

## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF METHODS – Part Three

### DEMOCS

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

We are looking at eight methods in relation to LVT. The aim is to reach some mutual illumination between them. When we discuss their relation to LVT, we are also drawing out their relation to each other. To set the scene we started 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. Last month we looked at Goldratt's Theory of Constraints and this month we look at DEMOCS. Next month will be the turn of Cynefin.

7	8	9
4	5	6
1	2	3

## METHOD IS NOT MECHANISM

We are using the term 'method' loosely in the sense of 'how to do something'. It does not mean that there is any defined mechanism for getting results (as we need to understand in something as important as the idea of 'scientific method' but also in general with any 'method'). All methods involve people and human experience, sense and sensibility. At least three different types of element are involved:

- Tools
- Procedures
- Language

There are also assumptions about context of use, introducing such elements as:

- Task
- Psychology
- Culture

And other elements still, to do with the

- Contractual arrangements
- Facilitators and their agendas
- History of the method

Not forgetting:

- Nature of working spaces
- Time available
- Resourcing

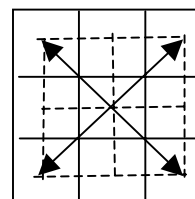
But, most of all, the background, character, beliefs, passions, capacities, etc. of the participants. Seemingly different methods can produce similar results if they draw on what the people can do rather than impose a set of controls and models on them.

A true method is one that follows the original meaning of the word 'educate', i.e. as 'to lead (or bring) out' what is there.

## NOTE ON TOPONOMICS

Typically, if a matrix is assembled with identifiable meanings along the vertical and horizontal axes, we will find that the *diagonals* yield new insights. There are eight combinations of three and if all of them are significant then the matrix as a whole is highly coherent. Their content (MMs) and arrangement (where placed) can be refined with increasing understanding.

FOUR LINES  
OF MEANING



## 2. DEMOCS AND LVT

Since this study was made (2006) there has been some exchange with people working on DEMOCS and this is still in progress. A note has been added with an interesting contribution from Robbie Hoque

### DEMOCS

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) has produced a game to instruct in and enhance democratic process. The game is a method of *informed discussion*. It uses prepared material put onto cards which, in LVT parlance, are 'molecules of meaning' (MMs). A contentious topic is introduced and a structured discussion ensues, building up insights and arguments that can be related to various policy positions. This has been developed as an improvement on the standard governmental consultation procedure, which is seen as a largely one way process giving little scope for the voice of the people. In relation to modern complex issues such as stem cell research, the public need to be informed but also helped to be articulate in voicing their views.

DEMOCS - Deliberative Meetings of Citizens - has been devised by the NEF to enable ordinary people to discuss hot public issues amongst themselves, and also to feed the results back to policy makers, if desired. It takes the form of a card game which can be played by groups of six to ten people, in which they explore together a contemporary issue, either national or local. It is possible for a group to run themselves if they study the briefing material but a facilitator can help the process along.

The MMs come under various categories. There are *Scenarios*, which illustrate the topic by examples. There are *Issues* which articulate what is controversial. These are used in the initial stages. There are *Factual* cards which provide information and *Policy* cards that define (usually) four alternative approaches, which are used in the later stages. There are also blank cards for the participants to write their own material on to add to what has been prepared and Yellow cards to use to intervene in the process (these are disregarded in the comparative table below). *Heading* cards contain the names and descriptions participants give to *clusters* of cards that they form around the issue cards. The total arrangement of cards they evolve is called the *matrix*.

"The matrix, the heading cards of the clusters, the feedback forms and any new cards are then sent back to the game's creators or the organiser of the consultation for assessment. If it is part of a formal process over a specific issue, in which many games are being played, there will be a central co-ordination of the responses and a means of feeding these formally to the government or other body who has asked for the public's views. For example, the Human Genetics Commission asked for a series of trial DEMOCS sessions to be held, as a pilot scheme, as part of a public consultation on across the counter genetic testing kits.

