

Symmathesic Agency

~catalysing breakthrough collaboration~

Scaffolded, collaborative inquiry catalysing fit-for context
responses to complex entangled situations

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A story of emergence...

- ❁ 1973 – My first autumn in the UK. I come upon my first ‘conker’ and am captivated by its beauty
- ❁ 1994 -2000 – working on projects that had never been done before that had no clear destination and no obvious pathway... bringing about the tangential creation and honing of the ‘Participation Compass’ + the ‘PAI’ (Point attractor Inquiry). Recursive application including in my MBA.
- ❁ 2014-2022 – what emerges from the crucible of my PhD researching? ‘Symmathesic Agency’ amongst other things!



Dancing with emergence

- ❁ What emerges, emerges in its own time, unbidden. It arises as a consequence of countless responses to surprising occurrences or 'invitations' that may appear to not have anything to do with the task in hand.
- ❁ I have learned to attend to the 'Little Occurrences', trusting that something is coming and it will manifest, eventually.
- ❁ I have learned to be with the tension, often longer than I am comfortable with; doing the next thing I am called to attend to... until the moment a bigger shift occurs, and something is revealed to me.
- ❁ Symmathesic Agency is one of the 'no-things' revealed to me during my doctoral inquiry.

Describing Symmathesic agency

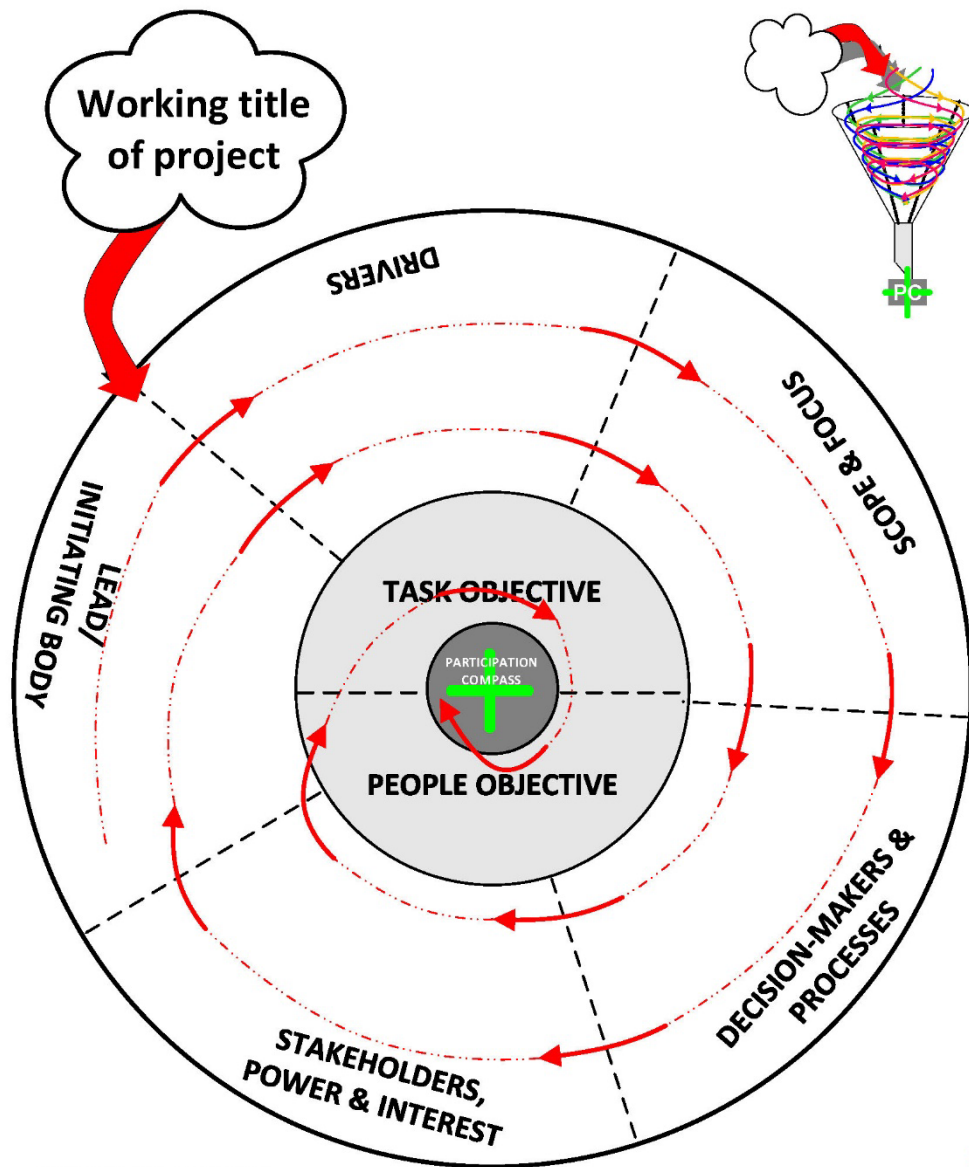
“The metaconscious capacity to engage in mutual, contextual learning through self-centering interaction in place, in space, in time” (Gardiner, 2022)

