

CECAN Webinar - Place-Based Evaluation Is Missing the Point About Place

Thursday 15th October 2026, 12:00 – 13:00 BST

Presenter: Matt Healey, Principal Consultant | Co-Founder, First Person Consulting

Welcome to our **CECAN Webinar**.

All participants are muted. Only the Presenters & CECAN Host can speak. The webinar will start at **12:00 BST**.

Matt will speak for around 40 minutes and will answer questions at the end.

Please submit your questions at any point during the webinar via the Q&A box in the Zoom webinar control panel. You will also be able to 'upvote' questions.

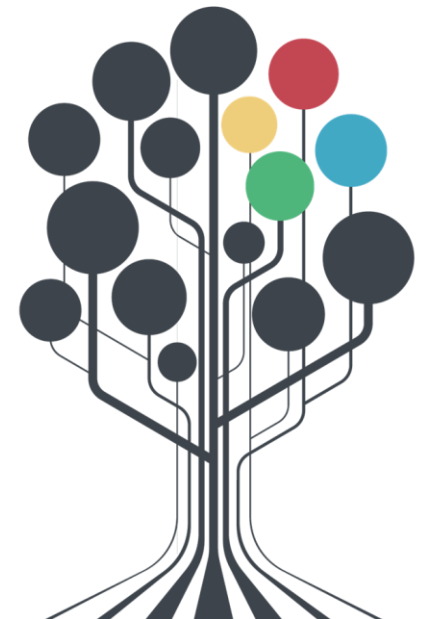
Today's webinar will be recorded and made available on the CECAN website.

E Mail: cecan@surrey.ac.uk

Web: www.cecan.ac.uk

www.facebook.com/CECANEXUS

Twitter: [@cecanexus](https://twitter.com/cecanexus)





Place-based evaluation is missing the point about place

Introducing the **Some of Place
Framework**

Matt Healey

Principal Consultant • First Person Consulting

CECAN webinar • 15 October 2026





How widespread are place-based approaches?

Australian place-based approaches date back to the 1970s – and there's no current accepted figure, but in short:

80+ Collective-impact-style projects in the mid-2010s

130+ Communities partnering with the Commonwealth on community-led place-based reform reported in the 2022 Budget



A unique multi-philanthropy and Commonwealth peak body that formally commenced operations in 2025.



Challenges in place-based evaluation

Choices about cause, context and success are connected.

Attribution

How do causes combine to produce change?

Boundaries

What belongs in the inquiry, and what is left outside?

Temporality

Which histories, rhythms and deadlines shape what we can judge?



Contested outcomes

Whose improvement and whose knowledge count?



My starting question

~~How could systems methods support place-based evaluation?~~

What do we mean by 'place'?

A way to conceptualise place that fits the context and purpose of the inquiry.



'Space-based' is not the same as 'place-based'

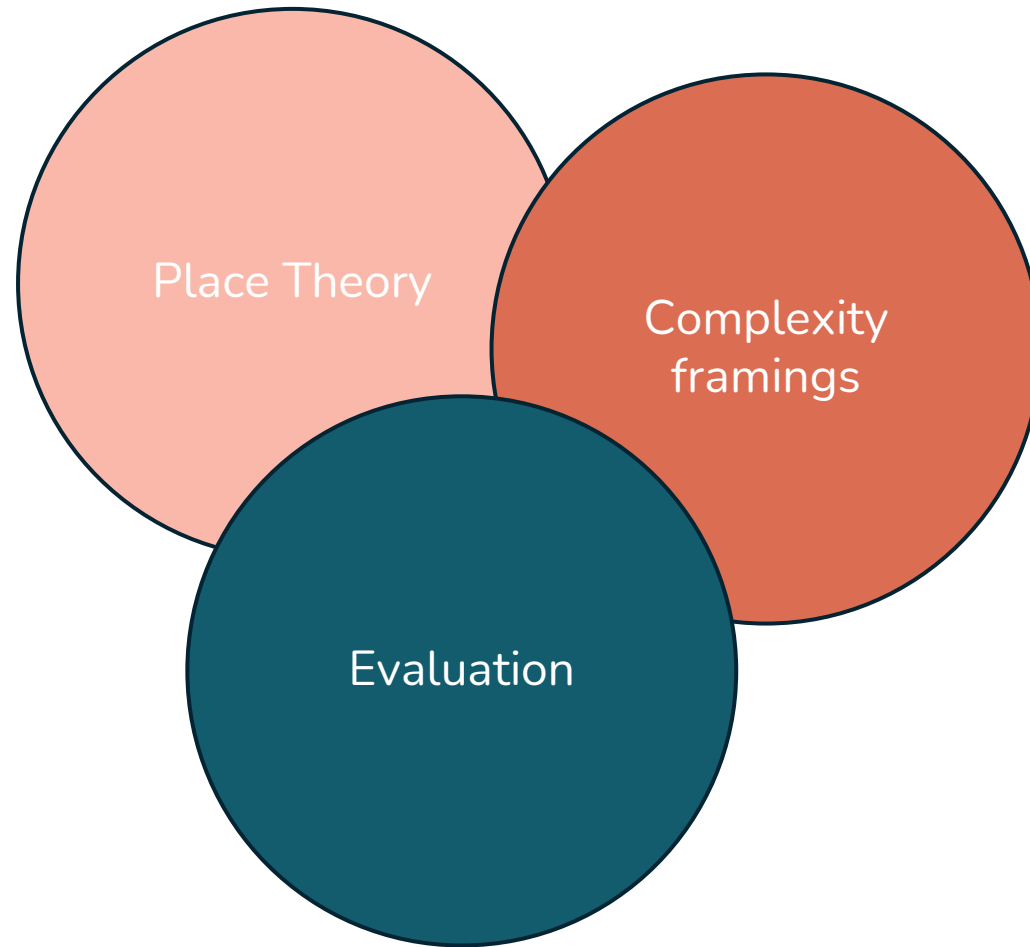
**A service area.
A family history.
A place to begin again.**

