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## **Evaluation of territorial reforms<sup>1</sup>**

### Abstract

This paper explores whether the territorial reforms in countries of amalgamations have been evaluated and, if so, by whom and with what results.

Evaluations of territorial reform are inherently political and involve different stakeholders whose interests – in the reform’s justification, meaning and results alike – differ, and often conflict, as do their views on whether a reform should be evaluated, by whom, how, and for what purpose.

*Ex-post* evaluations of amalgamation reforms are not common practice. The reforms most frequently evaluated are comprehensive, deep, one-off reforms, whereas more shallow or gradual reforms are evaluated in less than forty percent of cases. The most typical form of evaluation is an official evaluation carried out or solicited by the reform-deciding government, providing the reform-deciding government a high level of control over the evaluation.

The academic literature studying the consequences of municipal amalgamations shows that municipal amalgamations have both positive and negative outcomes. Nuances notwithstanding, the extant academic literature broadly suggests that amalgamation reforms experience a trade-off between efficiency and democracy.

Monitoring and evaluation are seen as inherent elements of the policy cycle (e.g. Anderson 1975). We are living in an era of evaluation (Vedung 2010), in an evaluation society (Dahler-Larsen 2011), with a widespread norm that public sector reforms and programmes ought to be evaluated in order to have a clear picture of the results of the reform and assess whether reform intentions have been realized (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011: 17). Evaluation may also pave the ground for policy change, by influencing the public agenda and closing the “feedback loop” between reform outcomes and possible further adjustments via a new wave of reform.

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