- ❁ Enabled by scaffolding that invokes us to
 - ❁ Notice more than we each do, when alone
 - ❁ Notice more, more swiftly when we notice together
 - ❁ Notice recursively, until a stopping rule is reached, giving rise to sudden surprising insight and/or knowing what, knowing that and knowing how

Scaffolding invoking Symmathesic Agency

- ✿ Using two scaffolded frameworks :
 - ✿ PAI: Point Attractor Inquiry
 - ✿ Delivers clarity of scope, focus and practical purpose (TASK and PEOPLE objectives)
 - ✿ Is a revolutionary approach for determining fit-for-purpose, collaborative responses to complex challenges
 - ✿ Participation Compass:
 - ✿ Determine fit-for-purpose approaches and methods of engagement with stakeholders
- ✿ Plus Acuity Practice + Symmathesic Agency SABs - both also used in Presence in Action (PIA)
 - ✿ PIA enhances the clarity and quality of data accessed when engaging with the PAI

©PAI: Point Attractor Inquiry



PAI 2012 (formerly SCAP, 1999)
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23/09/2026

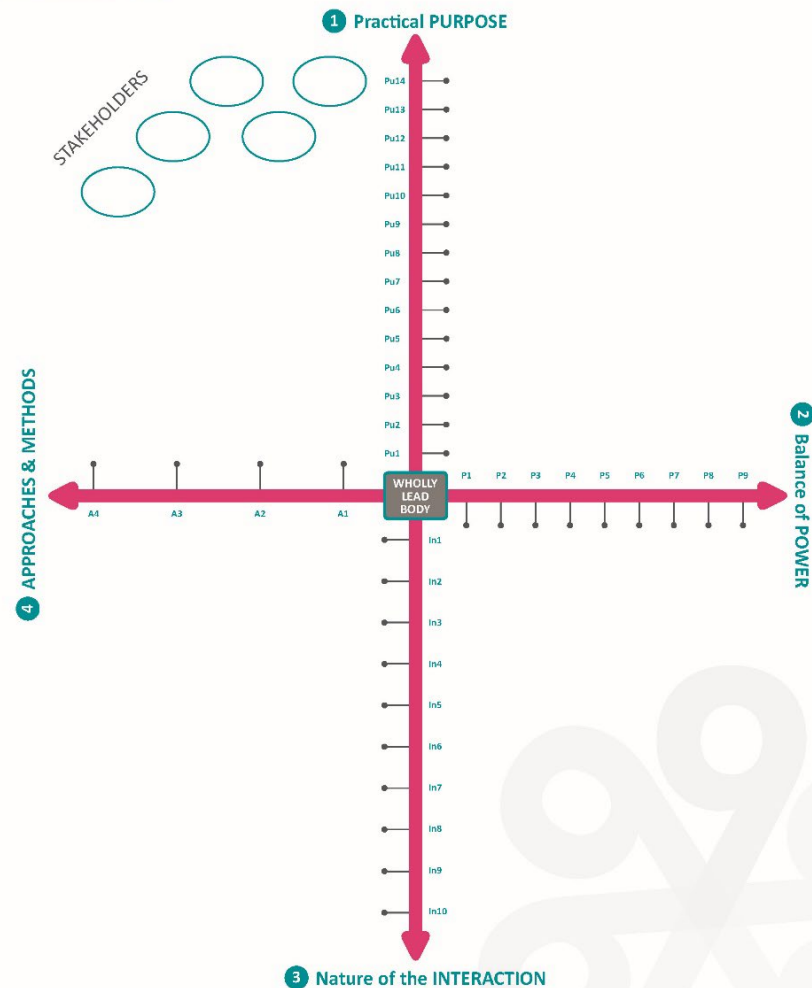
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The Participation Compass

THE GAME BOARD



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WHAT is the PAI (Point Attractor Inquiry)?