The geography alone
does not tell us what
this place means.





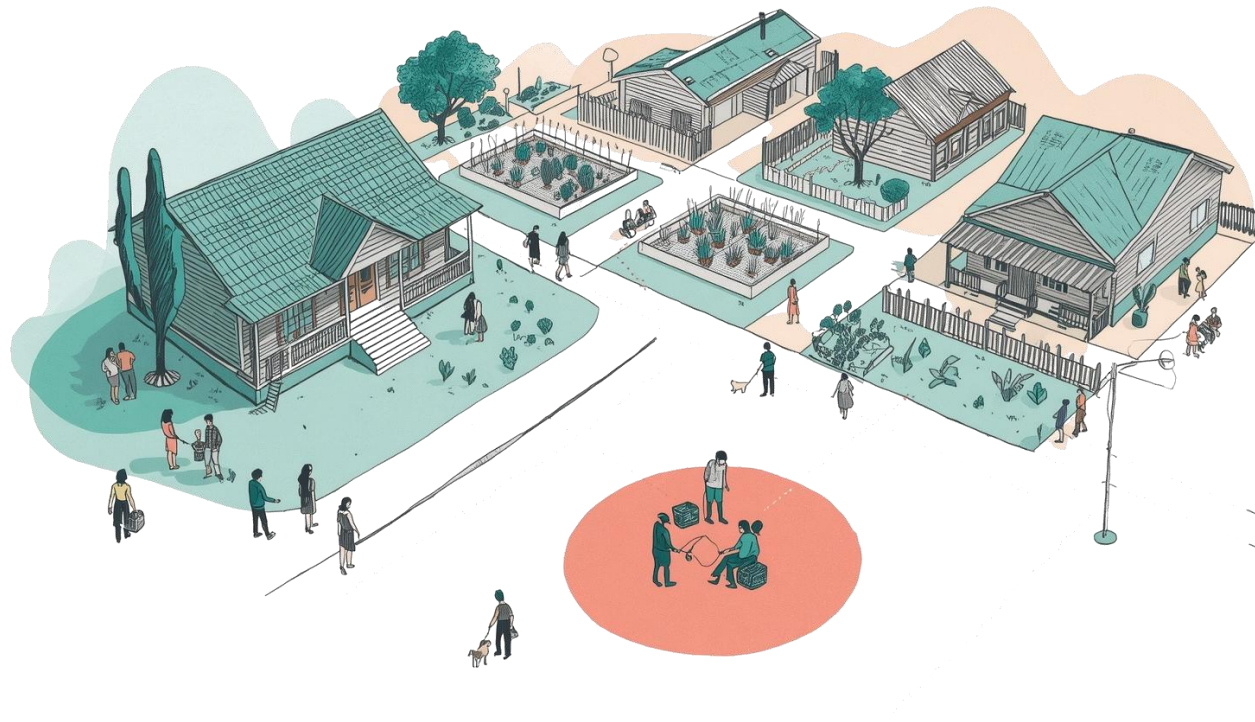
What do we mean by 'place'?





What makes a place, a place?

Place theory connects the physical setting with meaning, practice and relationships.



Materiality, meaning and practice

What is here, what it means and what people do are intertwined.

