Making policy and making policy work

With developmental evaluation

Martin Reynolds
Applied Systems Thinking in Practice (ASTiP) Group
The Open University, UK

Webinar 24th July 2018
Hosted by CECAN

Making policy and making policy work:
overview of webinar presentation

- Developmental evaluation: complexity and practice
  - Policy evaluation and complexity
  - From external accountability towards internal responsibility
  - X8 principles (criteria for developmental evaluation)
  - X2 core criteria (complexity and systems thinking)

- Developmental evaluation: systems thinking in practice (STiP)
  - Policy evaluation and systems
  - X3 principles of systemic evaluation
  - X2 interplaying criteria (systemic and systematic)
  - STiP heuristic for enacting developmental evaluation

- Case story 1: evaluating postgraduate curriculum provision
- Case story 2: evaluating evaluation-in-practice

- Summary: making policy evaluation as *public* work
  - Journeying evaluation with systems thinking capabilities
  - Working principles for systems thinking in evaluation practice

Policy and evaluation practice:
some definitions used

1. ‘developmental’ evaluation is associated with *any* policy domain/ situation (whereas ‘development’ evaluation is associated with specific policy domain/ situation of international development)

2. ‘evaluation’: stakeholders in process of making value judgements on an evaluand (e.g. a situation, policy, or policy implementation)

3. ‘policy’ used as proxy to any intervention (including projects, programs, plans etc.) where the intention is to change or transform a situation of interest (e.g. primary health care support) associated with a domain of practice (e.g. health care provision)

4. ‘complexity’ relates to *people*; in turn relating to (1) situations being transformed, (2) stakeholding issues, (3) the actual policies devised to transform situations, and (4) the developmental path of ‘policy’ interventions.

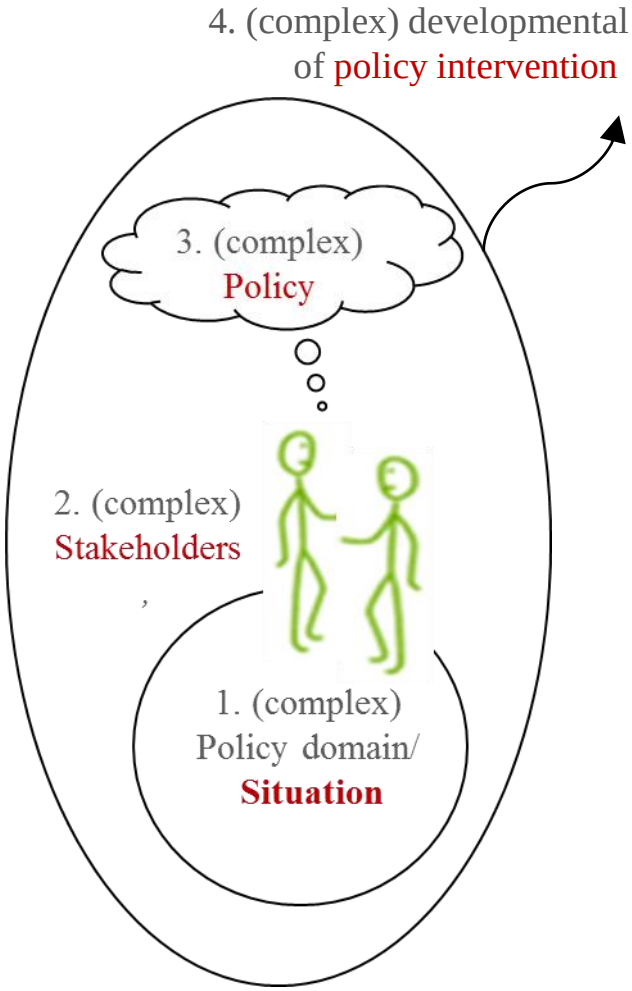
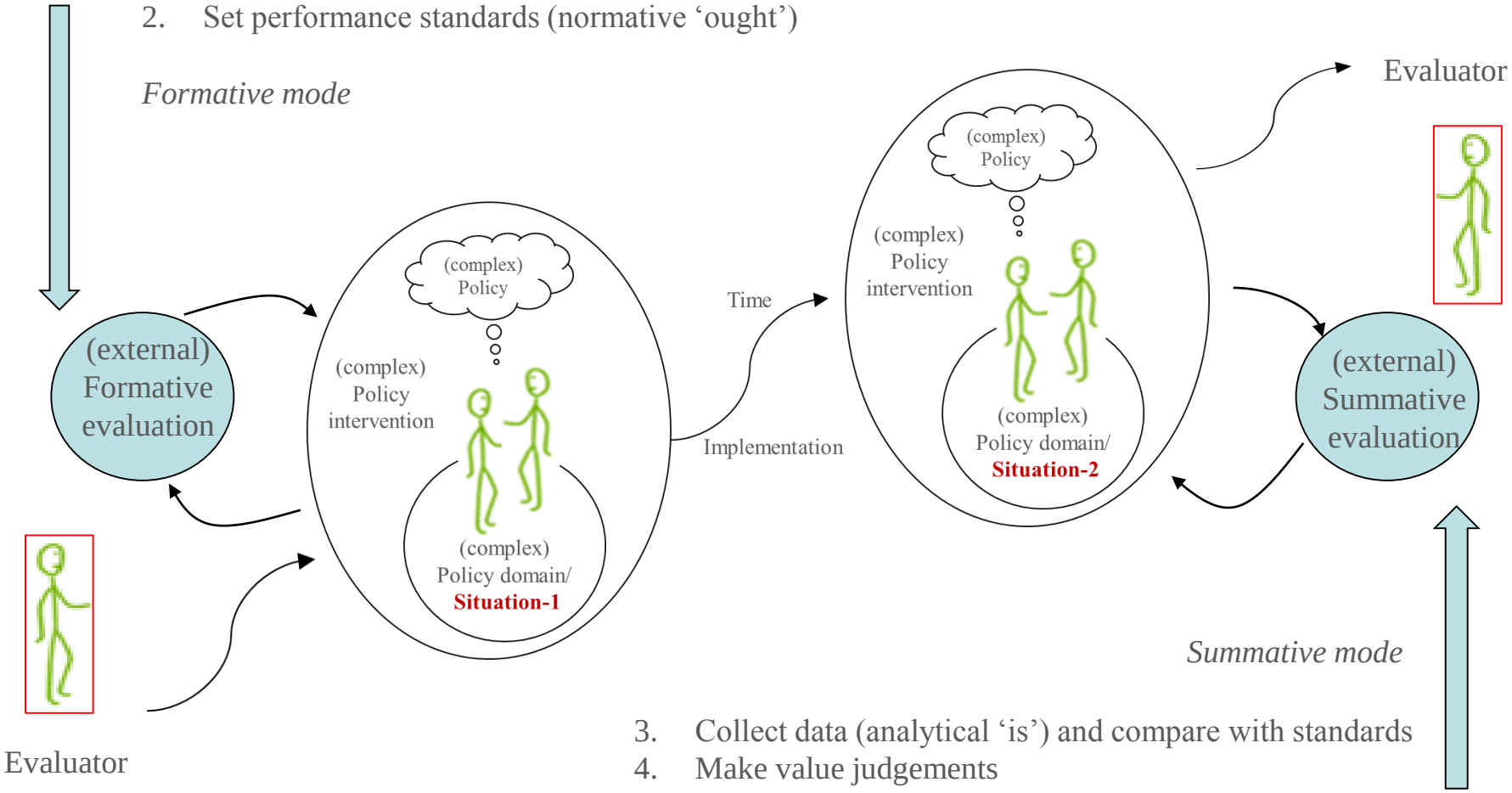


Fig. 1 A mental model of policy and evaluation practice (devised by Reynolds)

(1980s…) Evaluation as 'external accountability': conventional evaluation practice

