

# Diagramming to Understand Complexity



## The Challenge

We live in a complex world. It is certain that every generation throughout history has thought this as it is a facet of change and change is continuous. Hamlet grew frustrated with Polonius – the arch-politician/survivor and, at the end of his tether said: “Words, words, words”. Often, we do need to find another, better way to describe a problem. Sometimes words don’t work as well as we might hope. Tony Buzan identified the power of diagrams in his ‘Mind Maps’ and many have followed, developing rich means to explore and catalogue bewitchingly difficult issues. Diagrams can help to clarify and marshal understanding in a sea of complexity. The study of the use of pictures and diagrams is well established and various approaches have been developed that provide insight and illumination. The goal of the workshop described is to provide a portfolio of tools and understanding of when and how to apply them.

Our starting position is that diagrams are key and central to all forms of enquiry if it is to be holistic or systemic in nature. In this Workshop we want to introduce you to five diagramming approaches:

- Rich Pictures for problem mapping
- Spray diagramming for problem structuring
- Systems maps for problem focusing
- Influence diagrams for zoning in and problem prioritising
- Multiple cause diagrams (see the Figures of an expanding Multiple Cause Diagram) for identifying root cause and multiple causes of wicked issues.

These five diagrams are of value as stand-alone forms of exploration, analysis and interpretation but together can form a systemic progression of understanding, taking a complex reality and gradually allowing coherence and pattern to emerge.

## Our Approach

At the BI we seek to learn with you, to start where you are.

Our approach is called Action Research. We will work with you in full confidentiality, we will help you to explore, learn and guide you to own the outcomes of your analysis. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach we tackle real problems with you applying the tools to your challenges. In this way we can provide a legacy of new ways of approaching problems that become part of your repertoire. Effectively transplanting the new abilities into your organisation in a way that make sense for your needs.

## The Diagramming to Understand Complexity Workshop

During this event you will work in an issue area or problem context of your own choosing. You will apply the five diagram types sequentially. In using the diagrams greater and greater clarity is gained in assessing the underlying issues behind presenting problems. The five diagrams follow on from each other – each a gateway to the next.

In the morning you will work with Rich Pictures and Spray Diagrams – gaining clarity. In the afternoon we move on to more formal systems diagrams – the Systems Map,



**Simon Bell**  
 CEO –  
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Professor Simon Bell has more than thirty years' experience in exploring the signature of groups. He has worked in over 40 countries and with over 100 organisations ranging from the United Nations and the European Union to small UK based charities. He is currently Chief Executive Officer of the Bayswater Institute in London. Much of Simon's current work relates to the identification and alleviation of fear in organisational settings.

Influence Diagram and Multiple Cause Diagram to bring a deeper appreciation of the boundaries and causes.

## Outcomes of the Workshop

At the end of the Workshop you will have:

- Developed a Rich Picture which sets out the key problem you are keen on mapping
- Drawn a Spray diagram which will provide focus for your problem structuring
- Organised Systems maps which give you an intense assessment for your problem focusing
- Outlined Influence diagrams which will in turn allow you to zone in and problem prioritise
- Constructed Multiple cause diagrams which provide the basis for identifying root causes (there will rarely be just one!) of "wicked issues".

## Further information

For further information please visit the Bayswater Institute at: <https://www.bayswaterinst.org/>

**For more information about Simon see:**

<https://www.bayswaterinst.org/professor-simon-bell/>

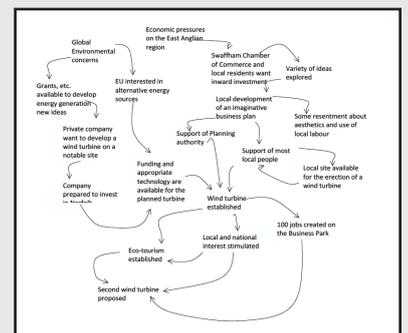
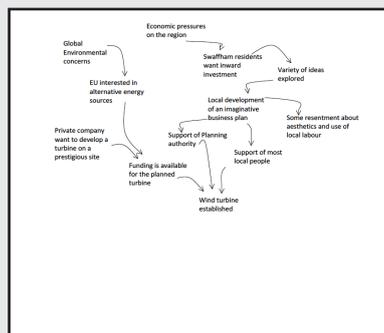
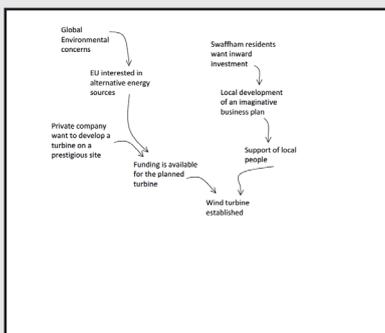
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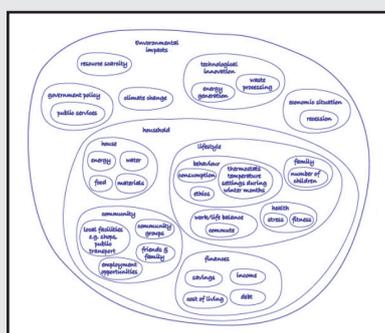
## Cost of the Workshop

The workshop costs £1000 + VAT plus travel expenses. Up to eight people can be accommodated in one workshop.

An example of an expanding Multiple Cause Diagram



An example of a System Diagram



An example of a Spray Diagram