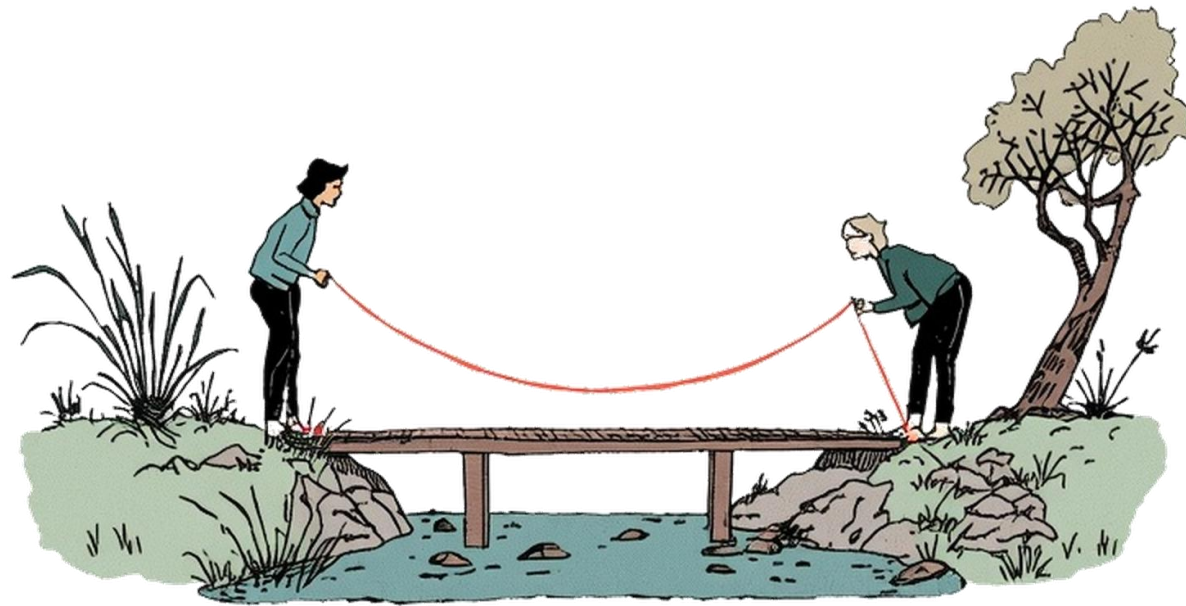
Relational and contested

Connections cross boundaries. Histories and attachments shape different experiences of the same space. In other words – one space = many places.



Complexity framings in evaluation

Change emerges through interactions in open systems.



Some-ness

Every account selects. Explain its limits and keep it open to revision.

Emergence and feedback

Interactions create outcomes and can reinforce or dampen change.

Non-linearity and history

Effects need not match the size of an action. Earlier decisions shape what is possible.



Developing the framework

I clustered concepts by their role in how places function and change.

Governance
Multi-level coordination
Institutional arrangements



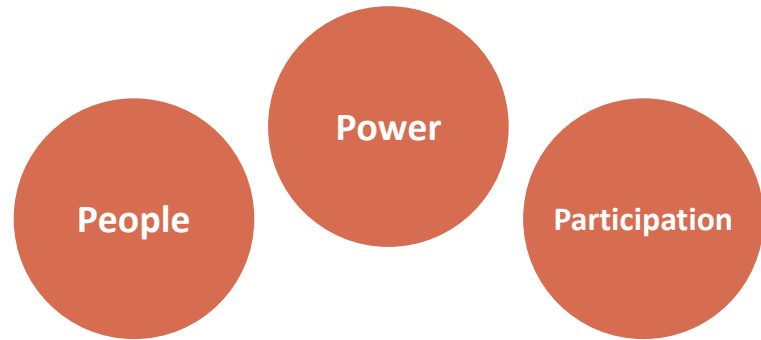
Attachment and belonging
Identity
Felt experience



Iterative synthesis across three literatures, refined through practitioner engagement.



