

THE ECOLOGICAL PLACE OF LVT IN A NETWORK OF METHODS

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Eight methods are compared with Logovisual Technology to elicit common and distinctive features. The aim is to cross demarcations and suspend commercial interests to assemble rich material on methodology that should be of value to all. Comment and discussion is invited.

Representatives of the comparative methods were contacted but only a few replied or followed up. We hope that in time there can be an open forum on methods because a great deal can be distilled that can help us understand organizations, management and mind.

The discussion begins with explaining the approach, continues with the comparative studies and ends with some overview concepts. We will be publishing the study in sections over the next ten months. In this issue, we introduce the approach and a description of LVT. In later issues, we will look at the other eight methods in turn. You are recommended also to link with the *Compendium* of linked methods and ideas, to be found on our web site (go to <http://www.logovisual.com/LVT/index.php>).

MEDLEY OF METHODS

Logovisual technology (LVT) is primarily a method and more than a tool such as a hammer, pen, or computer. The word 'method' comes from the Greek word *hodos* as way or journey and was first idiomatically used for the systematic treatment of a disease. Methods specialise, combine and alternate in all fields of human endeavour. They are an ecology rather than a set of mechanisms. They may all come out of the same basic ideas - in principle - but they appear in different ways at different times and in different circumstances. Some of them become associated with personalities such as their 'inventers'. But, as methods mature, they become increasingly recognised more in terms of accumulated practice due to hundreds and even thousands of people.

In the ecological view, we understand everything in terms of everything else and methods are no exception. No one sits down and works out from first principles what the 'best method' would be to solve a particular problem or meet a particular need. We use pre-existing methods and adapt them as we see fit. Methods develop out of existing methods. To *understand* any particular method we need to work with many methods. Methods can exchange with and inform each other.

Some methods can be easily combined together, while others are perhaps mutually exclusive. There are ranges of methods for different purposes, different people and different cultures. People bring with them many assumptions, beliefs, customs and practices that have to be acknowledged in any method they can utilise. Methods also change with markets and with technology and are subject to the play of politics and personalities.

In the management field, methods have been incorporated into 'products' like commodities that can be bought and sold, as well as 'services' that can be provided to clients. In this guise, they enter the domain of business competition, which has different rules from those of education and the academic community.

Methods, though, cannot be patented, so the products in question are really embodiments of the method in some tangible form that can be sold. A method can be seen as composed of two sides. On the one, it is a tangible *product* with tools, documents and explicit instructions; on the other it is a *wisdom*, an insight into the human mind.

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The wisdom side of methods is nourished by ecological exchange between them. This requires a facility to 'see the wood for the trees' – to understand similarities underlying diversity and differences. All methods stem from making more conscious things that we do 'naturally' but what is 'natural' can be obscure since we are inevitably involved in artifice. Research into the correlation of methods with brain function is still in its infancy, but much can be done in a phenomenological way to help us find our way through the complexities of competing methods into the deeper levels of agreement and mutual support.

This survey looks at LVT in its mutual relevance to eight other established methods, of apparently quite different character. This will serve to illuminate method in general as well as begin a discussion of the role LVT might play in unifying our thinking about methods.

MATRIX OF METHODS

LVT is not only a definite methodology in its own right, it also has some claims to be a *generic* methodology with wide spread possibilities. It is possible to map various other known methods into LVT. It is also true that other methodologies can illuminate aspects of LVT. These possibilities are dealt with here in terms of a *Matrix of Methods* in which we can represent *mutual relevances* between methods.

A Matrix is any square grid, so in principle can consist of 1, 4, 9, 16, etc. cells. We choose the 9-cell because it is the maximum number we can 'see as a whole' and the first matrix in which we can represent a central item surrounded by others.

The Matrix takes a 3 x 3 form. It does not reduce to two axes. Each position or cell is significant in its own right and combines with the others to make a structure in which it is at least theoretically possible to move systematically from one cell or method to another. Various versions of the Matrix can be made.

The middle cell is occupied by the main 'reference' or key item and the others are placed in relation to it and also to each other. For someone to be able to read the Matrix, they would have to have knowledge and experience of each method and also thought about it quite a bit.

