

Using the Cynefin (Cognitive Edge) “Abide” intervention model with action research

Attractors. Attractors consist of anything that keeps people in a particular situation or attracts them to it. *As results cannot be predicted in a complex situation, multiple attractors are desirable — you probably won’t know which will work until you try them and monitor them.*

As an action researcher, what are some ways (physical and psychological) in which you attract stakeholders to become involved, act desirably, and stay engaged?

Barriers. (Or “boundaries”.) Barriers impose or suggest limits to acceptable behaviour. Clear but permeable boundaries seem to work best — they don’t collapse the first time someone breaches them. They work best when they earn the commitment of participants.

What’s non-negotiable? How might you use that to define boundaries for an action research project? How might you discourage actions that will impair processes and outcomes?

Identities. Humans can fill multiple identities or roles. The roles emerge in different situations. They are activated by the environment or situation or relationships (including with the action researcher) and how the situation is framed.

What are some of the ways (physical and psychological) in which you might activate constructive identities and discourage unconstructive identities?

Diversity. Diversity and dissent *can* be expressed cooperatively and for collective benefit. Though not easily achieved, it increases the innovation within a group or community. It can decrease reliance on old patterns of perception, belief and action.

How might you increase the diversity amongst participants? How might you then legitimise the cooperative expression of different views and the constructive reception of them?

Environment. In the Cynefin model, the environment is “everything else”. Here it can refer to the physical environment and the psychological and cultural climate.

What uses of the environment can you identify, to improve the functioning of a team working on difficult problems? As an action researcher, how might you do so?