Derived from (conventional) 4- Step Logic Model of Evaluation (Scriven, 1980)…

1. Select criteria of merit and worth
2. Set performance standards (normative 'ought')



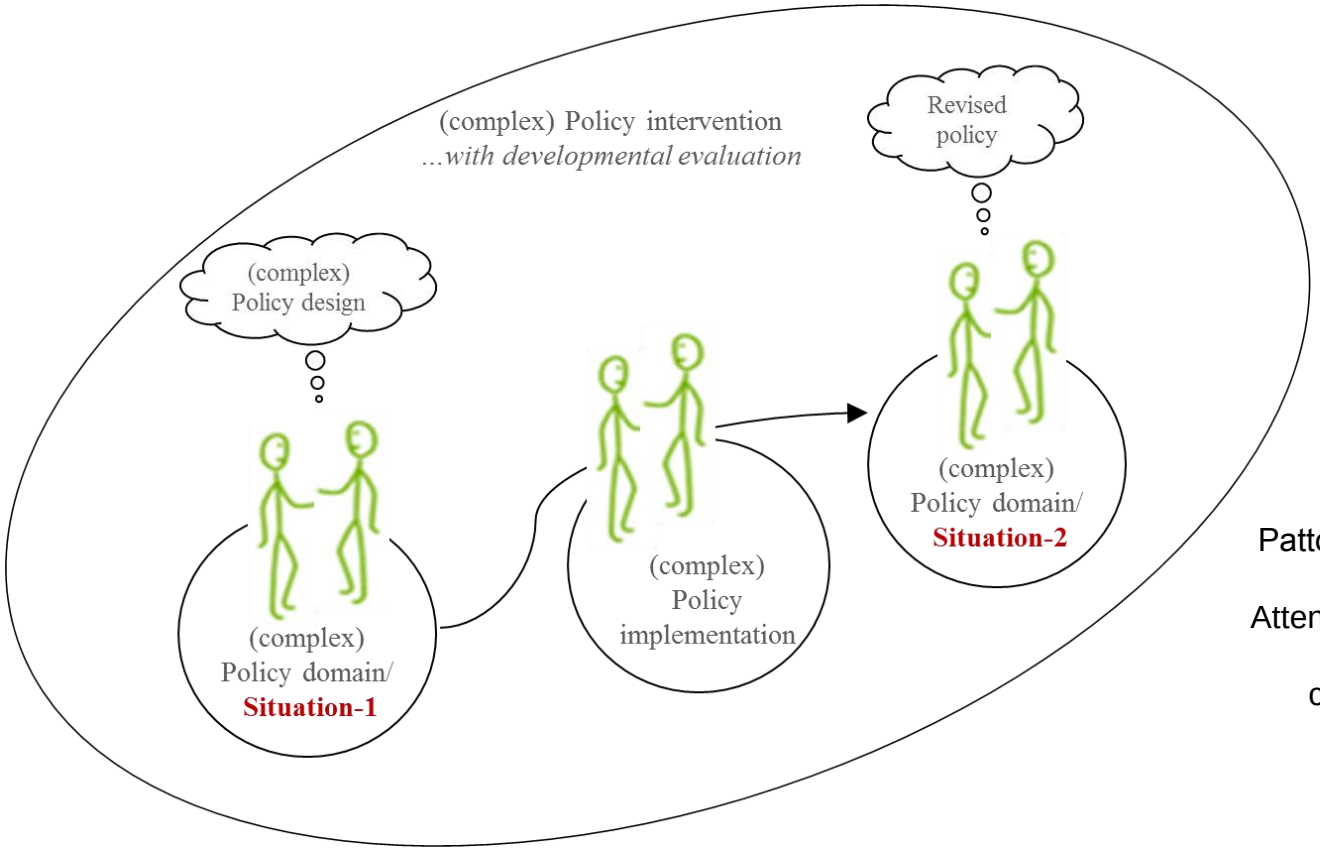
3. Collect data (analytical 'is') and compare with standards
4. Make value judgements

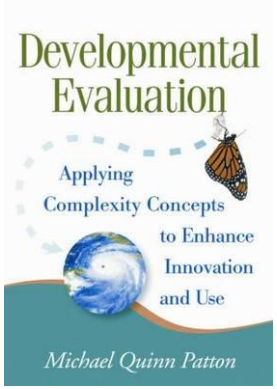
Fig. 2 A mental model of evaluation as 'external accountability' (devised by Reynolds)

(1994…) Developmental evaluation:
Michael Quinn Patton

Patton (1994) 'Developmental Evaluation' *Evaluation Practice* 15 (3) 311-320

…If policy intervention (design and implementation) is regarded as a (bounded) system
…Evaluators are part of (internal to) the system





Patton (2011) 'Developmental Evaluation'

Attention to DE as (i) process dealing with complex situations, and (ii) requiring complexity tools and systems thinking

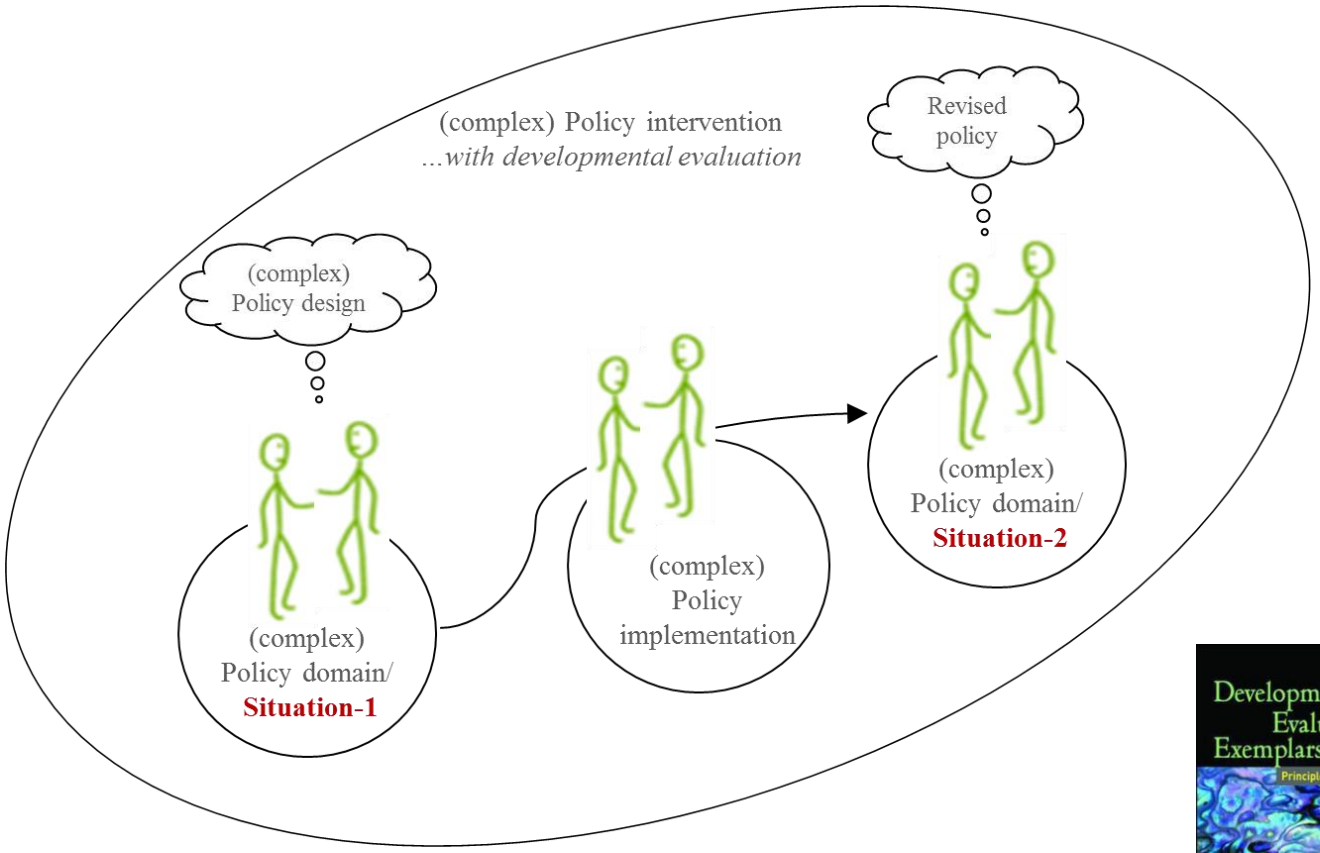
Fig. 3 A mental model of developmental evaluation as a system of interest (devised by Reynolds)