Example of LVT Matrix applied to LVT (not a current model)

CULTURAL	Synergic methods	Organising knowledge	Multi-culture
MENTAL	Mindware*	Toponomics**	Thinking together
TECHNICAL	Products	LVT process	Verifying agreement
	TOOLS	METHOD	EXPERIENCE

MATRIX FOR LVT

The arrangement is provisional and dominated by the meanings vertically. It can be seen that this differs from the selection and arrangement shown previously (page 4), which serves to underline that this is not a model of a mechanism with known constraints and relations. The choice of MMs was influenced by the criterion of *our having some experience, knowledge of and sympathy for them*. This is not, then, an academic study but a personal, historic one.

SYSTEMATICS	DIALOGUE	SOCIAL DREAMING	INTEGRATION
TRIZ	LVT	CONSTELLATIONS	INNOVATION
GOLDRATT	DEMOCS	CYNEFIN	ANALYSIS
TECHNICAL SYSTEMS	CONVERSATIONAL SYSTEMS	NATURAL SYSTEMS	

This provides a basis for a comparative study of methodology, in which we consider each of the eight methods in relation to LVT. The aim is to reach some mutual illumination between methods. When we discuss their relation to LVT, we are also drawing out their relation to each other. To set the scene we start with LVT. The sequence of exposition then follows the scheme shown here, in which Goldratt's Theory of Constraints and Social Dreaming Matrix define the extremes.

7	8	9
4	5	6
1	2	3

(Method 5) LVT – AN INTEGRATIVE METHODOLOGY

LogoVisual Technology

LVT concentrates on generic principles of thinking:

1. It (thinking) is based on known elements - knowledge
2. It makes connections between elements - reasoning
3. It builds and dissolves structures - invention
4. it derives from unknown impulses - freedom

The terms 'knowledge', etc. are indicators of classes of operation and have to be understood over diverse contexts.

In the acronym LVT the final letter T has been used to stand for:

1. Tools
2. Technology
3. Thinking
4. Theory

First of all, it requires appropriate **tools**. These are of two kinds: (a) objects that people can write statements on or affix images to, and (b) display surfaces on which these objects can be placed and moved around at will. The most representative tool for (a) is the magnetic hexagon and correspondingly for (b) the magnetic white board, which also allows for 'defining marks' to be made. The magnetic hexagons are appropriate because LVT is a method that works by using discrete elements of meaning called *molecules of meaning* (MMs). The board is appropriate because it represents the 'continuum of meaning' within which the MMs can be situated. The hexagonal shapes are helpful because they enable us to place MMs into conjunctions without connecting lines and even build 'molecular models' of combined meanings.

Secondly, it belongs to a class of **technology** that can be called 'logotechnology' (a term invented by the design thinker Edward Matchett) or technology of meaning. This contrasts it with information technology, which is largely based on computers and mechanical systems. The word 'technology' means the understanding of how we do things, and indicates that we can make conscious what it is we do and improve it. LVT stands as a complement of IT. IT endeavours to make people conform to mechanical systems while LVT obeys what people find meaningful.

Thirdly, it is a way of **thinking**. We have increasingly realized that the LVT structure of process reflects best practice in thinking in any field. The five step format we have adopted is a simple algorithm that encompasses a broad range of thinking skills and, by reducing them to their essentials, makes them more effective.

1. Focus. The articulation of what is needed (as a question, problem, topic, etc.).
2. Gather. The compilation of MMs, the elements of meaning pertinent to the need, each of significance. Cf. 'knowledge'
3. Organise. The grouping and association of MMs into 'simple complexes' expressing ideas that explain, evaluate, embrace and evolve their meaning. Cf. 'reasoning'
4. Integrate. Assembling the 'simple complexes' into a unifying structure that reveals the underlying 'natural system' and what is questionable or missing in present understanding. Cf. 'invention'.
5. Realise. Moving from contemplation to action. Cf. 'freedom'.

Each of these five can be found in thinking as practised by people in solving problems, innovation, reaching agreements and so on. Often, however, they are muddled up together and LVT provides a means of concentrating on each in turn so that they are all done well. It is also important to realize that this becomes even more important when *several or many* people are involved. This is because each one has their own private universe of thinking and special steps have to be taken to ensure that they can *think together*. The visual structures and media support spatial coherence while the procedural structures support temporal coherence or synchronization.