- ❁ A framework that helps us to convene engagement when there is 'something' calling for attention but no one yet knows what is actually needed nor how to respond. It helps to lay to rest reactive (often panic or desire-driven) edicts.
- ❁ It enables us to attend to multiple interrelating people, factors and dynamics impacting the stability, efficacy, and generative capacity of organisations, communities and groups within local, regional, national and international contexts
- ❁ It draws our attention to what matters within relevant contexts, enabling us to identify timely, fit-for-purpose ways of engaging with implicated stakeholders, for mutual benefit
- ❁ It enables 'Symmathesic agency' (Gardiner, 2021)

Principles of the PAI

- ❁ Principles of ‘complexity thinking’ and ‘Natural Inclusion’:
 - ❁ Nonlinear inquiry arises from the complex interdependencies between context, variables and stakeholders
 - ❁ We cannot predict, manage or control what will arise in the future
 - ❁ Receptive space invokes inflowing, responsive energy
- ❁ Every decision and action calls upon the engagement of more than one individual
 - ❁ No single person has THE answer(s) nor the ultimate/overall power to make complex change happen on their command
- ❁ Shared UNDERSTANDING, CLARITY and CONSENSUS emerge
 - ❁ Calls on us to engage, enquire, pay attention, listen
- ❁ Mutual knowing, knowing what to do and doing it arises as stakeholders engage together in matters of shared concern:
 - ❁ Every person/perspective contributes to comprehending the context and the nature of the challenge; and discerning what shall be done

Dynamics of the PAI

- ❁ The exploration is iterative and its completion predictably unpredictable:
 - ❁ Clarity and focus comes slowly; and then suddenly, INSTANTLY
 - ❁ You won't know 'when' it will be done... until it is done
 - ❁ You won't know where 'there' is, until you get there
- ❁ PAI scaffolds collective understanding by
 - ❁ Inviting diverse voices and perspectives
 - ❁ Engaging stakeholders in a process of sharing and listening
 - ❁ Gathering observations, information, knowledge
- ❁ By the 'end', most crucial decisions driving the practical planning for engagement and implementation will already have been clarified:
 - ❁ Resist the urge to 'race ahead'

Want to experience and learn about this?

❁ Register for Breakthrough Collaboration:

<https://events.humanitix.com/breakthrough-collaboration-working-together-for-mutual-benefit>



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BREAKTHROUGH COLLABORATION

WORKING TOGETHER FOR
MUTUAL BENEFIT

25-27 NOVEMBER 2026, EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

ENGAGING DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS IN CRITICAL COMPLEX CHALLENGES

Context in which Symmathesic Agency arose

- ❁ Breaking the academic mould: I committed to **embodying** complexity thinking in my doctoral researching (2014-2022)
 - ❁ Non-deterministic – can I relinquish the notion that I know and/or can determine what I should be doing; where I should/want to be; and what I should be doing to get there?
 - ❁ Unknowables, unknowns and knowns – what I know is miniscule in relation all that I don't
 - ❁ Entanglements and interdependencies – who has the right/legitimacy to decide, speak or act for/with/on behalf of others?
 - ❁ Nonlinear emergence (uncontrollable, unpredictable, irreversible state change – transformation?)

Challenges galore at every turn...

- ❁ In my academic discipline (systems science) I was confronted by folk who seek to 'know more' so they CAN BETTER PREDICT AND CONTROL! I feel confused...
- ❁ When is intervening 'for good' simply a cloak for meddling & manipulation to serve one's own undeclared (non-conscious) purposes?
- ❁ How do I/we know that the intervention is **really** about:
'emancipation, ethical practice, improvements, efficiencies, progress, development, effectiveness, sustainability'? OR
 - ❁ That any of these is what is needed?
 - ❁ That I/we can actually BE and bring the difference that makes THE (predetermined) difference?
- ❁ How do I/we know what is 'good' or 'bad' change ahead of time?
- ❁ Good or bad for whom/what? Over what timescale?

Attending, Responding...