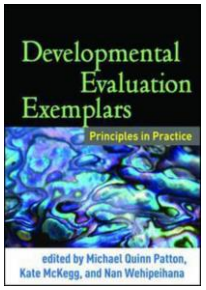
(2015…): X8 Principles of developmental evaluation: Patton, with McKegg and Wehipeihana (eds)

Developmental evaluation exemplars/ stories (x12): principles in practice (x8)

Systematic guidance derived from 20+ years experience; shift from '<u>determining</u>' value' towards '<u>developing</u>' value.

1. Developmental purpose
2. Evaluation rigor
3. Utilization focus
4. *Innovation niche*
5. Complexity perspective
6. Systems thinking
7. Co-creation
8. Timely feedback





Two Key Principles for Developmental Evaluation:
complexity perspective and systems thinking

Developmental Evaluation Exemplars : principles in practice (Patton et al. (eds) (2015)

1. Complexity perspective …x3 features
   - Conceptual ideas: emergence (self-organizing, attractors); nonlinear (small actions to large reactions… Butterfly effect); dynamic (interactive, volatile, changing); Getting to Maybe (uncertainty; unpredictable, uncontrollable; unanticipated consequences); co-evolutionary (interdependence between entities); adaptation (subject to continuous change)…
   - Context specific: 'Complex' situations are different from 'simple' and/or 'complicated' situations
   - Contingent ('best fit' for 'innovation niche'…): developmental evaluation is not appropriate to all situations… only 'complex' evaluands (public health, cross-sector initiatives, social movements…); not 'simple' or 'complicated situations

2. Systems thinking…x3 features/ orientations
   - Systems are 'real' (ontological devices): Systems are made up of sub-systems and function within larger systems; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (forest vs trees);
   - Focus on interconnected relationships; Parts are interdependent such that a change in one part changes all parts…bias towards *system dynamics (non-linear dynamics)* tradition of systems thinking (cf. The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge)
   - (core) conceptual tools: understanding evaluand as complex adaptive system (CAS); use of computerised agent-based modelling

(In contrast) systems thinking in practice (STiP) ….

Systems thinking in practice (STiP)

…an alternative path for developmental evaluation

Three features / entities

1. Reality… (holistic domain of situations of interest) interdependent, non-linear etc. *from which* inevitably partial (incomplete) 'factual' judgements are made…

2. People … (pluralistic domain of evaluators and other stakeholders) with inevitably partial (biased) viewpoints expressed through individual value judgements (e.g. 'viewing' situations as 'simple')…

3. Systems …. (conceptual domain of constructs) used to simplify real world complexity, for purposes of:
   - Understanding evaluand (e.g. CAS)
   - Transforming evaluand (e.g. policy interventions)

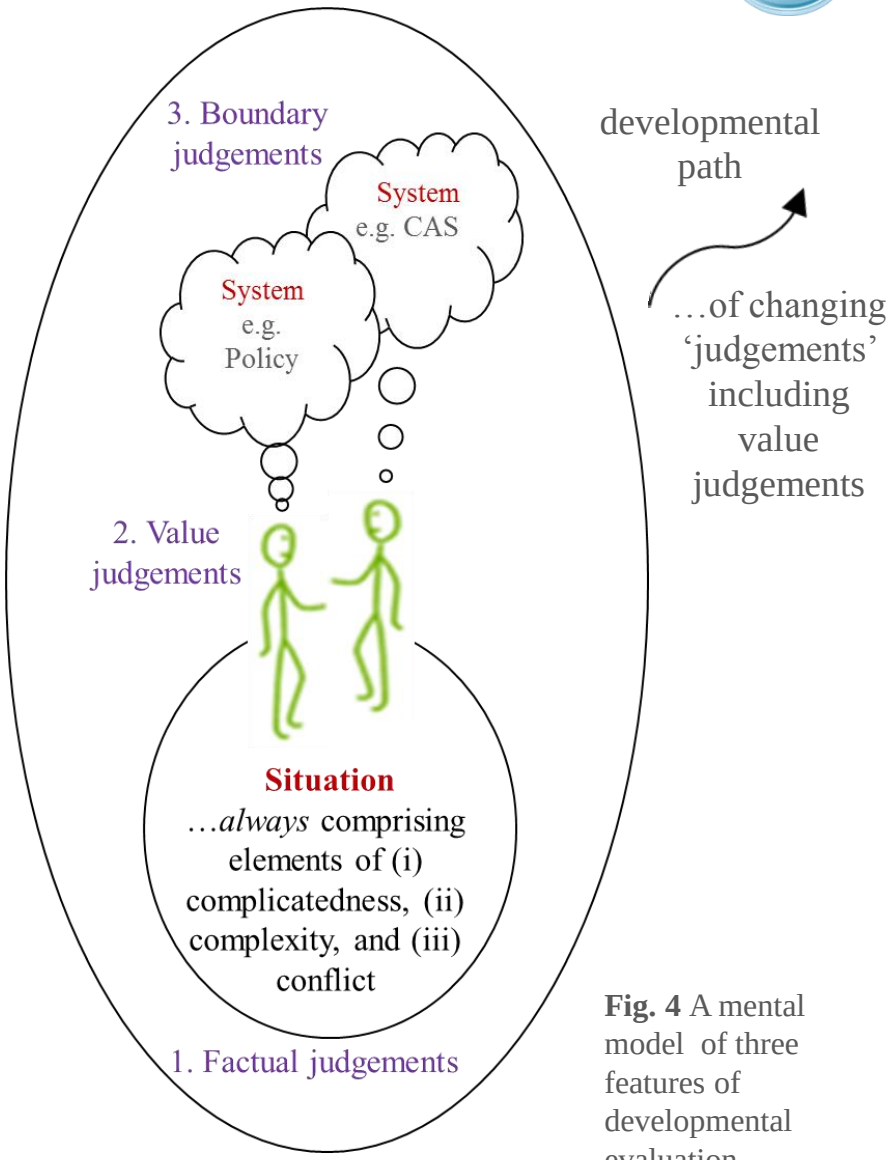


Fig. 4 A mental model of three features of developmental evaluation

x3 principles of systemic evaluation

…based on interplay between facts, values, and boundaries

…and ideas of boundary critique and Systemic triangulation from Werner Ulrich (2003)

(derived from) Reynolds, Martin; Gates, Emily; Hummelbrunner, Richard; Marra, Mita and Williams, Bob (2016). Towards Systemic Evaluation. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 33(5) pp. 662–673

