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Who Defines Evaluation Capacity

Decolonizing Knowledge, Power, and Practice in the Age of AI

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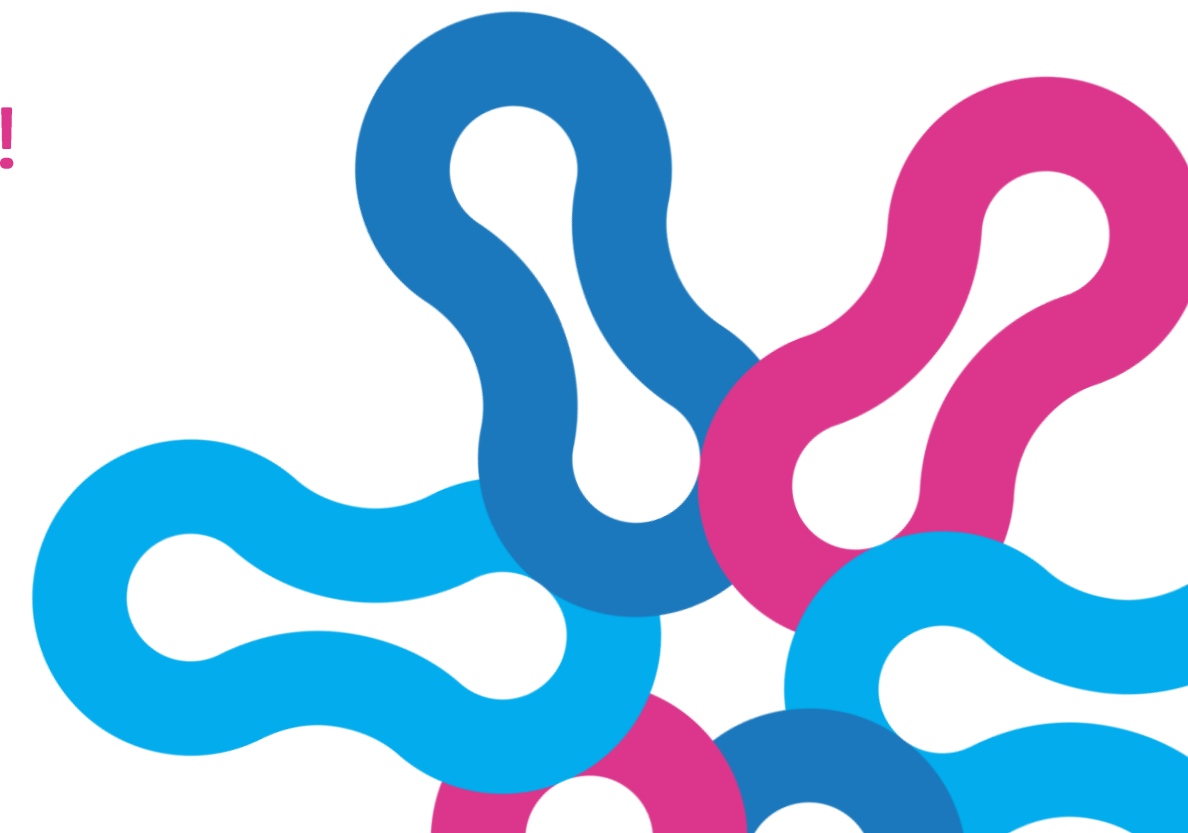
Welcome to Our Session!

We are grateful for your presence !

This session is a space for reflection, dialogue, and learning.

We want to create a brave and welcoming space for everyone, grounded in curiosity, humility, and respect for diverse ways of knowing.

Let us know where you are joining us from in the chat!!!



Agenda

- **Opening**
- **Key Concepts:**
Evaluation Capacity, Evaluative Thinking, and Decolonizing Principles
- **Round 1 Small group discussion**
- **Round 1 Share out**
- **Round 2 Small group discussion**
- **Round 2 Share out**
- **Key Takeaways, Resources, and Closing**

Who We Are

The Claremont Evaluation Center (CEC) is an organized research and evaluation unit at the Claremont Colleges which provide services to improve the effectiveness of a wide range of projects, programs, policies and organizations. Using state of the art scientific knowledge and methodologies, CEC has served more than 150 different organizations in the past 15 years.