- ❁ Let 'not knowing' be my invitation and guide: I recognised the irony, **I was being moved to conduct my research in a paradigm I was in the process of coming to know**, i.e. 'not knowing' was guiding my exploration in how to engage with 'not-knowing'. I had found no 'fit-for-paradigm' examples to follow; no maps; no directional signposts; no guidelines; and certainly no protocols, criteria or codes of practice
- ❁ I found myself distilling Aphorisms/Koans that expressed the relevant philosophical and theoretical guides informing my emerging praxis
- ❁ I began discovering what 'becomes' (possible) when I attend to what is current amidst all that is present in myself, in place, in space, in time

Paradigm + Principles:

- ✿ Natural Inclusionality (Rayner)
- ✿ Complexity thinking (Boulton)
- ✿ Primal animation (Sheets-Johnstone)
- ✿ → re-incorporating subjective empiricism, i.e. self as instrument:
 - ✿ I am the research
 - ✿ I am in it
 - ✿ I am holding/doing it
 - ✿ I am experimenting with what it means to stretch the boundaries of what is considered acceptable

PIA Koans
illuminating
Nature's
way

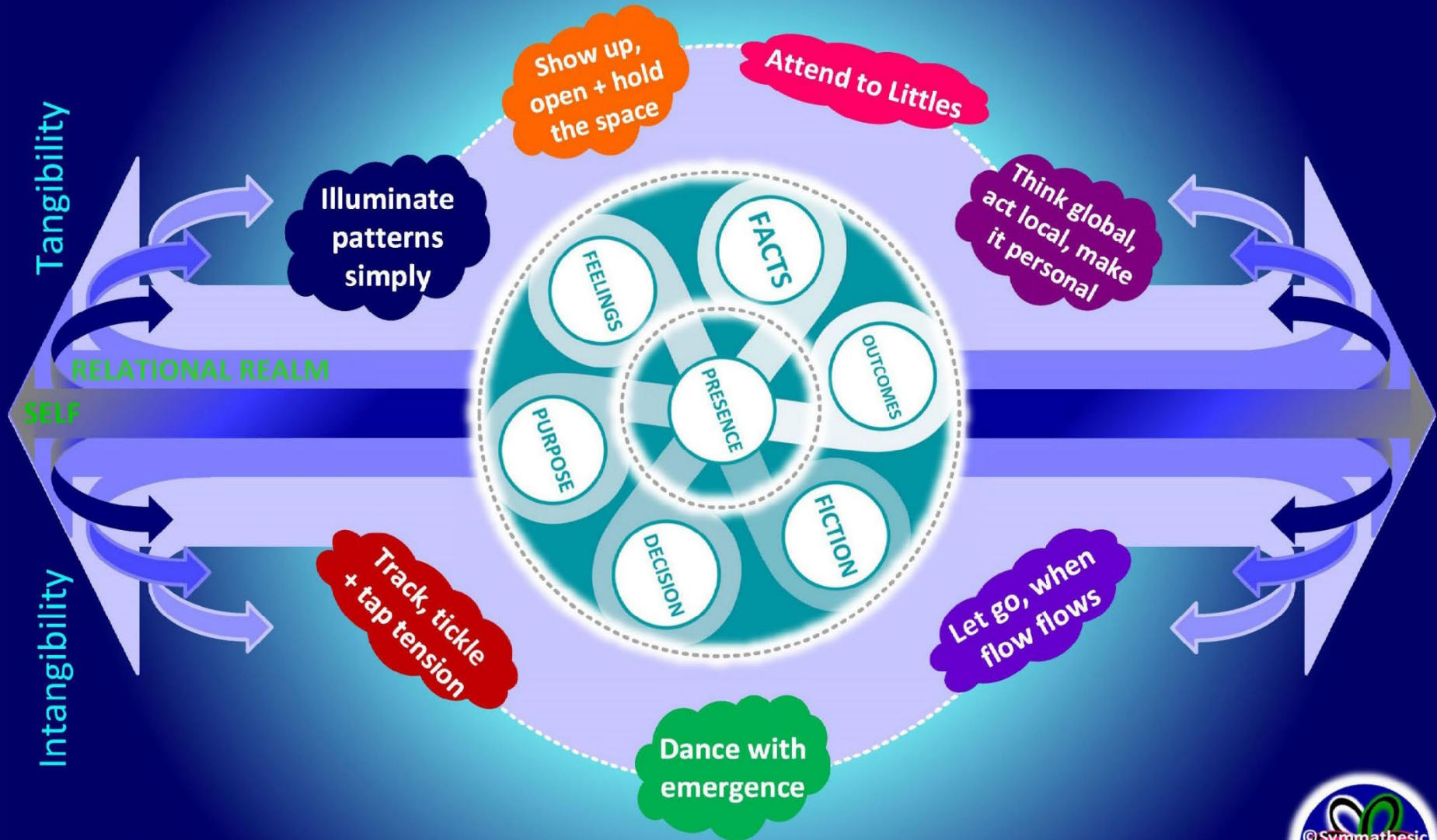
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What is, is not
Change changes
There is no outside
No way is the only way
Best practice is fit or myth
Everything is in everything
Change is determined within
Certainly, there is no certainty
Tension tips one way or another
Patterns play across space and time
Everything is something and no-thing
Difference seeds stability and adaptability
Littles seed Mediums seed Bigs, eventually
Transformation is irreversible state-change
Conditions shape patterns shape conditions
Emergence emerges beyond reason or control
Everything is interrelating, tangibly or intangibly
Space imbues and embraces all without exclusivity
Human beings follow simple rules – until they don't
Emotions move through us as they move us to move
Everything is a beginning, middle and end simultaneously
Receptive space invokes in-flowing responsive energy
Interventions are experiments with uncertain consequences