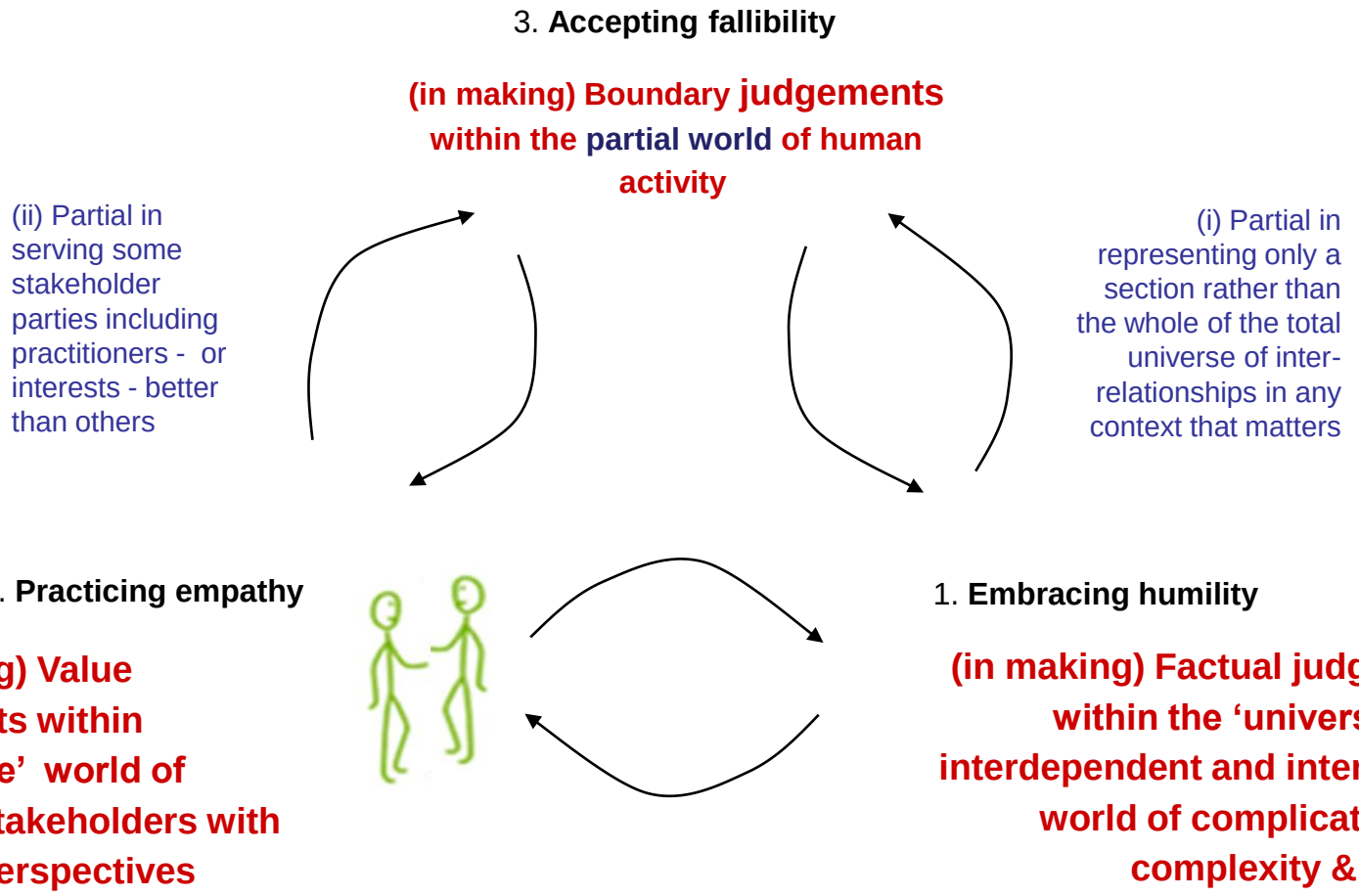


Fig. 5 An influence diagram illustrating three principles of systemic evaluation

Developmental evaluation heuristic

…through systems thinking in practice (STiP)

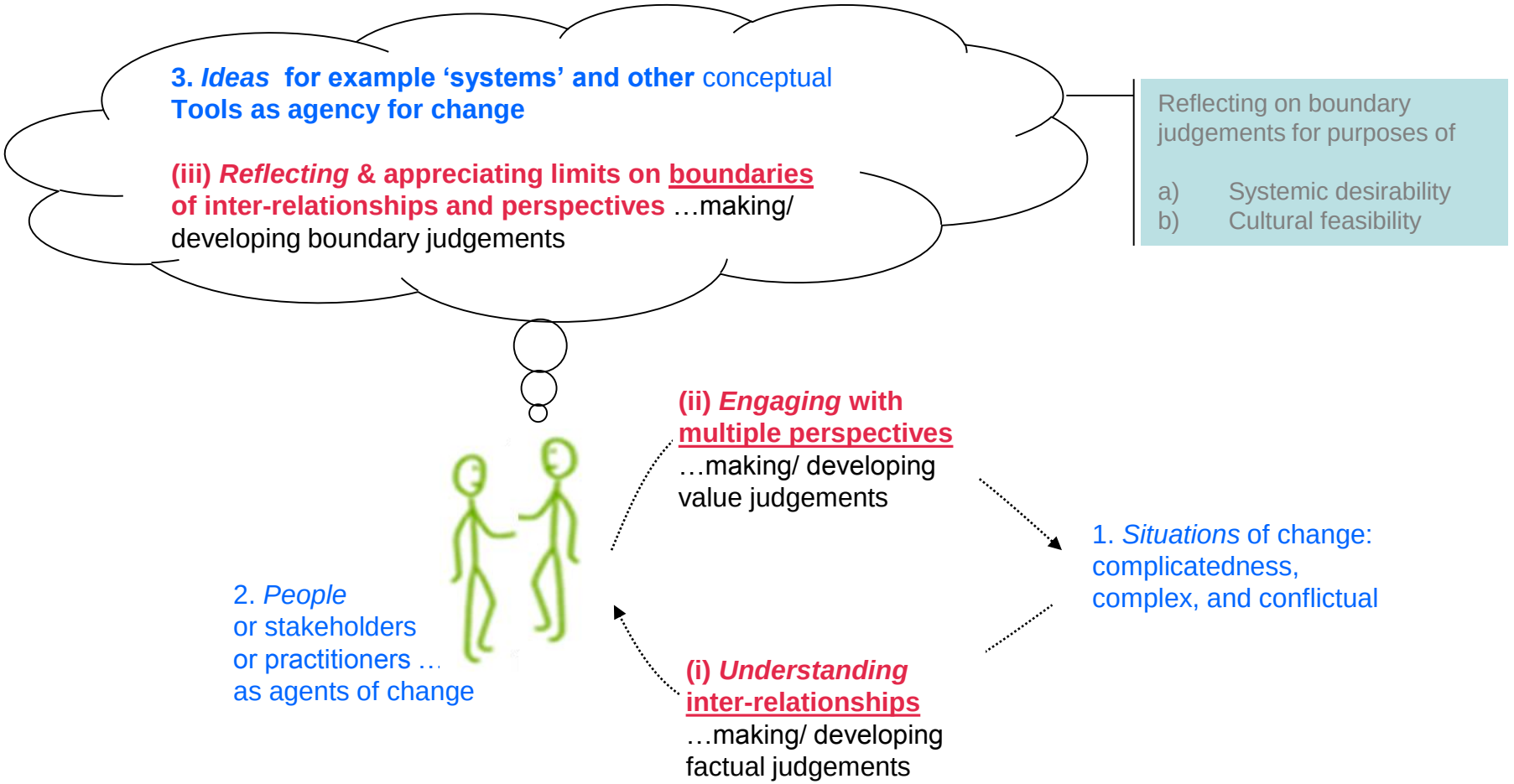


Fig. 6 A mental model of systems thinking in practice (STiP) as a heuristic comprising three entities (situations, stakeholders, and systems) and three associated activities (uIR, eMP, and rBJ) …adapted from Reynolds and Howell (2010*) Systems Approaches to Managing Change*