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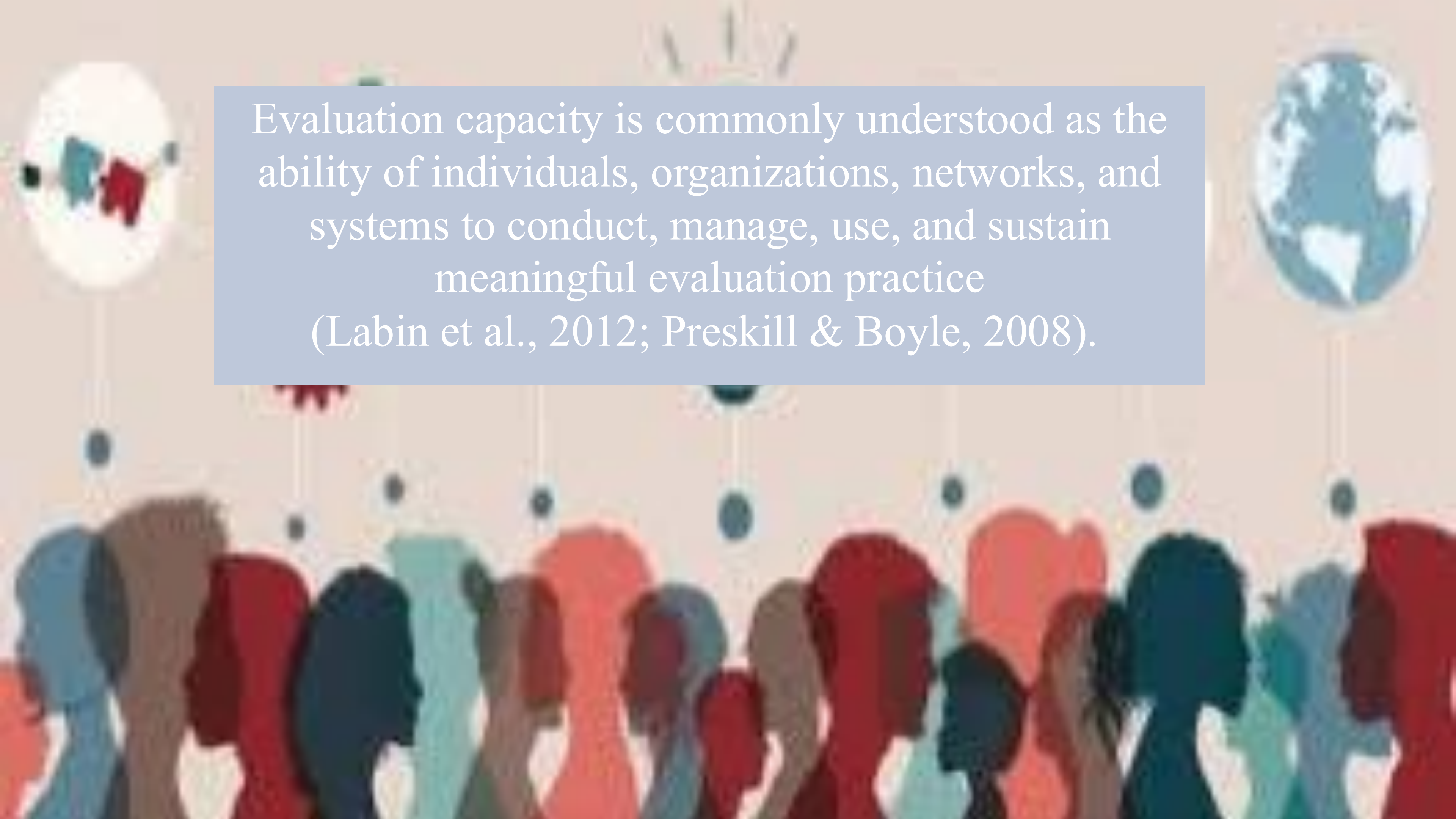
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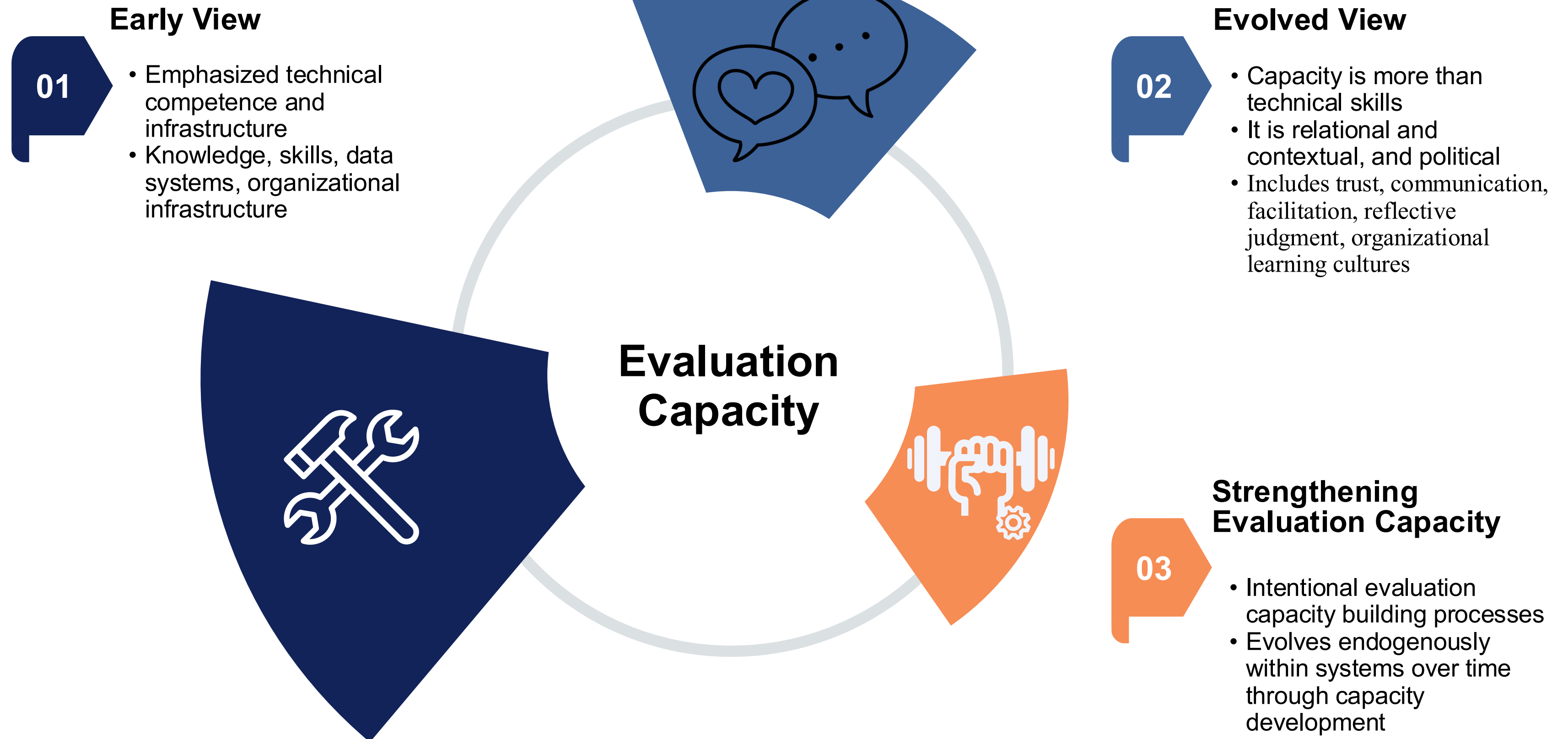


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A colorful mobile hanging from a ceiling. The mobile consists of several circular and oval shapes in various colors (red, blue, green, brown, white) suspended by thin strings. The background is a light beige color. The mobile is positioned in the foreground, partially obscuring the text.

Evaluation capacity is commonly understood as the ability of individuals, organizations, networks, and systems to conduct, manage, use, and sustain meaningful evaluation practice (Labin et al., 2012; Preskill & Boyle, 2008).

Evaluation Capacity in Practice



Evaluation Capacity Across Levels

Individual Level

- Evaluator competencies, evaluative thinking, and judgement
- Technical mastery, navigating complexity, interpreting context, exercising judgement



Organizational Level

- Embedding evaluation in structures, culture, and decision-making
- Shows up in routines, governance, culture and organizational learning

Interorganizational Level

- Working together to generate, share, and use evaluative knowledge
- Emerges through relationships, shared norms, and power dynamics

System Level

- Institutional, political, professional, knowledge environments
- Produced and constrained by systems of power, institutions, norms, knowledge systems

Capacity levels are interconnected and interdependent

AI in Evaluation Capacity

Positives



Expanding technical access

AI lowers technical barriers by supporting coding, synthesis, visualization, report drafting



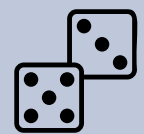
Supporting learning and reflection

AI enhances evaluative thinking through synthesis, pattern identification, analysis



Increasing efficiency

AI automates time-intensive tasks, creates space for engagement, interpretation, contextual analysis



Supporting linguistic accessibility

AI-enabled translation and language tools promote inclusion and encourage diverse participation

Risks

Reinforcing standardization & technocracy

Reinforces metrics, comparability, and audibility.
Marginalizes other knowledge



Narrowing what counts as credible evidence

AI is trained on datasets with assumptions about rigor, evidence, expertise, objectivity



Weakening evaluative judgment

Overreliance on AI weakens reasoning, interpretation, political sensitivity, values