Responding...

- ✿ Reflecting on what systemic facilitators/practitioners 'do' and distilling Koans into 'simple rules': Symmathesic Agency Behaviours (SABs = living~learning praxis guides)
 - ✿ Illuminate patterns simply
 - ✿ Show up open and hold the space
 - ✿ Dance with emergence
 - ✿ Let go when flow flows
 - ✿ Track, tickle and tap tension
 - ✿ Attend to Littles
 - ✿ Think global, act local, make it personal
- ✿ Recognising that what derails and distorts my capacity for timely, coherent sensemaking is not my emotions and reactive meaning-making but my **denying and disregarding** of them.
- ✿ Self-centering using P6 Constellation (P6C) throughout my PhD – helping me constellate what I was noticing... giving rise to Presence in action (PIA)

P6C ⇔ Acuity Practice ⇔ PIA Praxis*: interplay creates conditions for Symmathesic Agency



*PIA praxis: enforming, embodied behaviours (coloured clouds) that are metalogically coherent with Natural Inclusion (Rayner, 2011, 2017, 2018) & a complexity thinking paradigm



Responding...

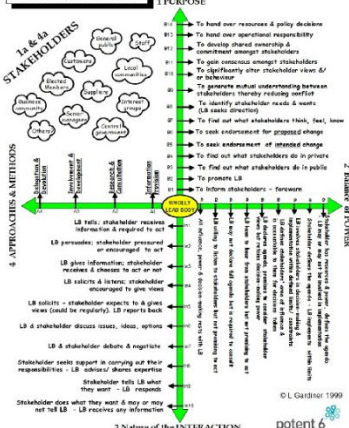
- ❁ From **‘systemic’ to ‘symmathesic’ – imperative of self-inclusion & re-incorporating subjective empirical data along with second and third person data**
- ❁ Scope of PhD expands: Illuminating patterns playing in my **‘being~knowing~doing’** in the present and across my lifetime
 - ❁ Reflecting back to the mid 1990’s - ‘doing’ projects that I had never done before
 - ❁ Learning from the ‘what’s, how to’s, misses, mis-steps’
 - ❁ Collecting what I was discovering along the way from my engagement with clients
 - ❁ Distilling into frameworks (scaffolding) that I used recursively, and iteratively honed - first in my MBA dissertation (1997-2000); and subsequently in numerous contracts, scenarios and contexts over the years.

Becoming...?

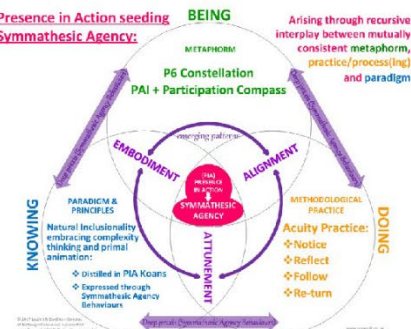
- ❁ KEY REALISATION: I cannot change or make anyone else do, or say, or learn, simply because I want them to or try to!
 - ❁ Autopoiesis (Maturana & Varela): “the world is infinitely complex and the self can only know and incorporate what the [being] creates within itself” (Freeman, W)
 - ❁ Mutual contextual learning: learning together in context symmathesy/ise (Bateson, N)
 - ❁ Natural inclusionality (Rayner): the imperative of self-inclusion
- ❁ TEN Contributions in PhD INCLUDING a poetry anthology + the nature and form of my composite doctoral submission – all interdependently implicated in the becoming of all other contributions
- ❁ A multi-scalar, multi-modal, metalogically coherent methodology

EIGHT of TEN 'becomings'...