Some of Place



Nine Ps

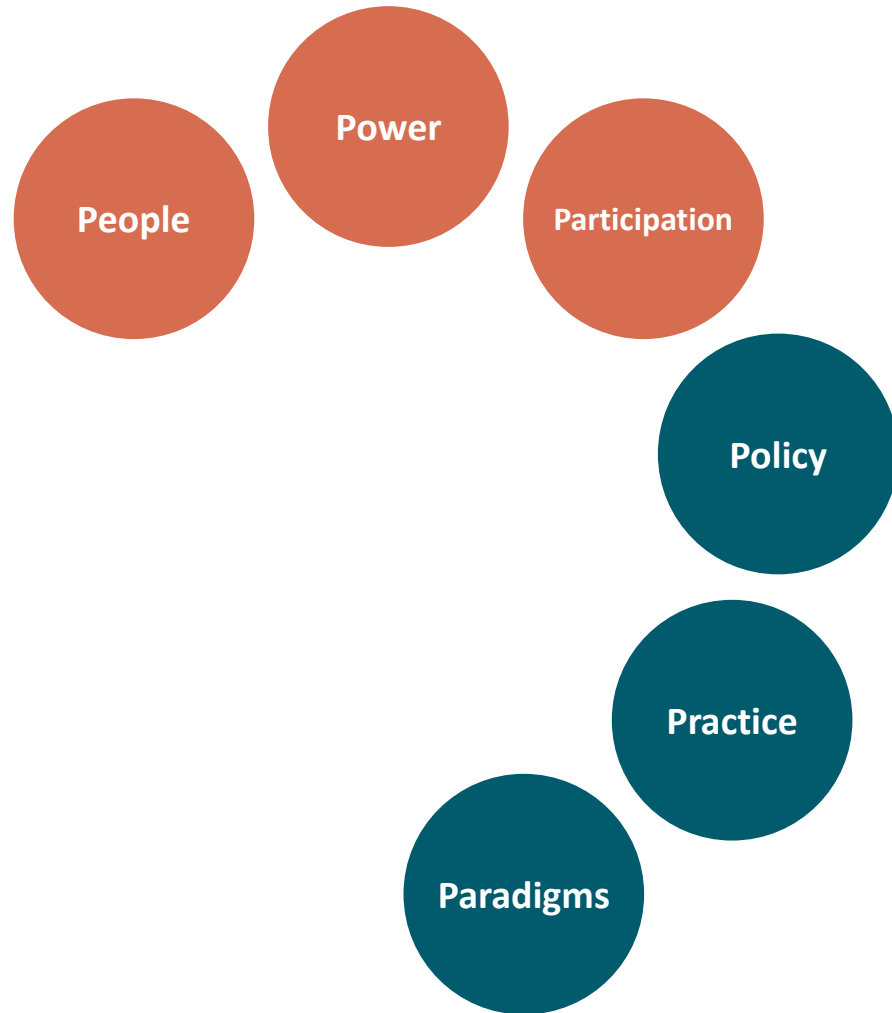
Human dimensions

Who is present, whose voices carry weight and how people shape their place.

People, Power and Participation



Some of Place



Nine Ps

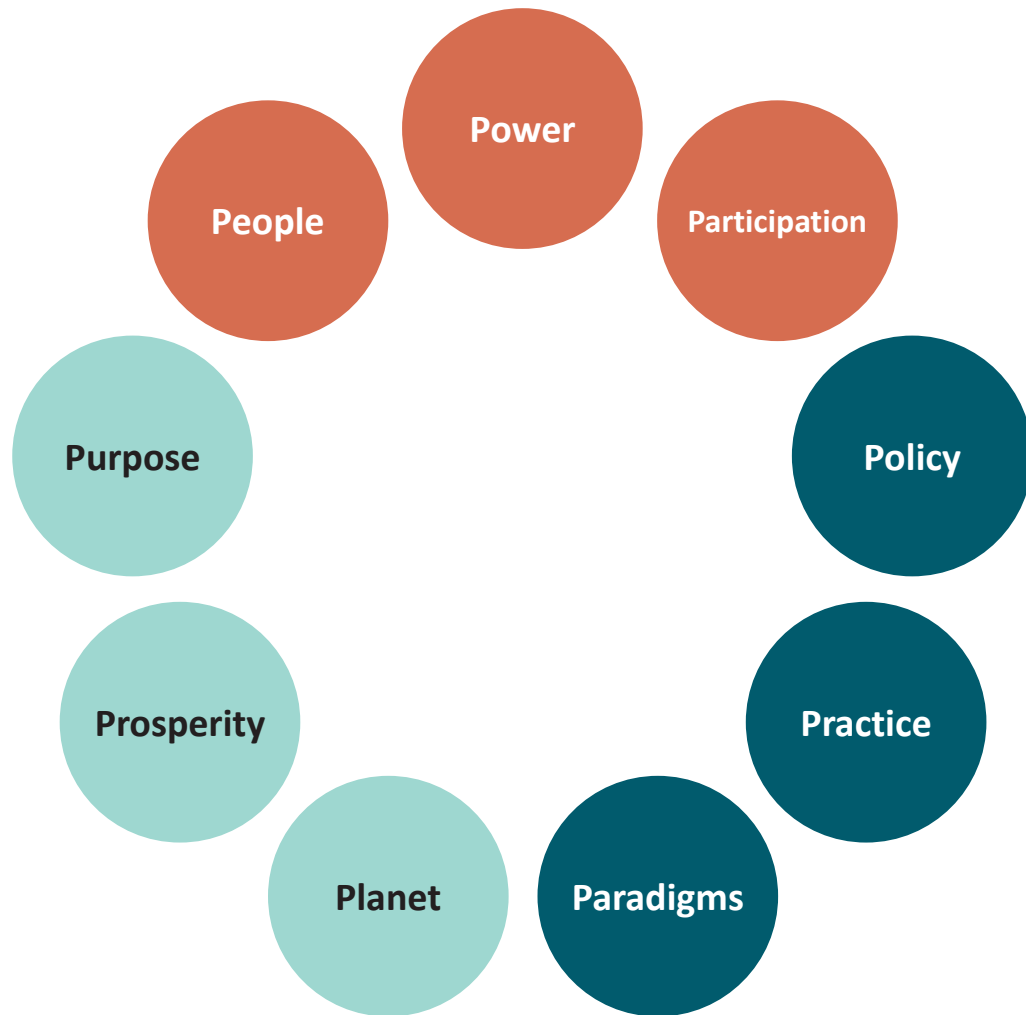
Institutional and epistemological dimensions