"It is felt important that the participants know what has happened to their efforts. At the end of the pilot phase of the DEMOCS project, we are considering not only the best ways to feed on the information from the different game to the relevant body, but also how to feed back to the participants and engage them in how the issue develops. The website could play a significant part in this. There may be follow up material around which the participants could meet again to find out what had happened, and to pass back any comments in the light of their experience. It is hoped that groups might be prepared to consider doing DEMOCS sessions on other issues in future. The aim is to have built up a clientele of people prepared to engage in discussing these issues that substantial numbers of citizens would be able to make their considered views known on matters of local and national significance, without having to "belong" to something, or make big time commitments." [www.srtp.org.uk/valdemoc.htm](http://www.srtp.org.uk/valdemoc.htm)

stage	LVT	DEMOCS
FOCUSING	Participants agree scope and manner of process and dialogue on the formulation of the key question(s)	Participants note the topic, the key question (if used), and the policy positions which span much of the range of policy responses to the question and/or issue.
GATHERING	Participants produce 'molecules of meaning' relevant to the question, the nature of which have been suggested by the question. These are placed on a display board in no apparent order.	Participants play with three sets of cards: Story; Fact and Issue. In each case they are dealt a number of cards, read them, discard some, read others' discards, and chose one or two. They then take turns to read or summarise a card, say why they chose it, and place it on the table.
ORGANISING	The MMs are grouped according to intrinsic shared meaning. Initially, the meaning of the cluster will be implicit and not explicit. Each cluster is then discussed and given a name and explanatory description.	As with LVT. In addition: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. people may fill in and add blank cards, as in the LVT gathering stage</li> <li>2. a card is used to record the details of each cluster, including the cards used to create it.</li> </ol>
INTEGRATING	The names of the clusters translate into new MMs. These new MMs are formed into what seems to be the most coherent structure, where participants look for conflicts, relationships, etc. and in particular for items that are missing or not really understood.	Not done at present
CONCLUDING	Decisions are taken on next steps, which can include communications, action plans, evaluation of process, etc. In the sphere of education, this stage would be writing an essay, making a performance, creating a poster and so on.	Participants vote on each of the four policies with four options: agree, accept, not-accept, abstain. They then try to create a policy that they can all live with.

This version of the table was drawn up by Perry Walker. Our original version appears below and further table by Robbie Hoque at the end.

## LVT

Logovisual thinking (LVT) developed from structural communication (SC) and has become a generic methodology centred on *understanding* in contrast with *knowing about*. Whereas in SC the MMs (molecules of meaning) were made for the student, in standard LVT they are generated by the participants. The five stage process of LVT covers a wide range of applications and has been used in community, management and educational circles. The discrete 'molecules' of meaning used in LVT consist of text written in hexagonal shapes and are paralleled by the various cards used in DEMOCS. The LVT method has paid considerable attention to the *structuring* of meaning through making arrangements of MMs on a two-dimensional surface.

## Meaning Games

LVT is now evolving into a generic participative method of *meaning games*. In meaning games, the MMs – whether prepared for or generated by participants – are placed in a playing grid that defines a set of positions. In playing the game, participants take turns to make moves. The moves are: to select and place an MM; to move the position of an MM; to remove an MM, and to generate a new MM. Only one of these moves is allowed at a time. As the game evolves, the rules can be modified and the space of play can extend beyond the confines of the given playing grid according to agreements between the participants. The relative positions of the MMs that develop contain significant information that is built up in the discussion as the game proceeds. The arrangements 'totalise' in a shape or design that typically expresses an 'organic' view of the whole subject.

## Input and Output

Consideration has to be given to the issue of inputs and outputs. If there is to be a serious dialogue, participants need to be informed or to have done some work on acquiring relevant knowledge. If they are addressing issues that involve them, this is a given. If not, then they need provisions. The DEMOCS practice of having participants read out loud from the cards is a way of enabling them to 'own' their content. In LVT, ownership comes more naturally since they generate the MMs themselves, but there also needs to be a way whereby they can share ownership of MMs generated by other people.