The Participation Compass REF: 1/H06



Gestation period (GP): 1997-1999



GP: 2014-2020

©PAI: Point Attractor Inquiry



GP: 1998-1999

PhD Statewaves:
 ♪ Aesthetic-Poetic
 ♦ Intellectual-theoretic
 ► Navigator-Narrator
 ≈ Visual-Kinaesthetic

GP: 2015

Later known as PIA Koans

What is, is not Aphorisms of Nature's way

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Change changes
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GP: 2010-2021

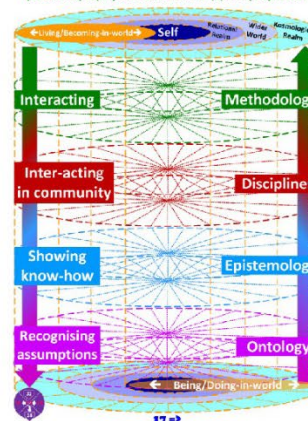


GP: from 1981/2000-2013/2019

"Abduction is situated, naturally inclusional*, emergent, nonlinear sensemaking...

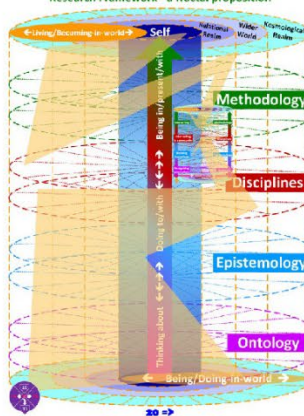
* (bringing, tangible and intangible first-, second- and third-person 'data' or presences/essences, into confluence enabling reflective-reflexive, receptive-responsive co-creative interplay).

Recursively using THIS framework: situating MY doctoral (downward) Inquiry with usual research (upward) trajectories

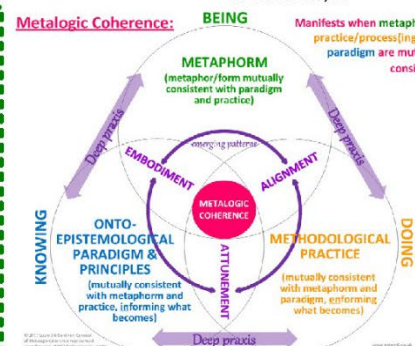


GP: 2015-2016

Situating my research by reflexively deploying Systemic Research Framework - a fractal proposition

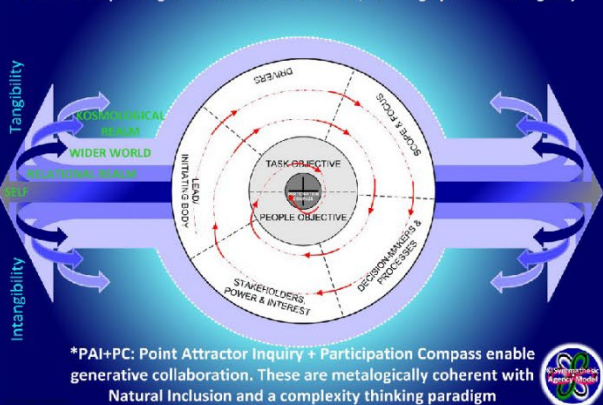


GP: 2015-16/17



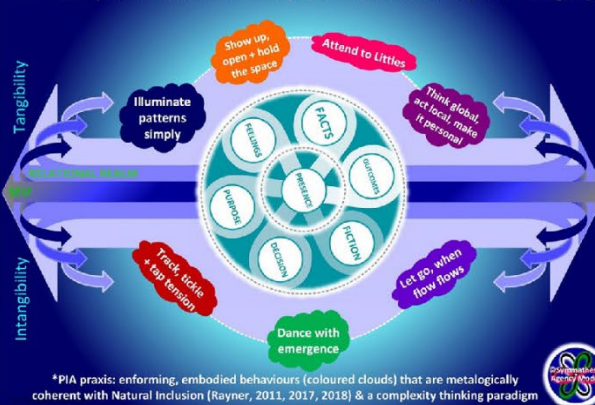
GP: 2014-2020

PAI ⇌ PC* expanding attention into Wider World, invoking Symmathesic Agency



*PAI-PC: Point Attractor Inquiry + Participation Compass enable generative collaboration. These are metalogically coherent with Natural Inclusion and a complexity thinking paradigm

P6C ⇌ Acuity Practice ⇌ PIA Praxis*: interplay creates conditions for Symmathesic Agency



*PIA praxis: enforming, embodied behaviours (coloured clouds) that are metalogically coherent with Natural Inclusion (Rayner, 2011, 2017, 2018) & a complexity thinking paradigm