The arrangements and activities of place, and the ways of knowing that frame them.

Policy, Practice and Paradigms



Some of Place



Nine Ps

Material and meaning-making dimensions

Ecological and material conditions, alongside what makes this place matter.

Planet, Prosperity and Purpose



Some of Place



The space between

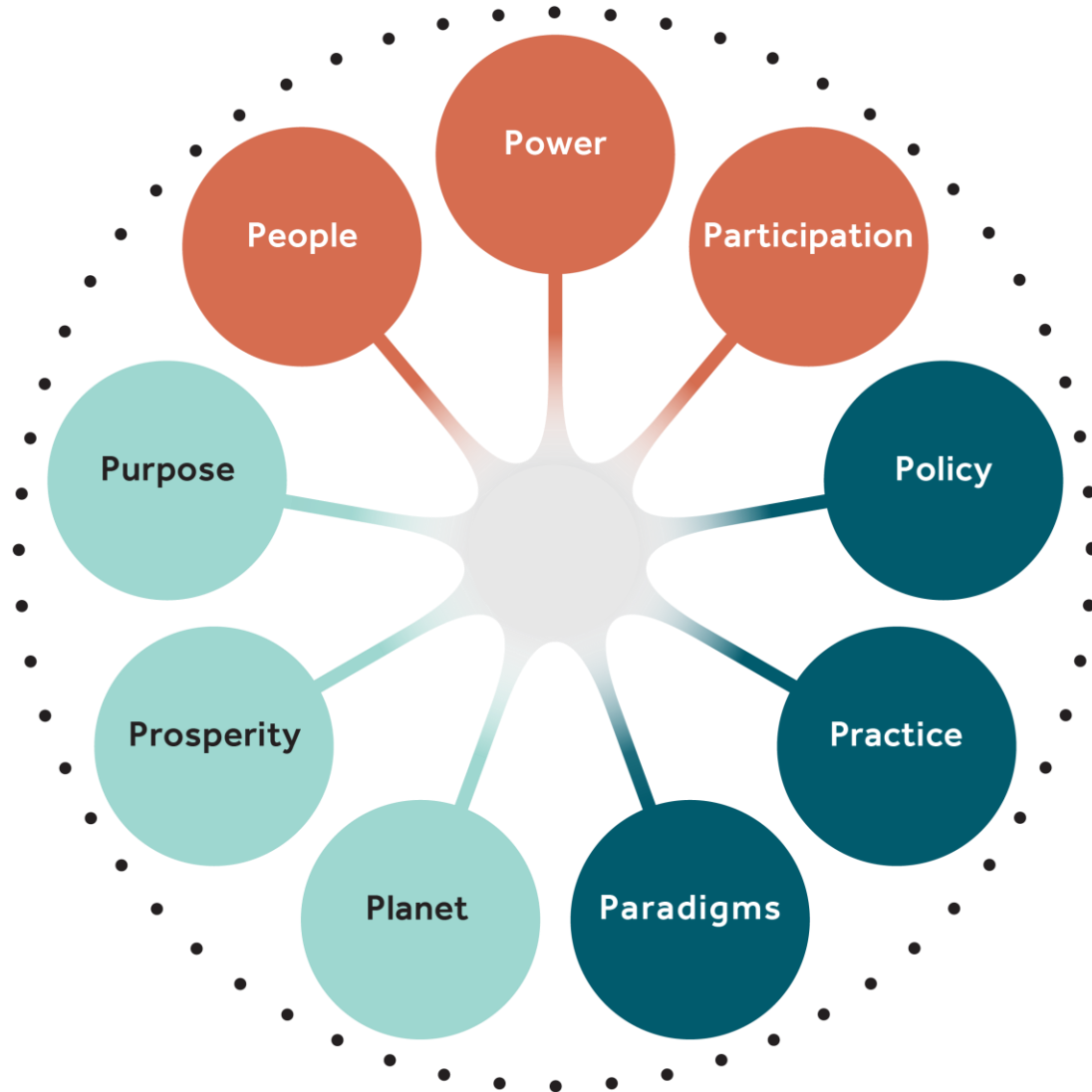
Relationships and emergence

What happens through the interactions between dimensions?