A system for developmental evaluation

…practicing principles of systems thinking in practice

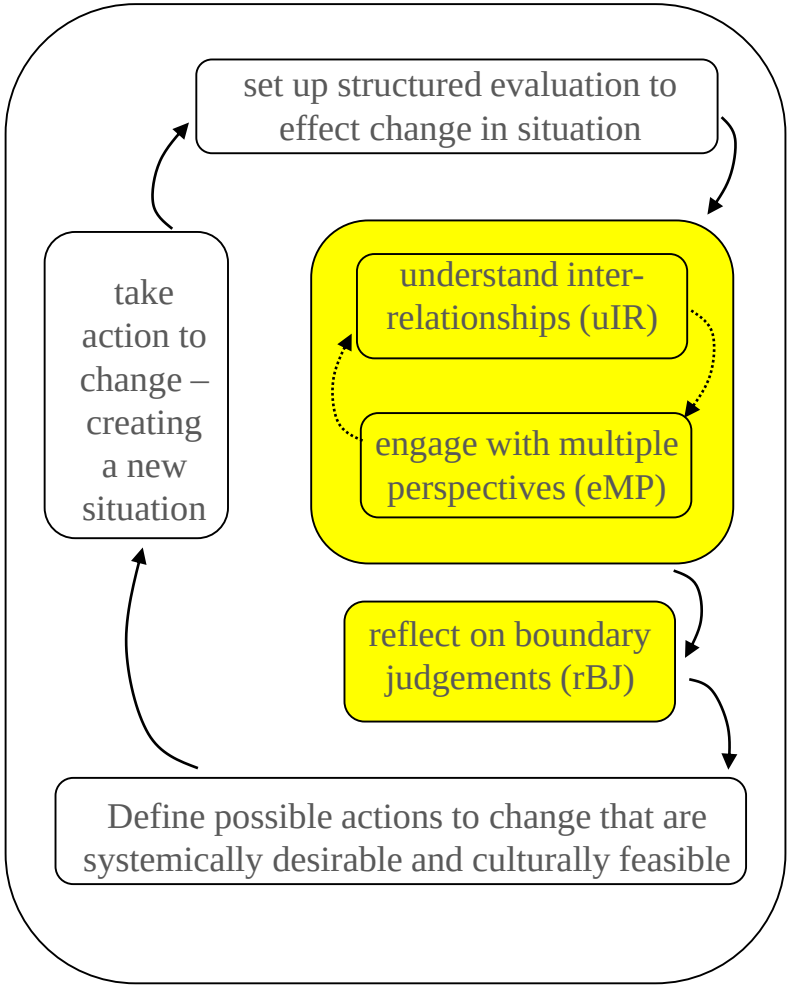


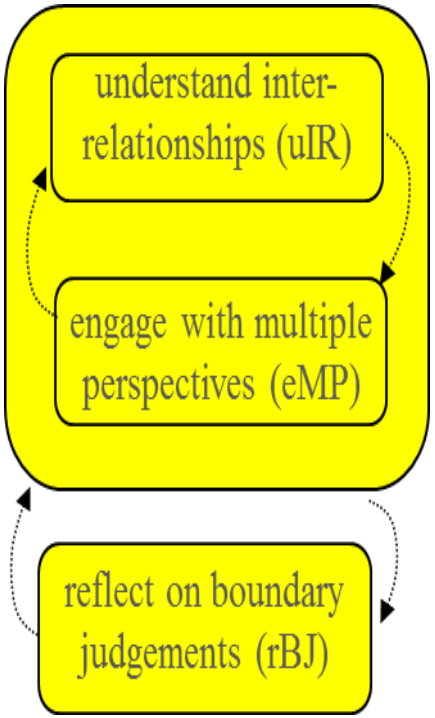
Fig 7 An activity model of a system to conduct developmental evaluation (adapted from a model of systemic inquiry: Checkland, 2002 and Ison, 2017)

Two case stories of developmental evaluation

…using systems thinking in practice (STiP)

Case story 1: Evaluating postgraduate curriculum provision

- Reynolds, M. Shah, R. and van Ameijde, J (2017). Framing systems thinking in practice competencies: report on systems thinking in practice competencies workshop 10 June 2017. The Open University. Milton Keynes
- Reynolds, M.; Blackmore, C.; Ison, R.; Shah, R. and Wedlock, E. (2017). The role of systems thinking in the practice of implementing sustainable development goals. In: Leal Filho, Walter ed. Handbook of Sustainability Science and Research. Springer, pp. 677–698.
- Reynolds, M.; Shah, R.; Wedlock, E.; Ison, R. and Blackmore, C (2016). Enhancing Systems Thinking in Practice at the Workplace: eSTEeM final report. The OU Centre for STEM Pedagogy. The Open University, Milton Keynes



Case story 2: Evaluating evaluation-in-practice

- Reynolds, M. (2017). Evaluating diagramming as praxis. In: Oreszczyn, Sue and Lane, Andy eds. Mapping Environmental Sustainability: Reflecting on systemic practices for participatory research. University of Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 207–230
- Reynolds, M. and Schwandt, T. (2017). Evaluation as public work: an ethos for professional evaluation praxis. In: UK Evaluation Society Annual Conference: The Use and Usability of Evaluation: demonstrating and improving the usefulness of evaluation, 10-11 May 2017, London, UK Evaluation Society.
- Reynolds, M. (2015). (Breaking) The iron triangle of evaluation. IDS Bulletin, 46(1) pp. 71–86.

Evaluating postgraduate curriculum provision

…using case study of postgraduate programme in systems thinking in practice (STiP)

Three developmental projects…

- Project 1: 2014-2016 (18 months)

Enhancing systems thinking in practice in the workplace

- Project 2: 2016-2017 (12 months)

Designing professional recognition for systems thinking in practice

- Project 3: 2018-2019 (18 months)

Transforming postgraduate pedagogic praxis and workplace capabilities

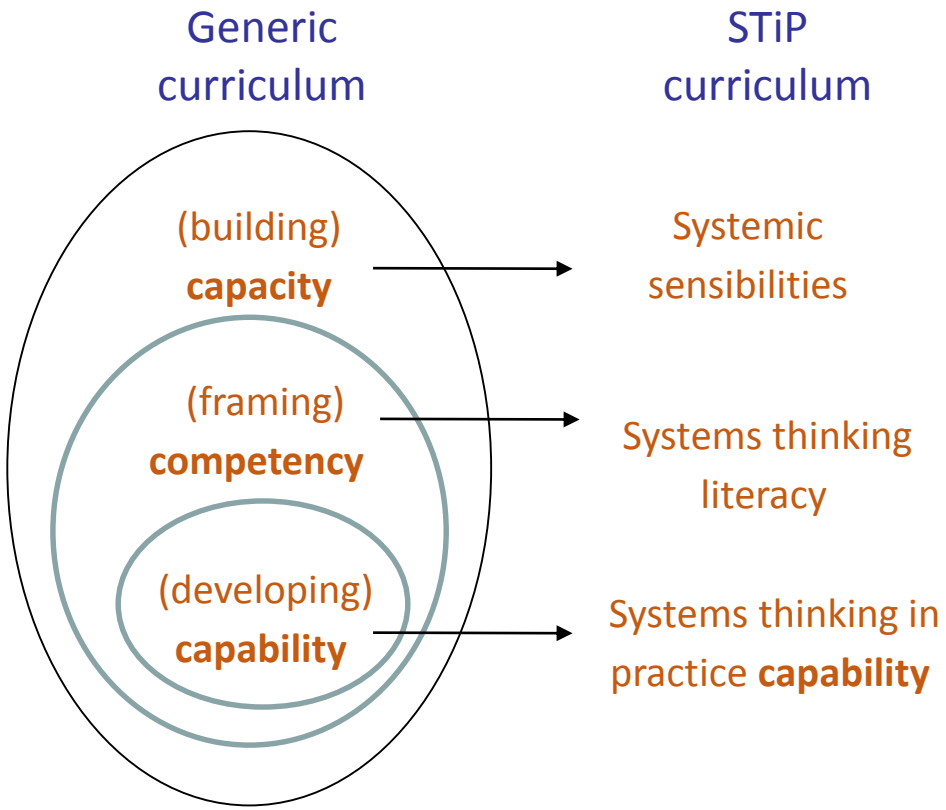


Fig. 8 Three nested systems of postgraduate curriculum development (adapted from Ison & Shelley, 2016 Fig. 1 p.589)

