTS in Leiden. I have been introduced to a smart bunch of evaluation nerds, Paul Wouters, Thed van Leeuwen, Clifford Tatum, Alex Rushforth, Julia Heuritsch and last but not least Thomas Franssen. I couldn't be happier to have joined them last October as a postdoc.

Special thanks to Dr. Sayed Mirwais Amin, Jean Amat Amoros, Jimmy Weir, Trinh Nguyen, Amah Edo, Bette Dam, Jojanneke van der Toorn, Jos Winters, Liakos Ariston, and Jenna Grant. At different stages of this project you have been invaluable friends and interlocutors of

this projects. I'm so happy you were around. Also, Jan Willem Petersen and Ludo Hekman, my conversations with you only very recently have made me excited about where to take my thinking to next. Paranymfen, Peggy van Schijndel and Jeltsje Stobbe, and Cristobal Bonelli also, from afar, I am really happy you'll have my back on the 22nd of February.

Nanne, Carlijn, Maria, Luuk, Mieke and Solco, you belong in this list, if only because you started it. I am proud to give you a copy of this thesis soon, finally, and you know all the rest of it.

I was introduced to the Flows Collective in 2012. Uli Beisel, Endre Danyi, Tahani Nadim, Natalie Gill, Filippo Bertoni, Christoph Michels, Joe Deville, Anna Mann, Malte Ziewitz, Ingmar Lippert, Ignacio Farias and Michaela Spencer: even if we don't see each other all that often you are guiding lights on the path of academia.

And with a stroke of luck Julien McHardy was among you too. He is a poet and a maker, good for helping me end this thesis, and great for new beginnings.