A relationship can be the focus of evaluation.



Some of Place



Bounded by time

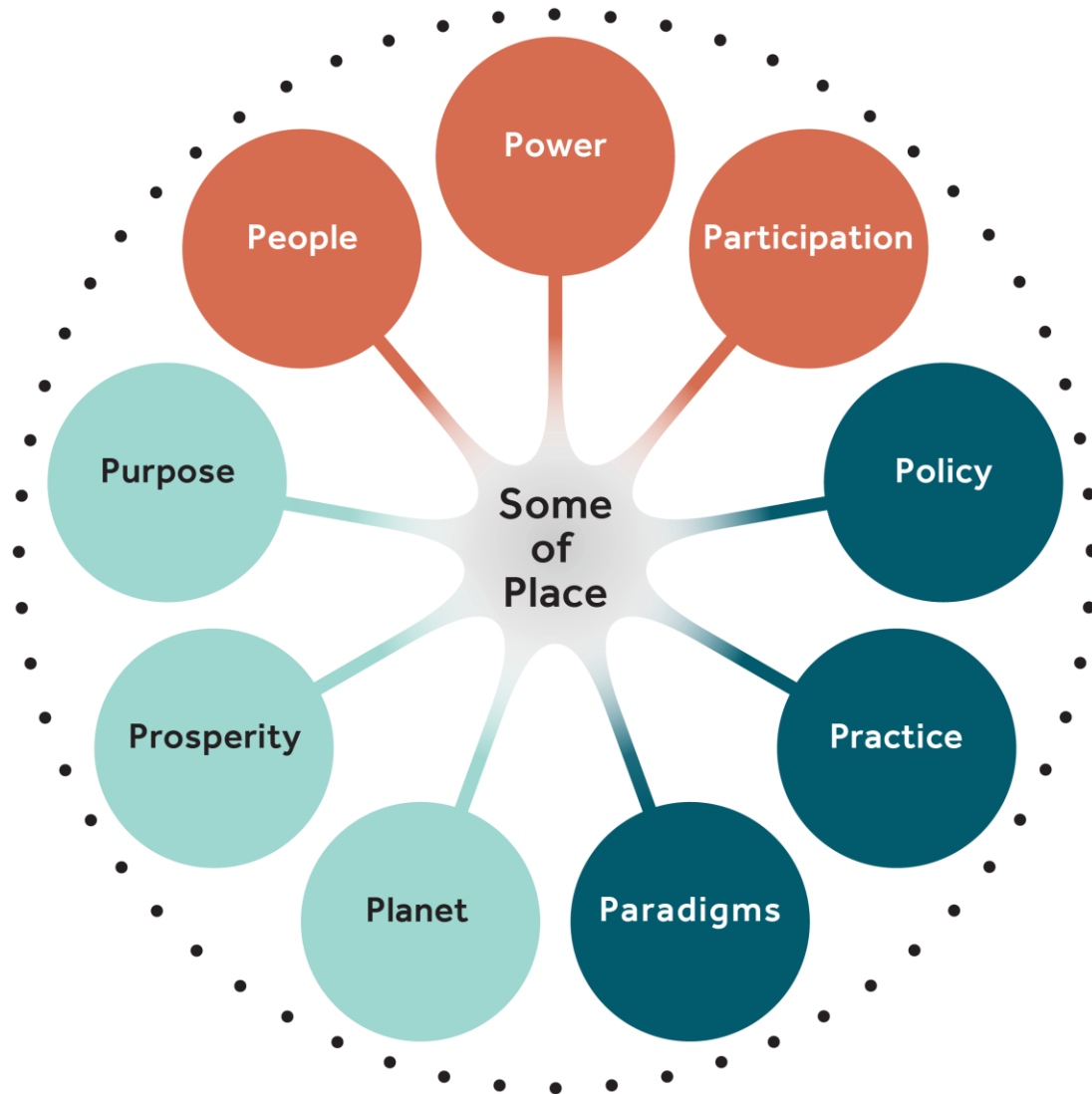
Overlapping temporalities

Institutional deadlines, recurring rhythms and connections across generations.