Reproducing global inequalities

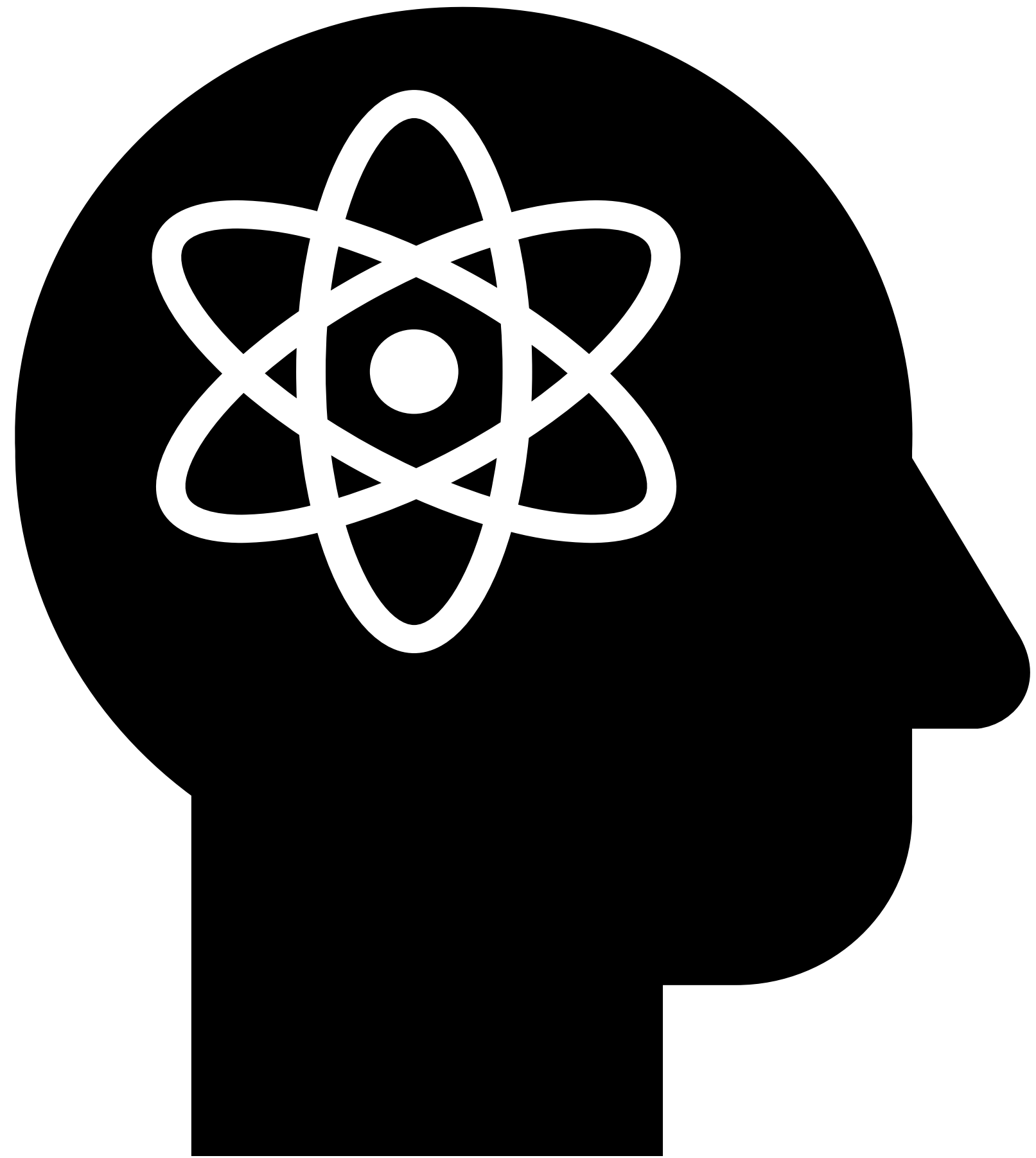
Uneven access to AI infrastructure, data, skills, and resources could deepen gaps in global contexts, resource systems, organizations



AI is transforming evaluation practice, offering powerful opportunities while also posing significant risks

Evaluative Thinking

- A unique way of thinking and reasoning that leads to a credible value judgement
- critical thinking applied in the context of evaluation, that includes an attitude of inquisitiveness, a belief in the value of evidence, identifying assumptions, posing thoughtful questions, reflection and perspective taking, - Buckley, et al. (2015)



ET as a social act

"The cognitive perspective on thinking focuses on what is inside the head of the thinker; ...

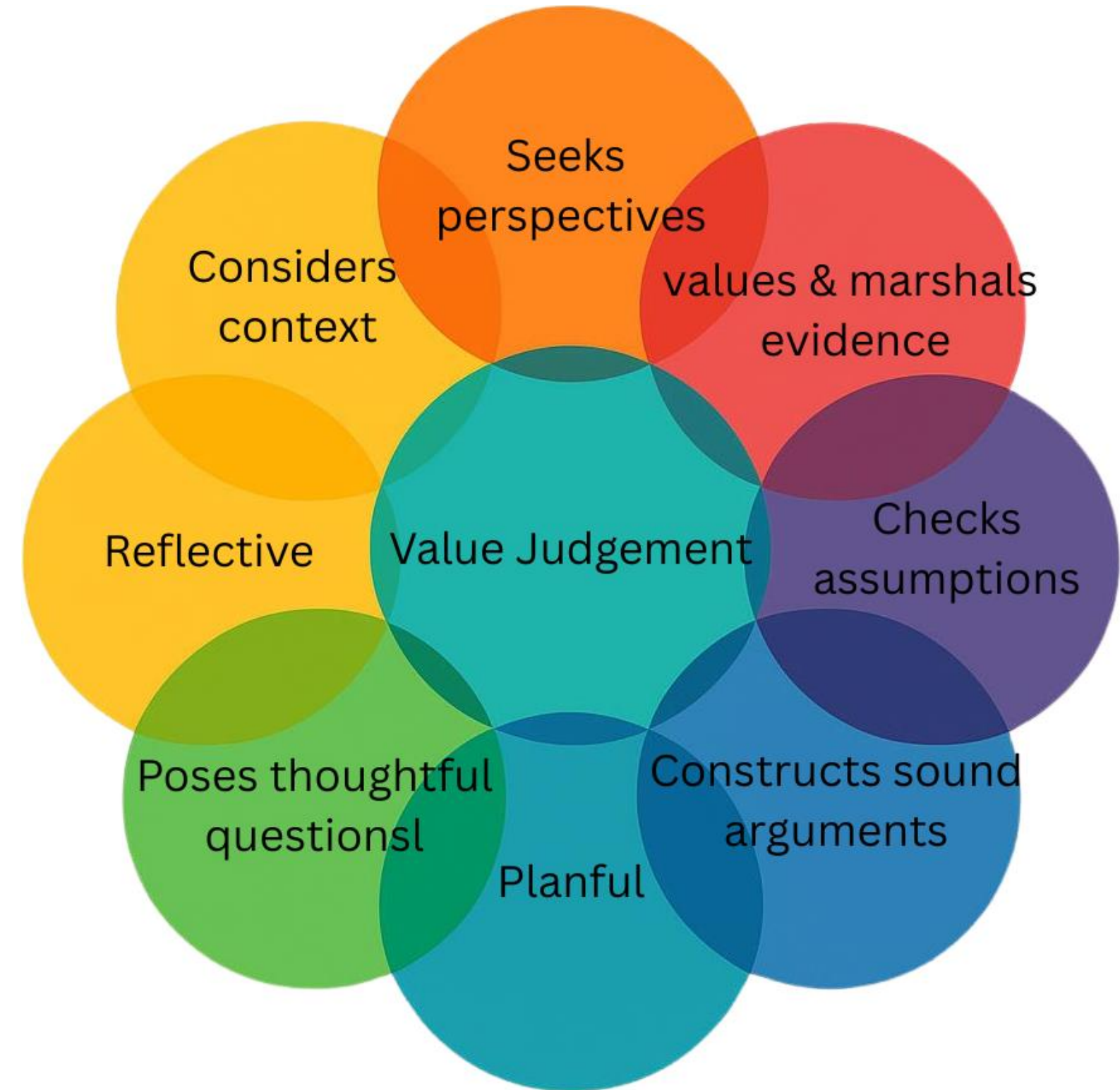
[with] situated cognition, thinking and reasoning are essentially social phenomena,.. a group of participants interacting with one another as well as with their intentions and motivations; ...