Symmathesic Agency*: meta-conscious capacity expressed through Presences in Action



**The meta-conscious capacity to engage in mutual contextual learning through self-centering interaction in place in space in time" (Gardiner, 2014)
 NB. "Symmathesic" (N. Bateson, 2016:159)

Why stepping into a new paradigm matters

- ❁ Systematic and systemic thinking and practice have their place.
- ❁ When facing complex, entangled dilemmas, with many unknowns and unknowables, we need to reach beyond causal and deterministic thinking.
- ❁ Nonlinear approaches that circumvent default patterns of being, knowing and doing can help us access/release generative co-created responses.

Fit-for-paradigm equivalence

FROM

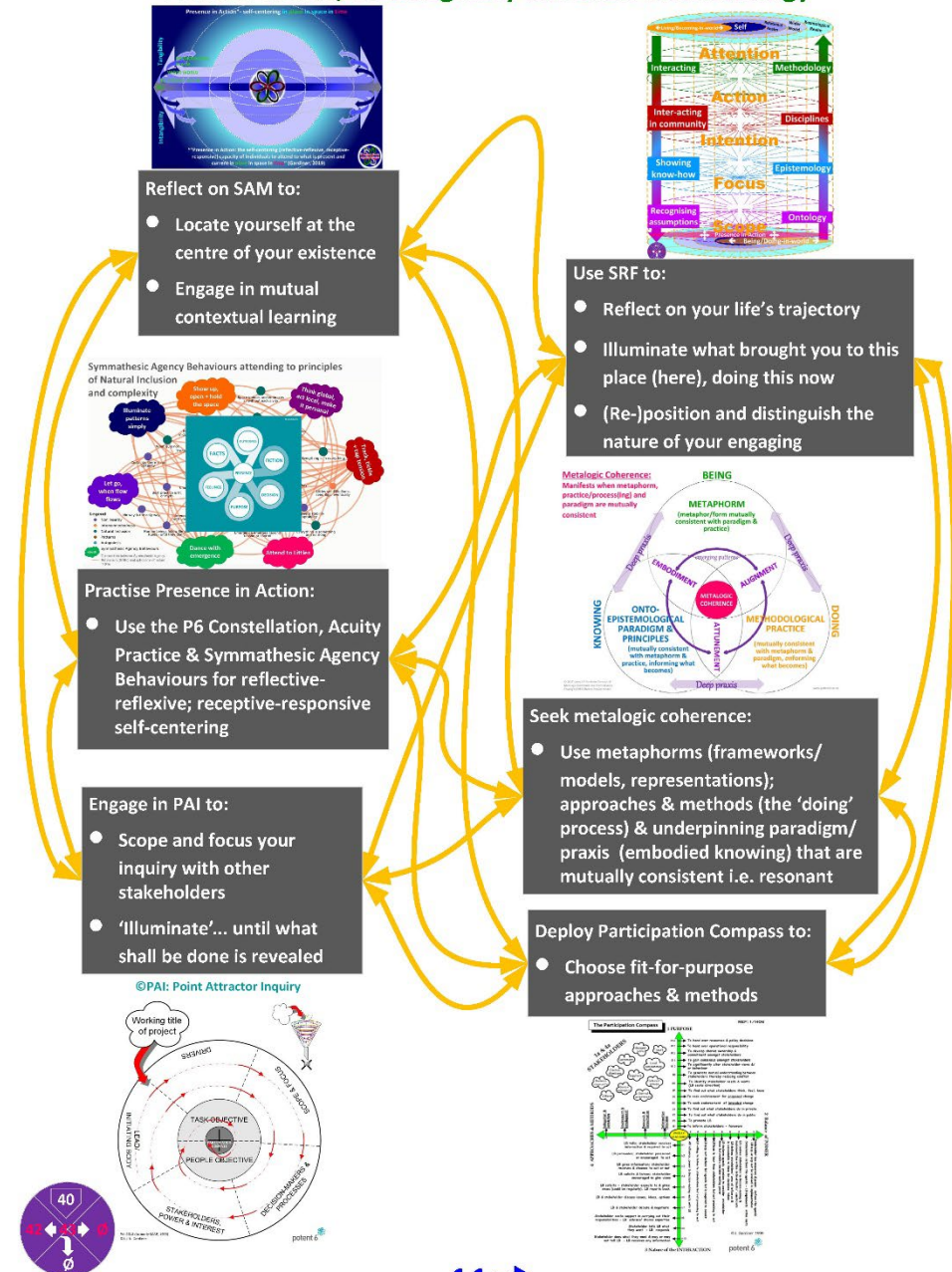
- ✿ Replicability
- ✿ Reliability
- ✿ Validity