Logovisual thinking means that the different powers of making sense we have are brought together to work synergically. The main components of this synergy are verbal, visual and sensory-motor intelligence. The visual aspect of thinking – seeing wholes, shapes, patterns and so on – is becoming increasingly appreciated as in the work of Robert Horn on *visual language*, which draws on *gestalt psychology*, but relatively little has been done on the powerful relevance of the bodily sense to thinking (David Bohm, the physicist, is exceptional in drawing attention to the significance in ‘thought as a system’ of the proprioceptive sense). By involving movement and placement the participants in LVT become involved in a *public space* in a way that enhances demonstrable and shared meaning.

LVT combines the intelligence of hands, eyes and voice.

Finally, as **theory**, it unites psychology with cognitive science. Its most powerful contribution lies in the ways it makes meaning visible and tangible, bringing into the public arena areas of operation that are usually considered subjective or hidden.

The sharing of meaning involves the way in which we naturally combine meanings to make new ones. On the one hand, LVT reaches down into the more ‘raw’ regions of experience and, on the other, reaches up to the more subtle and holistic regions. Between these two, it offers many ways of using what we know to deal with what we do not know. This is paradigmatic. LVT is linked to these allied methodologies:

1. Systematics – the study of systems according to number of terms (see p. 36).
2. Structural communication – two way communication systems with dual channels for form and content, independently and in conjunction (<http://structuralcommunication.com/sc/index.asp>.)
3. Toponomics – literally the ‘rules of placement’, how the arrangement of MMs in meaning space can represent and transmit information about mutual meaning.
4. Two other methodological ideas amplify what LVT means: *meaning games* and *mindware*.

Meaning Games

The word ‘game’ designates a process involving agents who can explore a world of possibilities through making moves (decisions) according to agreed rules. A meaning game is a mindful activity in which the rules can change as the game develops. The object of a meaning game is not to find a winner but to *generate maximum meaning*. LVT is a meaning game and it is likely that this concept embraces all the methods addressed in this comparative study.

LVT employs meaning games where players are on a level. There are also pedagogical games in which different status players – e.g. tutor and student – are involved. Creative thinking in groups can be interpreted as a meaning game.

A game involves rules and the generation, agreement and development of rules belongs to *Mindware*.

Mindware

There is hardware and software, but in addition there is *mindware*. This third 'ware' addresses the human component of information systems. The term is already in use (see Zachman <http://www.wfzachmann.com/Book86/Book86Chapter10.htm>) but Mindware can be used as a generic term that encompasses LVT and meaning games. In this usage it would not be software at all. Our over-all definition is:

Mindware consists of agreements about how to conduct thinking together.

Mindware has to be conscious and meaningful to the participants and arrived at through agreement. It is very different from the unquestioned assumptions made in running most meetings. In particular, it comes into prominence only when meetings are not controlled by an authority system.

Mindware concerns such things as deciding starting points, processes and evaluation of end points. It is the way we deal with information intentionally. The basic LVT process illustrates this. We begin with gathering MMs. We then process these according to established rules. We derive patterns that address the future. None of these can be done by a computer or any software because they involve meaning and judgment. Mindware links to Checkland's Soft Systems Method but is centred on the group's understanding of itself, its purpose and *how mind works*.

The operations of Mindware can be described in terms of *operations on sets*. In LVT, sets of MMs are operated on to map them into other sets and there are sets of rules about which agents out of a set of people determine what move. Mindware in our sense can be carried by a set of instructions or an algorithm transmitted through a facilitator who plays a role analogous to a software facilitator. Alternatively, it can be provided through a logovisual such as a diagram of a complete cycle with nodal points highlighted for attention. A *capable group* will carry its own self-created Mindware in its internal structure and memory which will develop through practice and experience, and require articulate discussion.

Reference to the 'capable group' is to emphasise that what is primary is the set of relationships between people.

Mindware includes cultural assumptions and worldviews as to what is

- meaningful
- acceptable.
- real

and how differences between them are to be articulated and dealt with. Mindware is conscious and cannot be reduced to mechanical rules. In its explicit form, it will be richly symbolic that is, embrace diversity, ambiguity and many levels of meaning. It stands between who the people are and what they do together.

Note:

Although this study is complete the publications is being serialised.

The next episode will address Goldratt's Theory of Constraint