"situated perspective views learning to think as becoming a more effective participant in social practices of inquiry and sensemaking" (Schwandt, 2018).

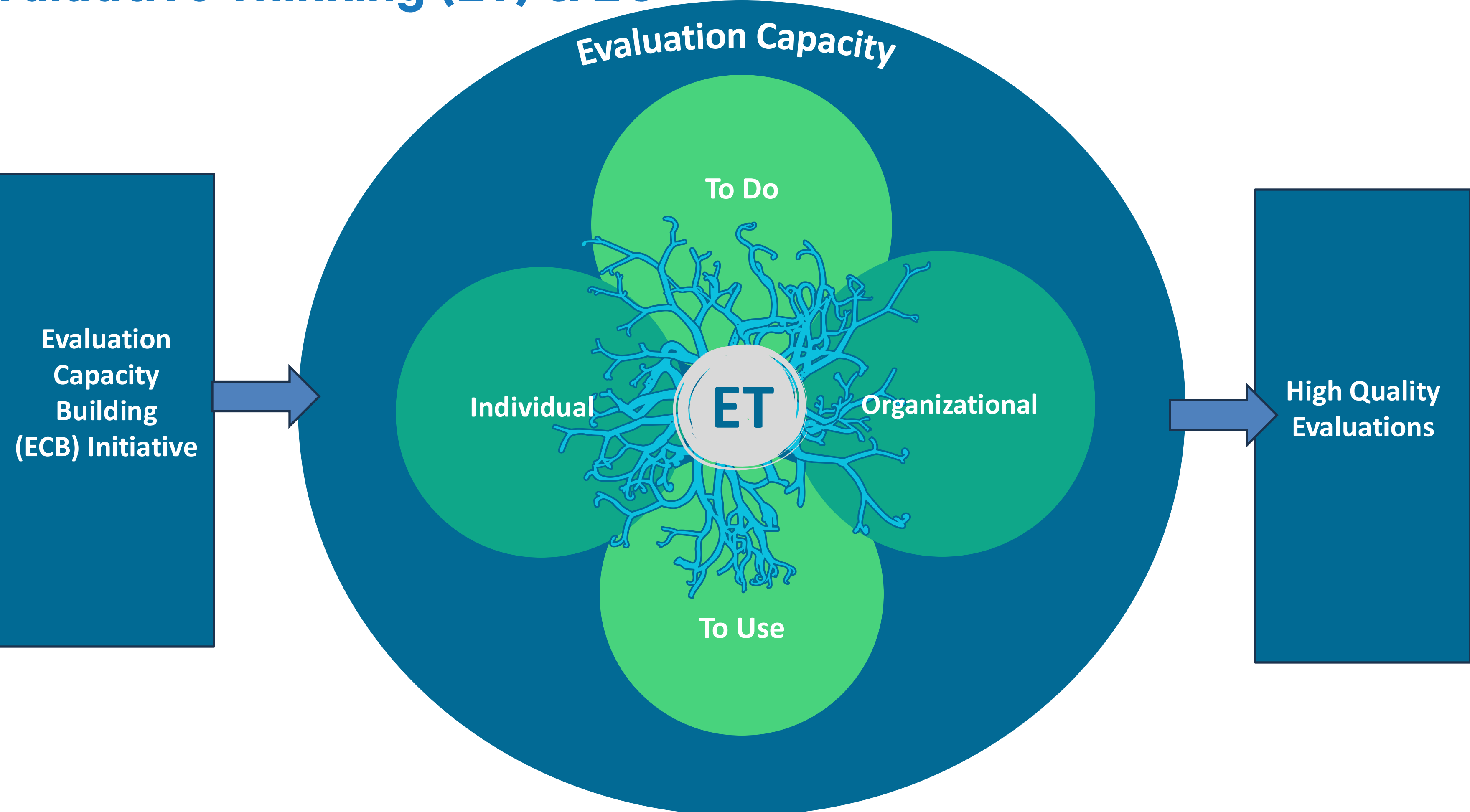


Evaluative Thinking

Evaluative thinking is a cognitive and relational process leading to a value judgement, motivated by an attitude of inquisitiveness and a belief in the value of evidence, that involves...



Evaluative Thinking (ET) & EC

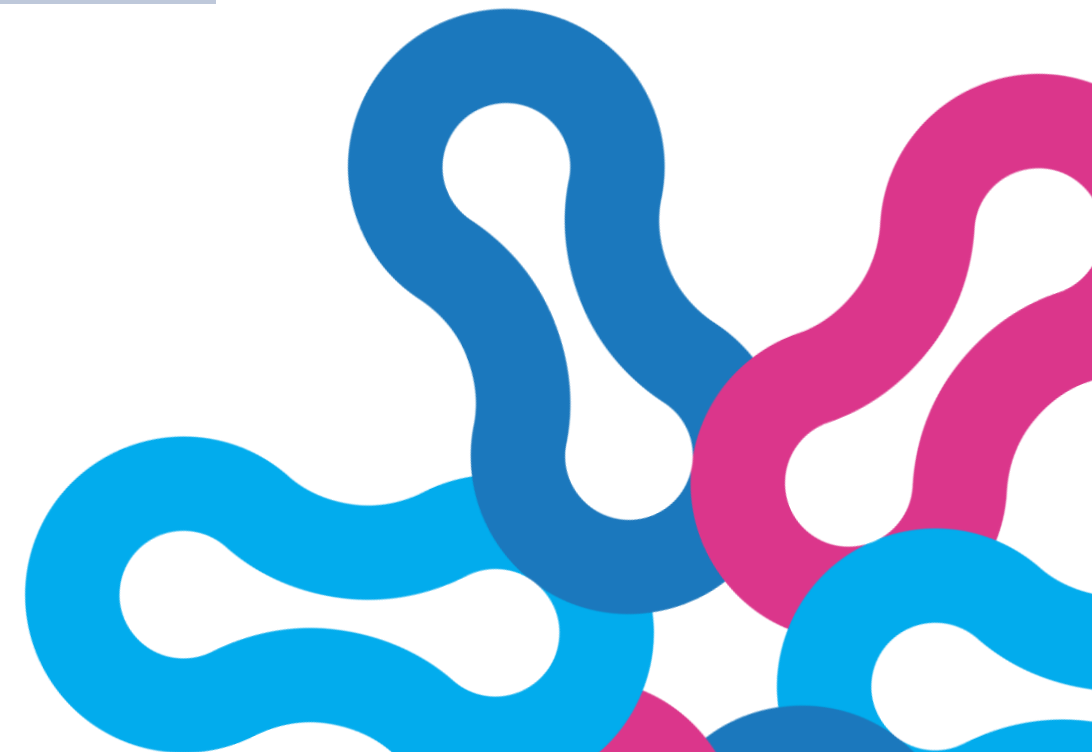


Can AI Think Evaluatively?