The output question is a serious one. Much of what develops in the course of LVT is 'within' the people involved and may not be apparent to people who were not involved in producing the final 'design' of ideas. In a strict sense, only those who have been involved in a similar process can understand or 'read' the final mapping of MMs. This mapping represents a considerable advance over any mere listing of ideas and is also an advance over presenting an argument in a text. The deeper levels obtaining 'between' the MMs are manifested, though in a 'language' that requires experience to understand. In a word, as stated in the extract above (from *The DEMOCS Project Playing Games to Improve Democracy?* by Dr Donald Bruce, Society, Religion and Technology Project, Church of Scotland) there needs to be a *community* of informed discourse.

## Comparative Study

The NEF has already recognised the relevance of LVT to DEMOCS and the need to explore and articulate the 'family' of techniques available that support democratic process. In the June, 2006 issue of their newsletter they described the relevance of LVT, drawing on material in the article 'Making Knowledge Tangible', from which the following has been extracted.

### Finding the family for a new democracy

With the general election long since past, what family of tools do we have to recreate democracy in the UK? Here's Perry on the subject:

"As we've started to understand better the root principles of Democs, so we have started to find out what other tools are out there to renew democracy – in other words, who else is in the family. Here are some of the principles. Then I'll introduce our relations."

#### **The principles:**

##### **1. Information is in chunks**

Anthony Blake and Darrell Mann in an article called, 'Making knowledge Tangible', downloaded from <http://www.triz-journal.com/archives/2000/12/d/index.htm> on 8th June 2005, refer to these chunks as 'molecules of meaning' or MMs. Providing information in this way enables both the elements of an argument and the relationship between them to be made visual.

##### **2. People move the chunks around**

This may be on a table, as with Democs, on a wall or on a computer screen. Blake and Mann suggest that we have to "handle knowledge and move it about *ourselves*, if we are to own and understand it."

##### **3. People combine chunks to make clusters**

Information is transformed into knowledge when people see the patterns and connections between the chunks. Blake and Mann provide the analogy of music, where the 'molecules of meaning' are notes and the clusters or combinations are 'chords' or 'phrases'.

##### **4. The implicit becomes explicit**

Blake and Mann argue "As we assemble a combination that we feel is significant, we are drawing on knowledge that is *implicit*. We can feel these MMs belong together but we cannot yet say why. The implicit transforms into the *explicit* as we give a name and description to the 'cluster'."

##### **5. People can see what they mean**

Blake and Mann point out that "in conversation alone, what is said can be alive in the moment but lost in the flow". The physical chunks of meaning and their combinations described here are visible. 'See' in the title of this paragraph is ambiguous, referring both to understanding with the mind and seeing with the eyes. The ambiguity reflects the connection between the two meanings.

##### **6. This approach helps people absorb and remember information**

The making of meaning described above also contributes to making material easy to remember.

Below is our original version of the comparative table, which includes *structural communication* (SC), the educational method that was the precursor of LVT.