Evaluating postgraduate curriculum

Projects 1 and 2 (see references on slide 12)

Dimensions of STiP evaluation ➢ Understanding inter-relationships (uIR) ➢ Engaging multiple perspectives (eMP) ➢ Reflecting on boundary judgements (rBJ)	**Project 1** (18 months) *Enhancing systems thinking in practice (STiP) in the workplace …building capacity*	**Project 2** (12 months) *Designing professional rec*ognition *for systems thinking in practice (STiP) …framing competencies*
uIR: interviews +…	…postgrad students' experiences in post-study workplace situations…x5 archetype STiP individuals	…workplace practices, professional practices & Higher education provision…x20 (+) relevant competency framings (repository)
eMP: w/shops +…	…current students/ alumni/ employers…x5 archetype employer/alumnus relationships	…employers/ professional bodies associated with STiP…new model to support competency framing and capabilities
rBJ: reporting…		
• systemically desirable	• …to render 'under the radar' silent STiP practices/skills into more visibly acknowledged competencies	• …to address tensions between *systemic* practices and *systematic* framing of competencies
• culturally feasibile	• …pluralist/ diverse culture of STiP practitioners	• …changing role of Universities (corporate 'good' vs social 'good')

Transforming curriculum praxis and capabilities

…changing the way the game is played (Project 3)

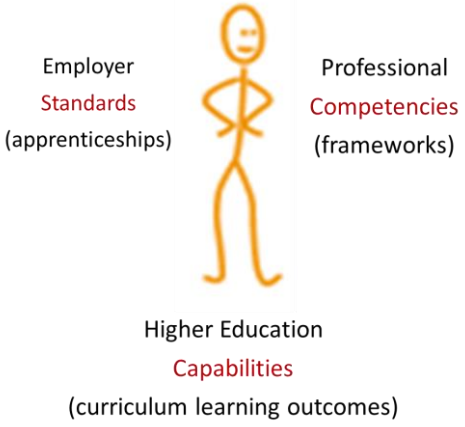
Aim: (Capabilities approach) shifting from developing 'competencies' based on learning outcomes (playing 'the game' better) towards enhancing 'capabilities' - creating innovative space for redefining occupational, professional, and social roles and practices amongst stakeholders in the workplace (changing the way 'the game' is played)?

Dimensions of STiP ➢ Understanding inter-relationships (uIR) ➢ Engaging multiple perspectives (eMP) ➢ Reflecting on boundary judgements (rBJ)	**Project 3** (18 months)… to 2019 *Transforming postgraduate pedagogic praxis and workplace capabilities: changing the way the game is played…developing capabilities*
uIR: interviews +…	…understand systemic governance issues of curriculum design and implementation in relation to supporting part-time postgraduate study for enhancing workplace capabilities
eMP: w/shops +…	…engage with progressing new Trailblazer Level 7 Apprenticeship standard involving multiple stakeholders including employers, professional bodies, other Higher Education providers
rBJ: reporting… • systemically desirable • culturally feasibile	 …draw on evaluative experiences of governance issues and the L7 apprenticeship for postgraduate STiP curriculum (re) design and implementation in 2020 ???

"It is not about being the best at playing the game … but more about changing the way the game is played …

…while having fun in the process"

(Sports journalist, Guillem Balague, 16th April 2018. BBC

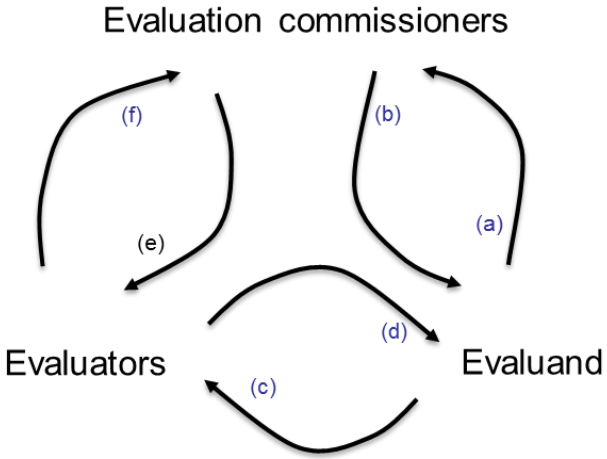


(developmental evaluation) Case story 2

…Evaluating evaluation-in-practice: uIR

1. understanding Inter-relationships (uIR)…

- Relational dynamics between evaluand (situations subject to evaluation), evaluators (making value judgements), and commissioners (decision makers responsible for overseeing evaluations)
- Use of ideas from (i) 'systemic triangulation' and boundary critique (Werner Ulrich, 2003) and (ii) 'iron triangle' (Ralph Pulitzer, 1919)
- Six activities of evaluation in practice revealed….



Six activities:

(a) auditing

(b) planning

(c) evaluating (summative)

(d) evaluating (formative)

(e) Commissioning… need for 'rigour'

(f) learning

Adapted from Reynolds, M. (2015). (Breaking) The iron triangle of evaluation. *IDS Bulletin*, 46(1) pp. 71–86.

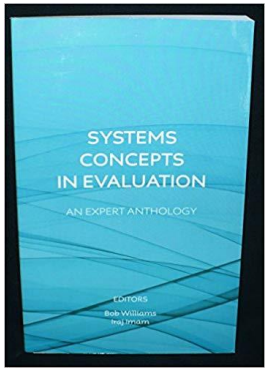
Evaluating evaluation-in-practice: eMP

…towards two perspectives

…

2. engaging Multiple perspectives (eMP)…over 20 years

- Research collaboration – since mid 1990s (evaluating participatory rural appraisal in Botswana), environmental planning, sustainability, conservation, public health, gender and equity, governance…
- Co-authoring – including systems thinking and complexity science in evaluation
- Conferencing (including round table forums), symposiums and webinars
- Workshop provision
- Consultancies
- Teaching



(2007) Bob Williams and Iraj Iman (eds)

Evaluating evaluation-in-practice: two over-arching perspectives being sought…

a) (descriptive) What 'is' the situation?..*Evaluation-industrial complex (E-IC)* perspective
b) (normative) What 'ought to be' the situation?...*Evaluation-adaptive complex (E-AC)* perspective

Evaluating evaluation-in-practice: rBJ

…systemically desirable: evaluand

3. Reflecting on boundary judgements (rBJ)…

Actions evaluated …associated with Evaluand (a) and (b)	Descriptive (actual) 'is' perspective Evaluation-industrial complex From…	Ideal (normative) 'ought' perspective Evaluation-adaptive complex (…systemically desirable) To…
a) Audit Check: aspects of situation assessed	Situations <u>systematically</u> recognised as either simple, complicated (tame), or complex (wicked)	Situations <u>systemically</u> viewed as comprising all of (i) complicatedness (ii) complexity and (iii) conflict
b) Plan: terms of reference (ToR)	<u>Purposive</u> …fixed goals and targets as ascribed measures.	<u>Purposeful</u> - agile, flexible, adaptive measures

Adapted from Reynolds, M. (2015). (Breaking) The iron triangle of evaluation. *IDS Bulletin*, 46(1) pp. 71–86.