"If the chapter's framing were reduced to 'rigorous evaluative reasoning,' the answer would be closer to an unqualified yes. Because it instead emphasizes values, valuing, relationality, intuition, and practical wisdom, the most accurate answer is: Yes, in instrumental and cognitive ways; no, in existential and ethical ones." - CoPilot (Archibald & Sens, 2026)



- Curiosity
- [Human] Relationships
- Contextual Understanding
- Creativity and Adaptive Thinking
- Seeking and accessing multiple perspectives



Why Decolonizing Evaluation?

01



Colonial Legacies in Knowledge Systems

Marginalizing Indigenous knowledge & Prioritizing colonizers' epistemology

02



Colonial-based Approaches in Evaluation

Donor-driven, Accountability- and punishment-focused, & Responsive to funders' needs

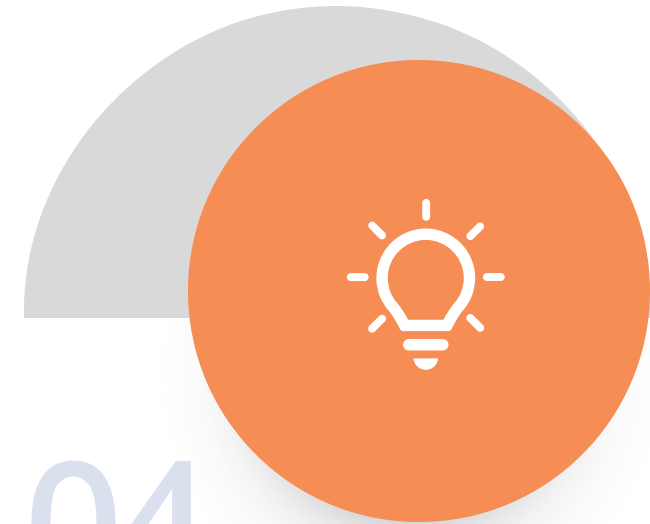
03



Recognizing Heterogeneity

Lack of stories and voices from diverse local groups, Need of understanding complexities in decolonizing

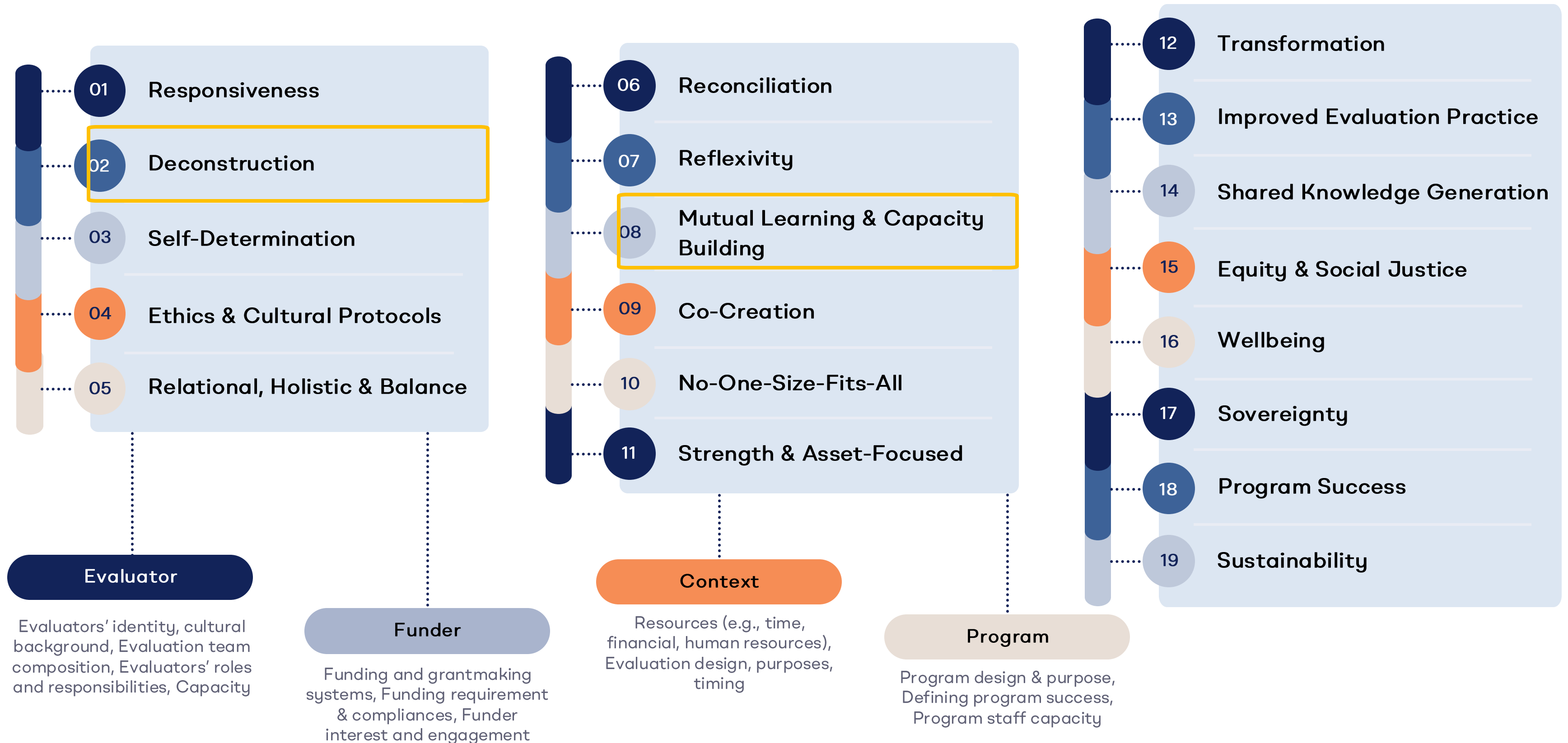
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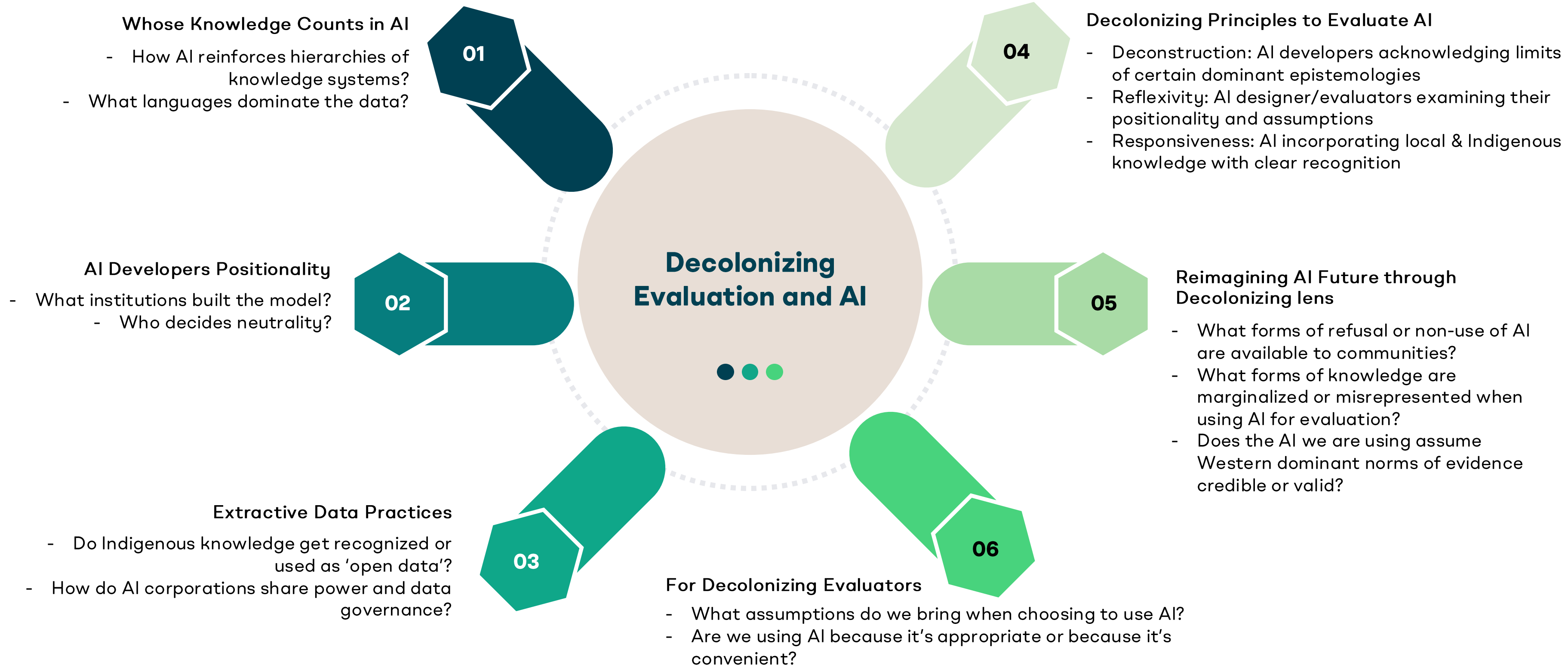
Contributing to Equitable Society

