# Exploring Identity, Place and Worker Attraction and Retention in Rural Businesses
# A Study of the Derbyshire Peak District (DPD)

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# Why place and identity?

- Place making agenda becoming increasingly important at government level
- As part of the place-based approach, the ‘natural capital’ view was applied to the project as natural assets within the region can attract people to live and work in the area (Barnard, 2022).
- ‘Sense of belonging’ & how people identify with places is often overlooked in research
- Rural communities can be particularly impacted by movement in and out of the region
- Impact of ‘disruptions’ such as Brexit & Covid on the sense of belonging influence how people experience place attachment and how these disruptions influence how individuals cope with change or loss and begin to rebuild connections (Brown & Perkins, 1992).



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# A Two-Staged Project

- To explore how people ‘identify’ with where they work & live in rural communities within the DPD
- To investigate the impact of key events such as Brexit & Covid have had on this sense of belonging
- To gather views from those with formal responsibility for ‘place-making’ in the region as well as employers and employees
- 52 qualitative interviews conducted

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# Findings: Complex and Differentiated Labour Market

- Global influences on labour markets (e.g. Covid)
- National influences on labour supply (e.g. Brexit)

- Regional influences on labour supply:
  - Tight local labour market in terms of quantity and quality of staff for some, dependent on sector and role
  - Seasonal challenges especially for hospitality sector
  - Demographic challenges – The ‘Green Graveyard’
  - Cost of living and mobility across the region
  - Lack of job opportunities at a senior level

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# Findings: Sense of Belonging (Employers)

- Derbyshire Peak District (DPD)

"I think a lot of people are I think quite proud of living here and where they work but I'm not sure it's necessarily something that many people really consciously think about".

"And the other thing about it, it's not just about the place itself, it's about the location of the place, which is smack in the middle of England. The accessibility of the place is incredible"

- The employer

"We do incentives in terms of sales incentives and sort of review incentives for them to actually gain physical cash vouchers, nights out, team days out. As well as kind of staff parties, we organise brewery trips, wine-tasting days out. And we try and do one day a month where they will do something, where it might be they go to Chatsworth for a picnic or something, that we sort of part-fund. And actually to try and create a bit of community culture within the team".

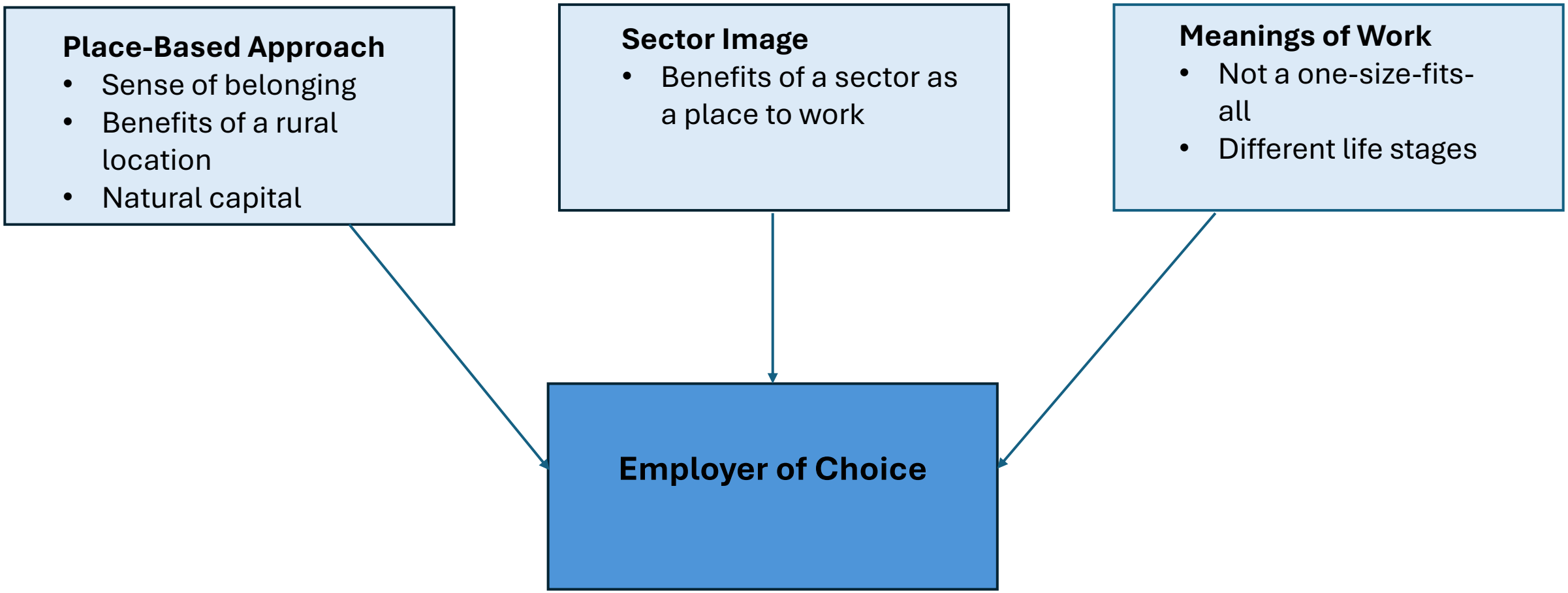
"Well I think it's feeling that you belong in an organisation that cares about you and that will bend over or bend the rules a little bit to help you out, which is what we do".

"So I think there's a lot of the sort of flexibility and wellbeing stuff that we support with and less of what I would call the sticky HR issues".

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# Recommendations

**Organisational Implications**

- Draw on natural capital approach to attract workers to the region as well as emphasising the attraction of the organisation to create a sense of belonging.
- Orientations to work – instrumental; career-orientated; community (outside or inside work).
- Relational aspects of employment – link to talent flows (jobs for life).
- Internal talent flows – e.g. enable staff to rotate around the organisation to fill skill gaps and become multiskilled; consider opportunities for job enrichment (rather than just job enlargement!).

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# Recommendations

**Policy Implications (Government & intra-organisational)**

- Implications for education policy; skills for life; apprenticeships; the value of different occupations.
- The need for a holistic, place-based approach to support worker attraction and retention rather than industry/sector specific – DPD as a place to work
- The role of 'natural' capital is central to a sense of belonging (mental and physical well-being)
- Lobby for change e.g. mobility infrastructure
- Co-operation across employers to tackle shared problems (e.g. transport etc.).
- Benchmark and compare approaches in other national and international rural communities.

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# Any Questions?

Digital links:

https://indd.adobe.com/view/530e844b-1825-4b12-b4ec-5ed39e9c941d

https://indd.adobe.com/view/cfadd99e-d74d-4f27-899f-9f57c64dae2e

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