Evaluating evaluation-in-practice: rBJ

…systemically desirable: evaluators

3. Reflecting on boundary judgements (rBJ)…

Actions evaluated …associated with Evaluators (c) and (d)	Descriptive (actual) 'is' perspective Evaluation-industrial complex From…	Ideal (normative) 'ought' perspective Evaluation-adaptive complex (…systemically desirable) To…
c) Evaluation summative: criteria used (measures)	Evaluator 'external' to evaluand: Focus more on efficacy/worth and efficiency/merit ('outputs' and doing things right) as pre-set criteria, rather than effectiveness/worthiness/ significance ('outcomes and impacts' and doing the right thing). Stress on impartial (quasi) positivist epistemology.	Evaluator part of evaluand; Able to continually juggle between criteria of efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness (including ethical and political notions of equity and sustainability). Includes intrinsic 'personal' values/ principles. Stress on partiality of constructivist epistemology
d) Evaluation formative: tools used, values developed	Evaluator 'external' to evaluand: primary specialist 'scientific' role of measuring value as part of either repeated use of same fixed tools -'best practice', or seeking ever growing 'toolbox' adopting new tools as 'best fit' for purpose ('horses for courses'). 'power-over' = dominant power relation attribute…setting criteria for later summative evaluation	Evaluator part of evaluand; more generalist role as an agile 'bricoleur' a crafts person formatively developing value - instrumental (utility), intrinsic (rights-based), and personal (justice) - of stakeholders adapting existing tools for purpose. 'power-to' and 'power-with' and 'power-within' (empowerment) = dominant attributes

Evaluating evaluation-in-practice: rBJ

…systemically desirable: commissioners of evaluations

3. Reflecting on boundary judgements (rBJ)…

Actions evaluated …associated with Commissiioiners (e) and (f)	Descriptive (actual) 'is' perspective Evaluation-industrial complex From…	Ideal (normative) 'ought' perspective Evaluation-adaptive complex (…systemically desirable) To…
e) Commissioning guarantors of rigour: assurances, trustworthiness, and responsibility	Guarantor of *truthfulness* through objective '*evidence*' … objective reliable and replicable use of tools through data triangulation (multi methods) Responsibility limited towards accountability to decision makers	3 sets of co-guarantor attributes, for *trustfulness* through appropriate *deliberation* – (i) reliability (multidisciplinary), (ii) resonance (interdisciplinary complementarity or– communicable with other groups/ cultures etc,) and (iii) relevance (transdisciplinary dialogue with wider social and ecological concerns Responsibility involves attributes of caring as well as accountability
f) Learning developed	Mostly single-loop (is the intervention being done right?) and occasional double-loop learning (is it doing the right thing?) expressed, but generally less reflective of power relations circumscribing the intervention and/or circumscribing the use of tools for evaluating the intervention. Evaluation regarded as apolitical	Single-loop, double-loop and triple-loop learning are all evident. Intervention regarded as political, with awareness of, and adaptive address to, power relations affecting the intervention and being effected through the intervention. Evaluation regarded as 'political' act

Evaluation-adaptive complex:

Making evaluations work…culturally feasible?

CECAN Conference: Policy Evaluation for a Complex World
11th July 2018 London

Opportunities:

- Complexity of interventions (policy/programmes/ projects…involving both design & implementation) acknowledged and more appreciated in most sectors
- Evaluation increasingly regarded as integral to *any* intervention
- Evident need for more simple heuristics to work appropriately with complexity (Matthew Taylor RSA)
- Importance of 'language' in conversations between evaluators and policy making communities of (Siobhan Campbell)
- Evaluations and humility… claims are more circumspect
- 'developing value' …Principles of evaluand i.e. Principle-focused evaluation (Patton, 2018)
- Evaluation as *political* (deliberative evaluation…) cf. Thomas Schwandt (from 'what should be done?' towards 'what should we do?'); ISE4GEMs (Lewis and Stephens, 2017)
- Push-back against 'expertocracy' (but risks of neoliberal populism…)

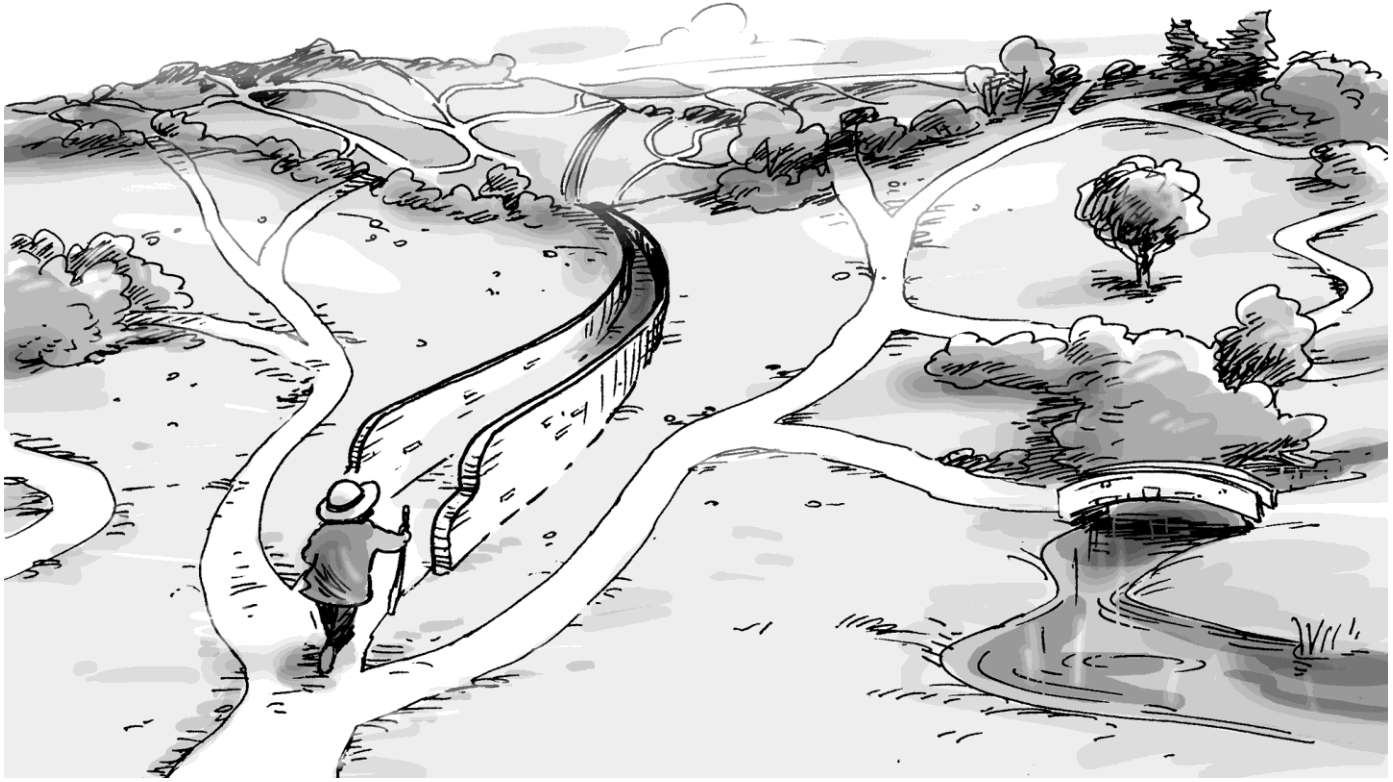
Challenges:

- Evaluation as 'external accountability' still dominant
- Turbulent times: post-truth (evidence based fatigue) or rather post-trust?
- 'Think like a system' (?) 'Act like an entrepreneur' … Matthew Taylor
- Prevalence of 'contingency thinking' (simple/ complicated *or* complex)
- Methodological/ method fetishism (social sciences…); burgeoning 'tool box'.. Empathy with users(?)
- Complexity 'tools' as silver bullets…
- Prevalence of dualisms – either 'facts' or 'values' …evidence or meaning…