Improving evaluation practice to better serve most marginalized and oppressed people

Decolonizing Evaluation Principles



Decolonizing Evaluation and AI



More about Decolonizing Evaluation Principles



Scan it!



Decolonizing principles are not abstract ideas. They come alive through how we practice.

Scan the QR code to dive deeper into each principle and explore how to put them into action.

Key Takeaways



Evaluation capacity is not purely technical competence



Evaluative thinking is essential for navigating complexity



Decolonization asks whose knowledge counts



AI-mediated evaluation environments create both opportunities and risks.



AI cannot exercise evaluative thinking



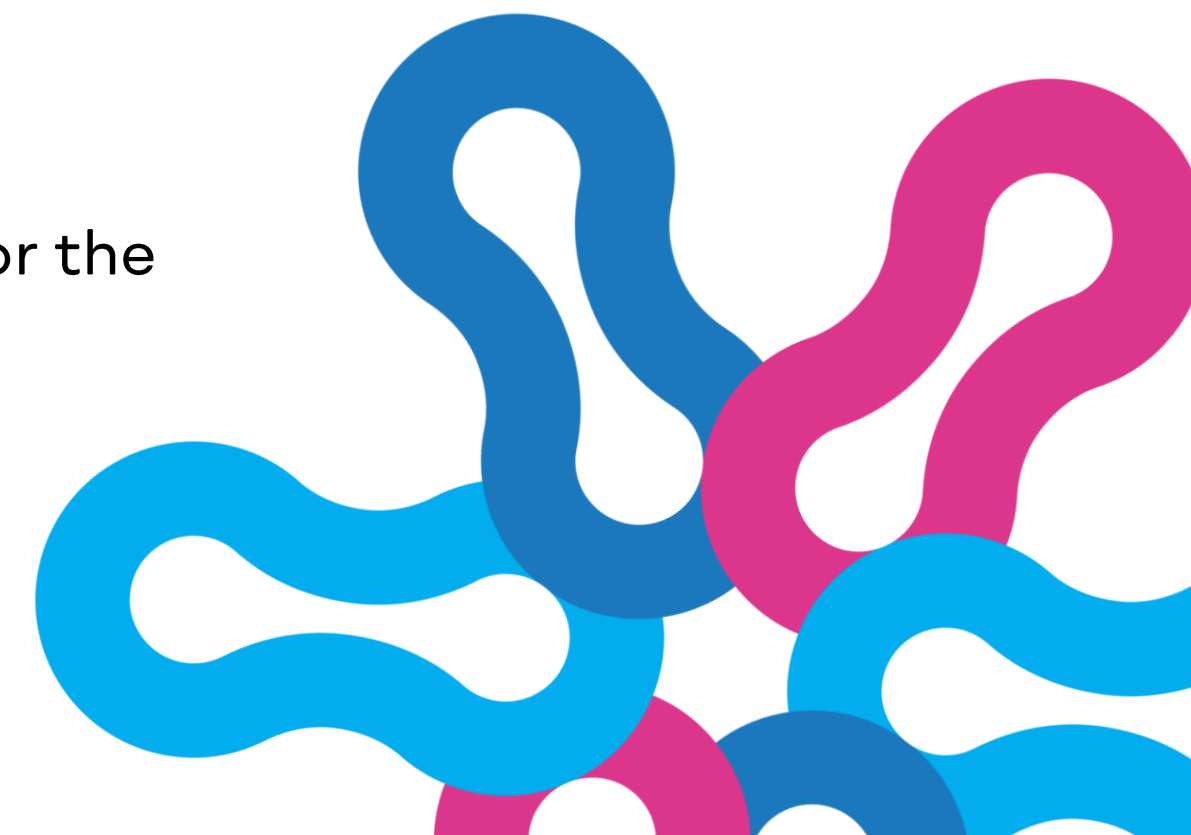
Round 1

Small Group Discussion



Discussion Questions

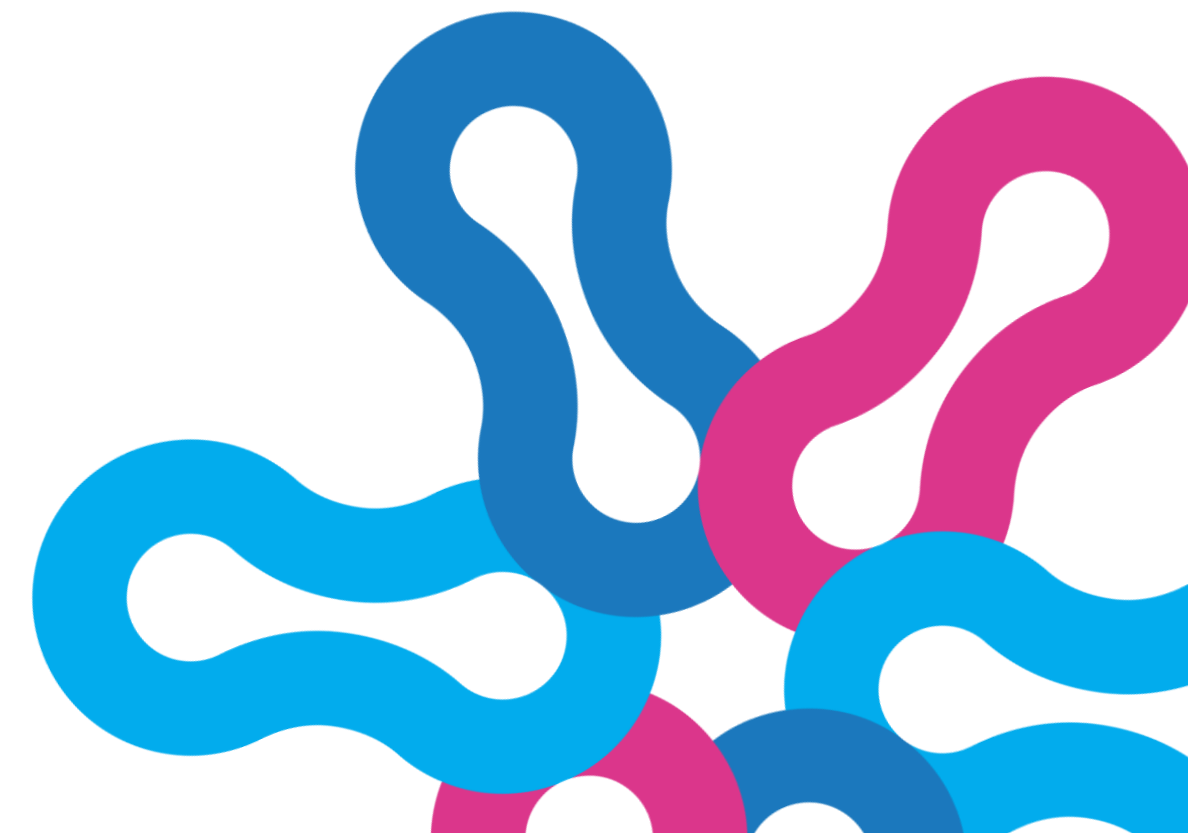
1. How do you understand evaluation capacity, based on your practice? How is it supported in your contexts? Whose knowledge and values shape your understanding and/or practice of evaluation capacity?
 2. What does evaluative thinking look like for you? Based on what we learned, are there ways to expand/enhance this process?
 3. Within and across individual, organizational, and system levels, how might assumptions about capacity reproduce inequities or favor certain groups or knowledge over others?
- We'll put you into small breakout groups
 - Have about 15 - 20 minutes for discussion
 - Choose 2-3 questions to focus on - the ones most relevant to your contexts or the ones your group's most interested in exploring.
 - Group Roles: Assign one person as a note-taker and one person to share out



Discussion 1 Share Out

Each group will have 2-3 minutes to share:

- ❖ One key insight from the discussion
- ❖ One tension, question or challenge emerged