TO

- ✿ Metalogic coherence
- ✿ Efficacy
- ✿ Accessibility
- ✿ Transferability
- ✿ Impact

Nonlinear pathways to symmathesic engagement

A multi-scalar, metalogically coherent methodology



Links of potential interest

❁ *Me:*

❁ [linkedin.com/in/louiegardiner](https://www.linkedin.com/in/louiegardiner)

❁ [potent6.co.uk](https://www.potent6.co.uk)

❁ louie@potent6.co.uk

❁ Signal: @louiegee.66

❁ *Doctoral material:*

❁ [Louie's Doctoral Research – Potent 6](#)

❁ *Symmathesic Agency*

Model <https://prezi.com/view/zrwxTaDG9XhTvz4oiHff/>

❁ *Systemic Research*

Framework <https://prezi.com/view/hahTcj6EINEUOoCJ70eS/>

❁ *Presence in Action* <https://prezi.com/view/UQXG2RZh9jM45uoL32zf/>

If you are interested...

- ❖ The remaining slides list the chronology of the 'abductive fruits' emerging through my lifetime – distilled within my PhD.
- ❖ The dates indicate the gestation period of each – illustrating the reality of emergence arriving in its own time.

Functions of Abductive Fruits #1

❁ 1998-1999: *Participation Compass*:

- ❁ Function: discerning how to choose and deploy fit-for-purpose methods/interventions for engaging with implicated/impacted stakeholders.

❁ 1999-2001: The *PAI – Point Attractor Inquiry*:

- ❁ Function: attending to what is ‘calling’ for the collective, **considered** attention of implicated/impacted stakeholders in complex contexts, in which no one yet knows what is actually needed nor how to respond.

Functions of Abductive Fruits #2

❁ 1981-2013: The *P6 Constellation*:

- ❁ Function: illuminating what is current in all that is present¹²² within ourselves, amidst our relational and wider world realms.

❁ 2015: *Symmathesic Agency Behaviours* derived from the *aphorisms*:

- ❁ Function: a metalogically coherent, multi-scalar, meta-praxis supporting the embodiment of the principles of Natural Inclusion and a complexity thinking paradigm.

Functions of Abductive Fruits #3

❁ **2015:** Statewaves:

- ❁ Function: **admitting** (my) ways of being/exchanging/expressing through different modalities; following their invitations as/when they arise, without knowing what might become of them.

❁ **2013-2017:** Presence in Action:

- ❁ Function:
 - ❁ (a) a self-centering praxis (soemthing we 'do');
 - ❁ (b) an experience we gain through this praxis (in-the-moment, bodily-emotional 'state-changes'); and
 - ❁ (c) becoming a Presence in action through engaging in PIA (acuity, agility, fluency and artistry in living our lives).

Functions of Abductive Fruits #4

❁ 2015-2020: Symmathesic Agency Model:

- ❁ Function: situating ourselves and our interventions within the context of a naturally inclusional paradigm, illuminating our nested, contextual inter-relationality.

❁ 2014-2021: ≈Systemic Research Framework:

- ❁ Function: situating, positioning and framing (systemic) researcher-practitioner inquiries.

❁ 2010-2021: *Aphorisms*:

- ❁ Function: teasingly provocative ways to engage folk in considering the principles informing complexity thinking, Natural Inclusionality and primal animation.

Functions of Abductive Fruits #5

❁ 2015-2017: *Metalogic Coherence*:

- ❁ Function: discerning the fit-for-paradigm coherence of any intervention.

❁ 2014-2021: Poetry Anthology:

- ❁ Function: opening the space for new (ways of) knowing to manifest and be expressed.

❁ 2014-2021: Abductive inquiry, *subjective empiricism* and Natural Inclusionality :

- ❁ Function: non-reductionist (i.e. naturally inclusional) approach for engaging with not-knowing.

Functions of Abductive Fruits #6

- ❁ **2016-2021:** *Multi-scalar, multi-modal, metalogically coherent methodology (2016-2020):*
 - ❁ Function: naturally inclusional suite of approaches, frameworks and models that can be deployed within systemic interventions, supporting the admittance of not-knowing, opening the space for (new) knowing and knowledge, accessed through the interplay between personal, interpersonal and impersonal realms.