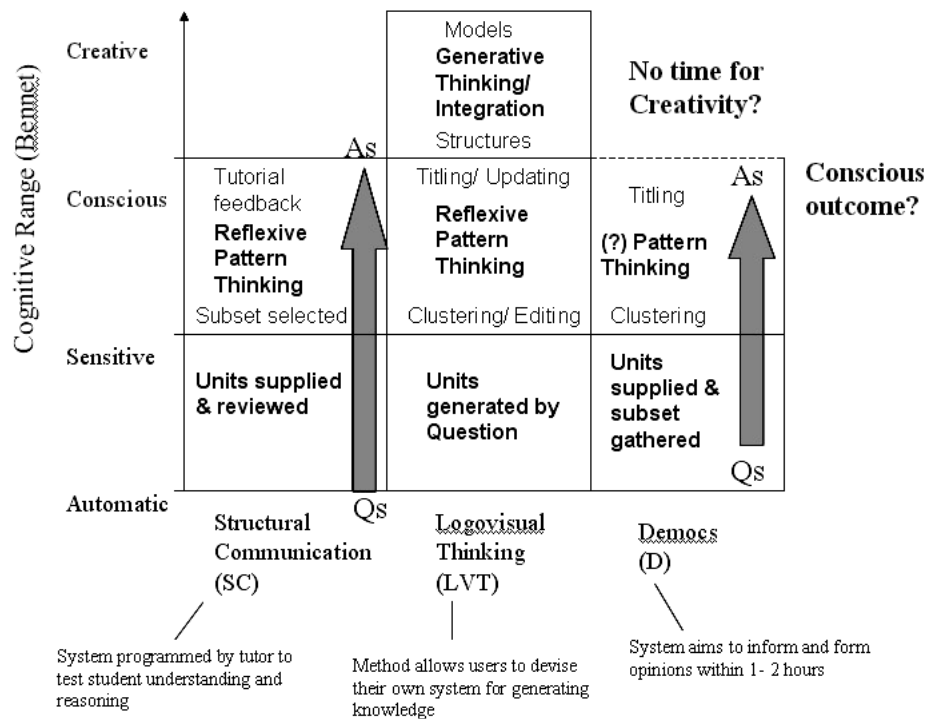
<b>LVT</b>	<b>DEMOCS</b>	<b>STRUCTURAL COMMUNICATION</b>
<p><b>FOCUSING</b> Participants agree scope and manner of process and dialogue on the formulation of the key question(s)</p>	<p><b>SCENARIO &amp; POLICY CARDS</b> Participants read out from Scenario cards and consider how they might vote on four Policies.</p>	<p><b>TOPIC</b> Scope and content of topic in the particular Study Unit is introduced.</p>
<p><b>GATHERING</b> Participants produce 'molecules of meaning' relevant to the question, the nature of which have been suggested by the question. These are placed on a display board in no apparent order.</p>	<p><b>FOCUSING ON THE FACTS</b> Players taking turns select and read from Fact cards, placing the cards on a display board.</p>	<p><b>PRESENTATION</b> Content given as text, etc. this content then summarised and focused into a numbered set of statements (c. 20) called a Response Array</p>
<p><b>ORGANISING</b> The MMs are grouped according to intrinsic shared meaning. Initially, the meaning of the cluster will be implicit and not explicit. Each cluster is then discussed and given a name and explanatory description.</p>	<p><b>DEALING WITH ISSUES</b> Players take Issue cards and in turn read from them and place on the display with the Fact cards; rearranging the cards to associate selected Fact cards with each Issue card. In addition, the scenario cards can be brought in. When a cluster takes shape around an Issue card it is given a Heading card (Name and cards that make it up)</p>	<p><b>QUESTIONS</b> A set of (usually) four questions are posed for each of which a sub-set of statements from the Response Array is selected by student.</p>
<p><b>INTEGRATING</b> The names of the clusters translate into new MMs. These new MMs are formed into what seems to be the most coherent structure, where participants look for conflicts, relationships, etc. and in particular for items that are missing or not really understood.</p>	<p><b>VOTING ON POLICIES</b> Participants vote on each of the four policies with four options: agree, accept, not-accept, abstain.</p>	<p><b>FEEDBACK</b> The author has produced model answers such that for each question statements from the RA are: essential, relevant, irrelevant, misleading. On this basis, student's responses can be analysed and given feedback.</p>
<p><b>REALISING</b> Decisions are taken on next steps, which can include communications, action plans, evaluation of process, etc. In the sphere of education, this stage would be writing an essay, making a performance, creating a poster and so on.</p>	<p><b>COMMENTS ON POLICIES</b> They can create a new policy. They can also write on implementation, etc.</p>	<p><b>OVERVIEW</b> The deeper underlying issues and principles can be discussed and formulated.</p>

## Levels of Mental Operation (Cognitive Range)

The table constructed by Robbie Hoque includes a psychological structure of four levels of mental operation, which derives from the ideas of John Bennett, the inventor of Structural Communication.

*Creative* – original, spontaneous

### Democs, Structural Communication, and LVT



*Conscious* – integrative, structural

*Sensitive* – reactive, linear

*Automatic* – programmed, repetitive

All four levels or 'energies' are needed for effective thinking. In LVT, the *conscious* level is emphasised and this has meant developing ways of structural integration that are *not* based on established models and which are open to *creativity*. In DEMOCS, the voting procedure substitutes for this integration. This is itself a reflection of the inherent problems of present democratic methods that usually reduce to numbers and quantity and lose qualitative differences and meanings.