Whose timeframe shapes the judgement?



Some of Place



Some-ness

A partial, situated account

Every evaluation captures some perspectives, relationships and temporalities.

Explain the choices and what could change them.



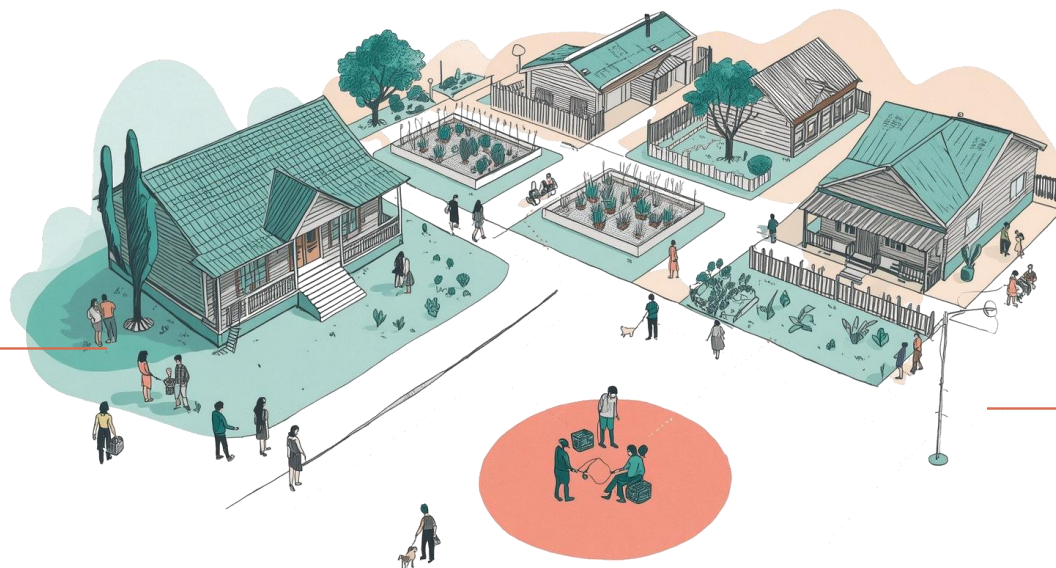
People, Power and Participation

Human dimensions

People

Who is present, and how intersecting identities shape experience.

Carers and shift workers may experience a service differently.



Power

How authority, influence and decision-making are distributed.

A funder sets eligibility rules; residents live with their effects.

Participation

How communities shape their places and the evaluations of them.

Residents help decide which questions the evaluation asks.



Policy, Practice and Paradigms

Institutional and epistemological dimensions

Policy

Governance and institutional arrangements

Funding rules can reward separate organisational outputs.

Practice

Activities undertaken in pursuit of change

Staff develop informal referrals alongside formal delivery.

Paradigms

Worldviews and ways of knowing

Is access understood as an individual problem or a feature of service arrangements?





Planet, Prosperity and Purpose

Material and meaning-making dimensions



Planet

Ecological systems and biophysical processes

Heat or flooding changes where people can safely meet.

Prosperity

Economic conditions and material circumstances

Transport costs affect who can reach support.

Purpose

Meaning, attachment and identity

A familiar gathering place holds significance beyond the service it hosts.



Interpreting the intersections

Hypothetical example: support moves to a shared hub

Purpose

Practice



Prosperity

Who finds support easier to reach?

How do the new service arrangements interact with travel costs and the resources people have?

What changes when a familiar place is lost?

Ask how attachment and trust affect whether people use the new service.

The report is due. Has enough time passed?



A contract ends in June

Agree what can reasonably be judged then, and what needs a later review.

A single reporting window can miss recurring patterns and the histories that shape change.



Planning around different timescales

These temporalities overlap in the same place.



Institutional deadlines

Agree what can be judged by the reporting date.
Plan a later review where change is still developing.



Recurring community rhythms

Collect accounts across relevant routines and seasons.
One visit may give a misleading picture of access.



Intergenerational connections

Explore earlier experiences and future obligations.
Ask how they shape what people value now.