Summary 1: Journeying evaluation with systems

capabilities approach to evaluation praxis

Heinz von Foerster: ethical action is to ‘act always so as to increase the number of choices’



…and increase ability to appropriately choose and develop value in the process

A core capability for systems thinking in practice is praxis… avoiding dualisms from dualities

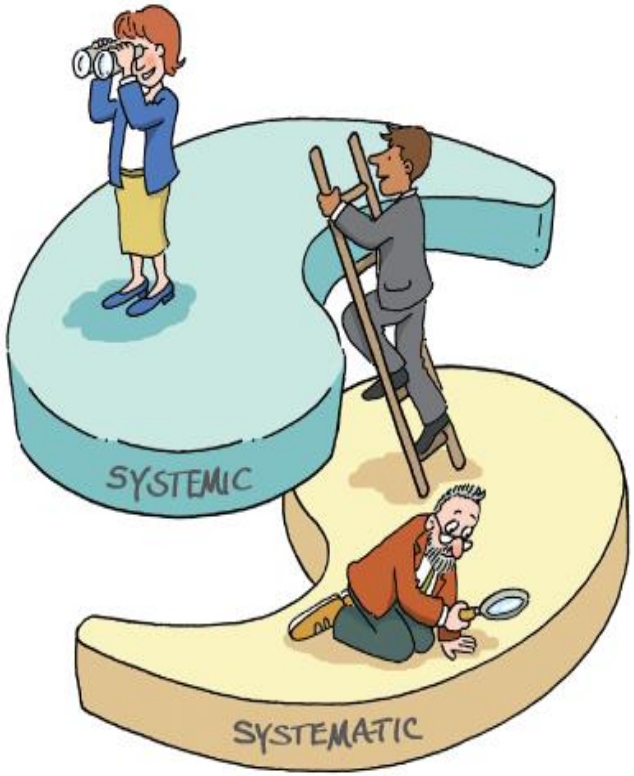
Journeying evaluation with systems

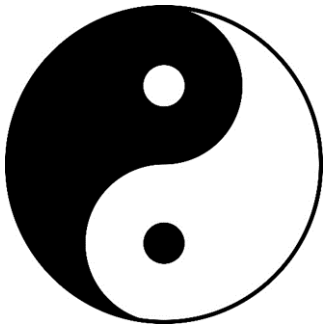
…capability to appropriately be systemic and systematic

Iterating between seeing 'the forest' and 'the trees'

Systems thinking as iteration between:

1. Systemic… understanding real world (of complicatedness, complexity, and conflict)…*theory*
2. Systematic… engaging real world (e.g. listening to different perspectives)…*practice*





Not 'either/or' but 'both/and' (ying and yang)

Journeying evaluation with systems

…capability towards ontological and epistemological use of systems

Iterating between two devices for thinking about 'systems'

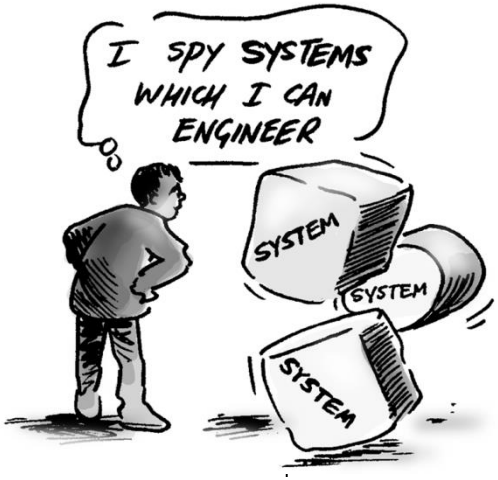
1. Ontological device: *systems* to be evaluated

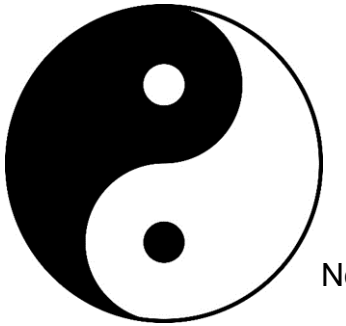
   'the' health system
   'the' legal system etc.
   (…regarded as complex adaptive systems)

   purposive engagement (e.g. external accountability)

2. Epistemological device: *situations* to be evaluated using *systems* as a learning device

   purposeful engagement using systems design





Not 'either/or' but 'both/and' (ying and yang)

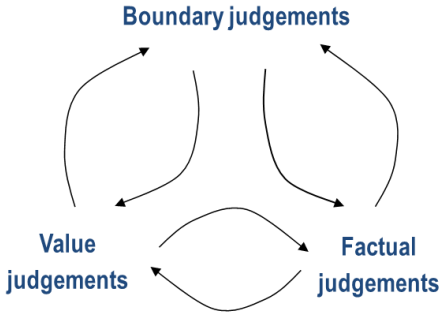
Journeying evaluation with systems

Developing praxis capability with systems thinking in practice

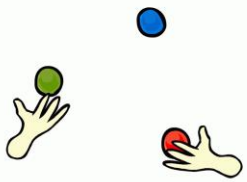
'juggling' with (2 balls of…) dualities

value judgements	*and*	factual judgements
epistemological drive (knowing)	*and*	ontological drive (knowns/ unknowns)
systematic	*and*	systemic
perspective/perception	*and*	inter-relationships, perspectives, boundaries
engaging multiple perspectives (eMP)	*and*	understanding inter-relationships (uIR)
practice	*and*	knowledge
action	*and*	research
meaning	*and*	evidence
humanities	*and*	sciences
trust	*and*	truth
empathy	*and*	humility

All mediated through reflection on (3rd ball of…)
boundary judgements
= systems praxis



+ having fun in the process



Systemic triangulation: adapted from Werner Ulrich (2003)

Summary 2: Making policy work

Principles of systems thinking in evaluation practice

X3 ethical principles of systems thinking in evaluation practice

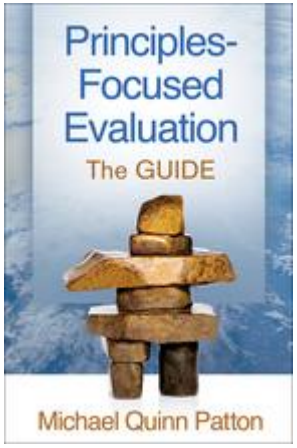
1. Embrace humility (inter-relationships)
2. Practice empathy (perspectives)
3. Accept fallibility (boundary judgements)

Systems in Evaluation TIG (topical interest group of the American Evaluation Association (2018). *Principles for Effective Use of Systems Thinking in Evaluation Practice*.

Team of 21 TIG member practitioners (including MQP) setting out x5 principles – systems-in-evaluation, interrelationships, perspectives, boundaries, and dynamics – each with a sub-set of operating principles (x 16 in total) based on GUIDE principles developed by Patton (2017)

X6 'operating principles' of systems thinking in evaluation practice

1. (audit) start systemically (complications, complexities, and conflict)
2. (plan) keep objectives flexible in time (cf. adaptive action.. 'what/ so what/ now what'.. Glenda Eoyang)
3. (evaluation summative) attend to ethical criteria of wellbeing… who might be the victims?
4. (evaluation formative) attend to power relations (privileging power-to and power-with)
5. (commissioning) provide robustness/ rigour without rigor-mortis (trapped in one co-guarantor of 'objectivity' at expense of other co-guarantors
6. (learning) generate learning that questions ethics (doing the right thing) as well as politics (power and knowledge…who determines what's right?)



Making policy and making policy work

With developmental evaluation

Contact details and resources

Martin Reynolds
Qualifications Lead (PG systems thinking in practice)
School of Engineering and Innovation
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA
Email: martin.reynolds@open.ac.uk

Website Publications Resources

Applied Systems Thinking in Practice (ASTiP) Group