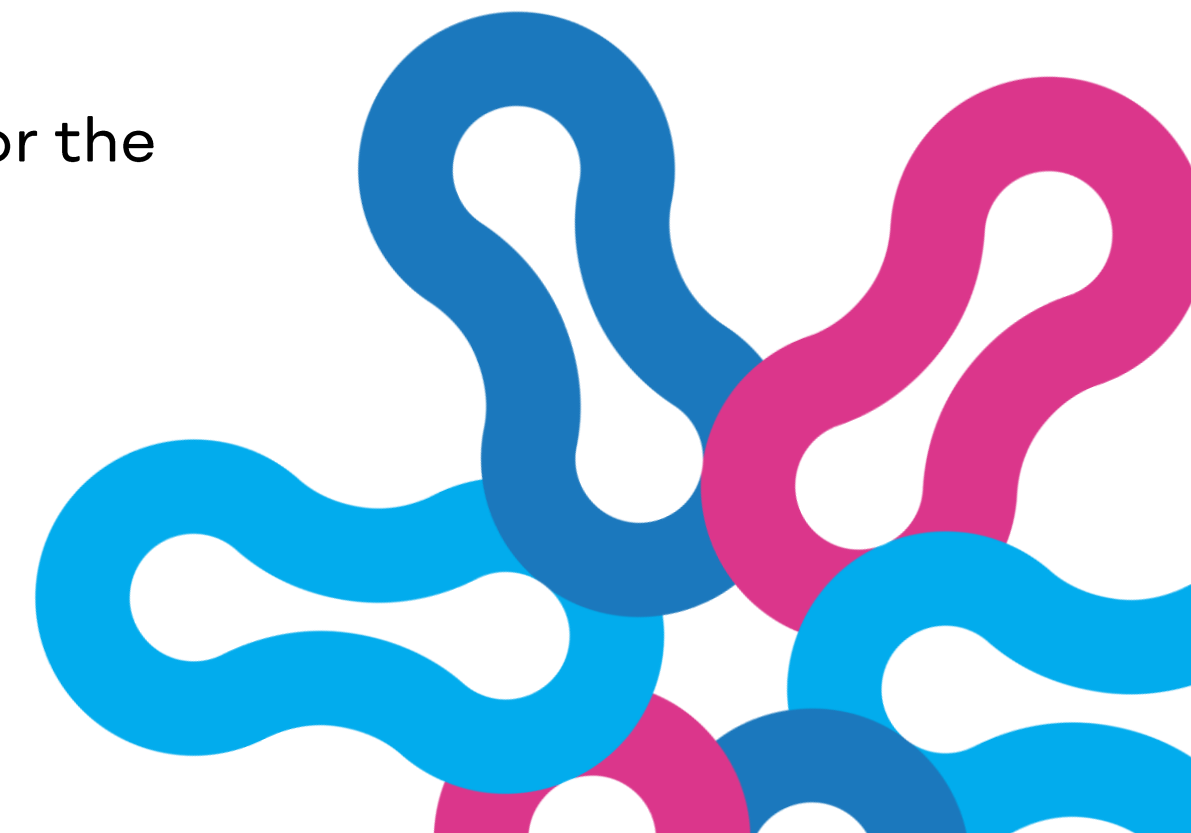
Round 2

Small Group Discussion



Discussion Questions

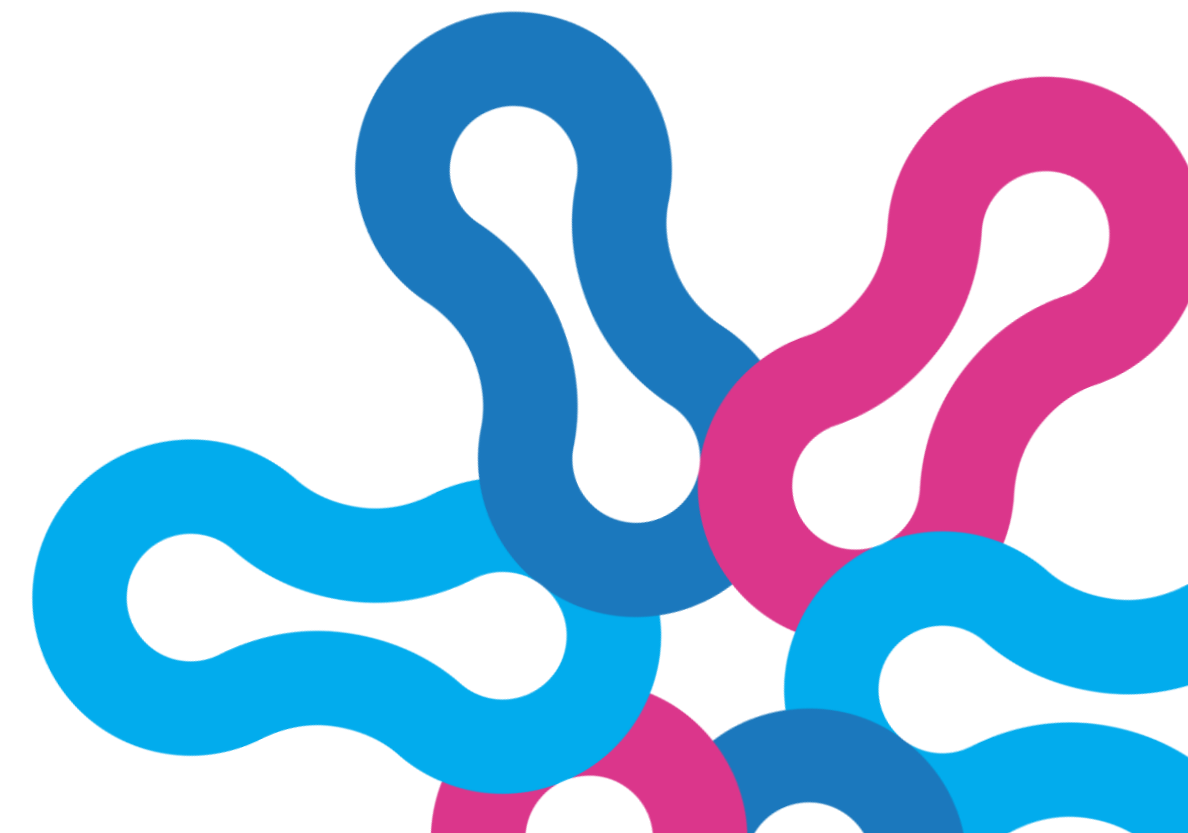
1. How does AI privilege certain knowledge, values, and ways of knowing in evaluation capacity or evaluative thinking, while marginalizing others?
 2. How can we leverage AI while decolonizing evaluation capacity and evaluative thinking?
 - How could evaluation capacity be reconceptualized or assessed to honor diverse perspectives, promote epistemic plurality, and support equitable learning across contexts?
- We'll put you into small breakout groups
 - Have about 15 - 20 minutes for discussion
 - Choose 2-3 questions to focus on - the ones most relevant to your contexts or the ones your group's most interested in exploring.
 - Group Roles: Assign one person as a note-taker and one person to share out