Some-ness



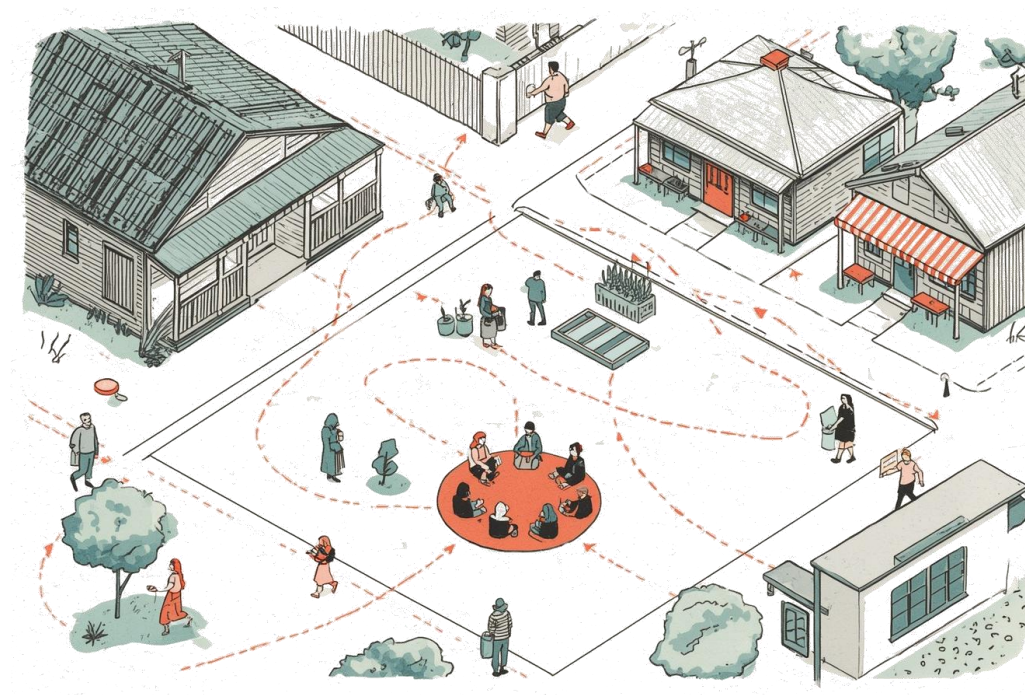
Every evaluation captures some of what matters.

Whose perspectives?
Which relationships?
What places and timeframes?

Explain who made these choices,
why, and what would change
them.

What does this change about evaluation?

The framework helps us decide whose experiences to include, what to investigate and when to look.





An Australian example

Connected Beginnings

2023 mid-term evaluation · Inside Policy

A place-based program connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with early learning, health and family services.

Community and service-provider accounts, documents and data.

Using SoP to plan a local inquiry

What makes support easier for families to reach?

Published inspiration: Inside Policy (2023). The following application is illustrative.



Transport and trusted relationships mattered for access.



Which relationships shape access?



Purpose

Prosperity

Practice

Meaning and
attachment

Resources and costs

Service arrangements

Look at the interaction

How do service locations and hours work with transport options and attachments to familiar places?

Let families shape the judgement

Agree what better access means. Compare journeys, staff accounts and service rules.



A different evaluation design



Explain who finds support easier to reach,
under which conditions, and what remains uncertain.

Boundaries

Follow family journeys beyond the
funded catchment.

Time bounding

Sample recurring routines, explore
histories and review around
decisions.

Some-ness

Record whose journeys and which
periods are included, what is left
out and when to revise.



To end...

Which some of place does your evaluation represent?

Why? Whose involvement could change it?



Matt Healey



matt@fpconsulting.com.au



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/mphealey/>

**It Depends
Podcast**

with Matt Healey





The Nine Ps in more detail (1)

People

Who is present and how intersecting identities shape experience.

Whose experiences are missing from our account?

Power

How authority, influence and decision-making are distributed.

Who sets priorities and decides what counts as evidence?

Participation

How people shape their place and its evaluation.

What can people actually change through their involvement?

Policy

Governance arrangements and institutional structures.

Which rules and funding arrangements shape what is possible?

Practice

Activities undertaken in pursuit of change, formal and emergent.

What happens in daily work beyond the funded activity?



The Nine Ps in more detail (2)

Paradigms

Worldviews and ways of knowing that frame problems and solutions.

Which assumptions are taken for granted or marginalised?

Planet

Ecological systems and biophysical processes.

Which environmental relationships shape experiences and outcomes?

Prosperity

Economic conditions and material circumstances shaping life chances.

How are resources, opportunities and burdens distributed?

Purpose

Meaning, attachment and identity that make places matter.

What is valued here, by whom, and how might that change?



An evaluation-design prompt sheet

Purpose of inquiry

What decision does this evaluation need to inform?

Perspectives

Whose place is represented? Who can reshape the inquiry?

Dimensions and interactions

Which Ps and relationships matter to the question?

Boundaries and time

What places, histories and periods will we include, and why?

Evidence

Which propositions will we investigate? What could challenge them?

Some-ness and review

What remains outside? Who chose? What would prompt revision?