Discussion 2 Share Out

Each group will have 2-3 minutes to share:

- ❖ One key insight from the discussion
- ❖ One tension, question or challenge emerged



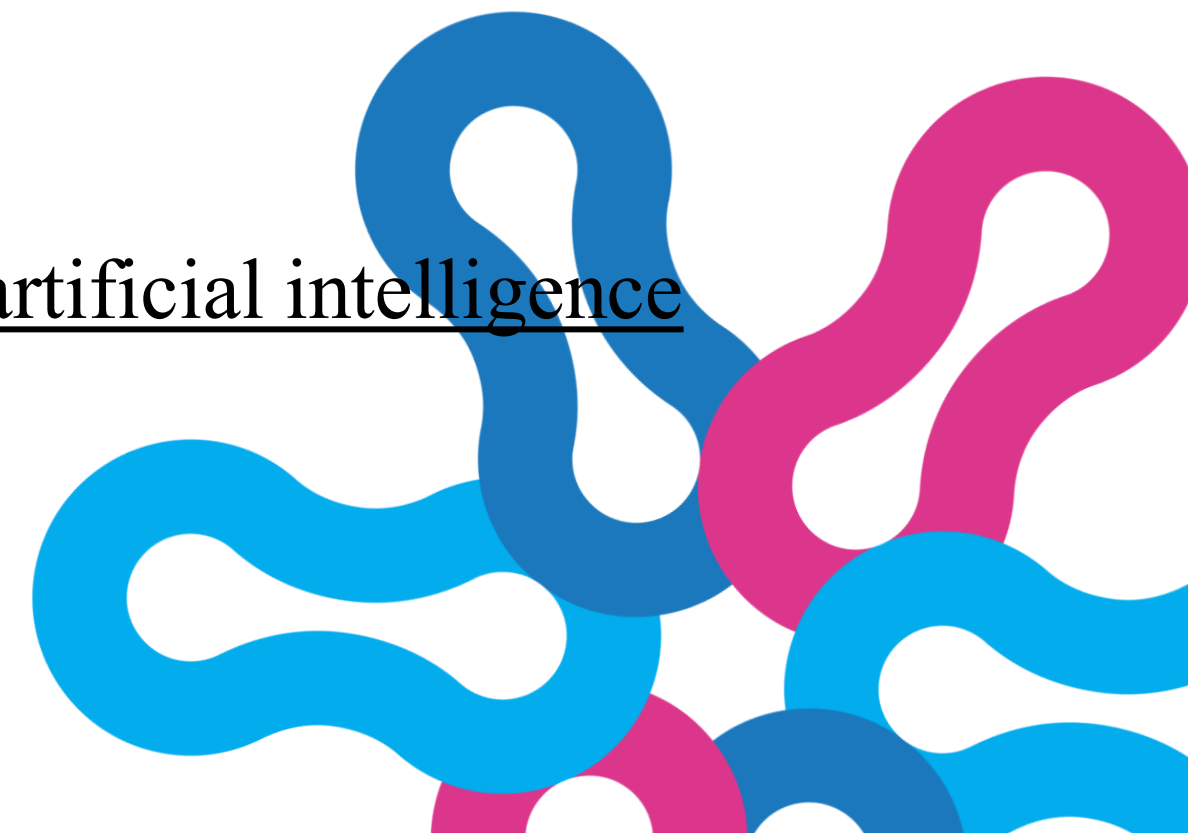
Resources

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Resources

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SAMEA. M&E in the age of generative AI: Balancing innovation with responsibility

[AI ET archibald & Sen.pdf](#)

Schwandt, T. A. (2018). Evaluative thinking as a collaborative social practice: the case of boundary judgment making: evaluative thinking as a collaborative social practice. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2018(158), 125–137. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20318>





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Thank you!

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