

CONSTELLATIONS AND LVT

Constellations appears in our comparative grid as 'innovation in natural systems', associated with emergence and self-organisation. It is based on ideas of natural harmony and relates to the TRIZ concept of Ideality.

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

CONSTELLATIONS

The method of **Constellations** (cf. The Nowhere Foundation) derives from the work of Bert Hellinger on family systems.

What is the Order of Love?

It was in his systemic therapy work that Bert discovered that the family system, just like any other system, has its own natural order and when that order is disrupted, the effects are felt by subsequent generations as the system tries to right itself. There appear to be certain natural laws operating to maintain that order and permit the free flow of love between family members.

According to Bert Hellinger's systemic therapy, the solution to life in family occurs when each of its members takes his/her appropriate and actual place, takes upon his/her roles in life, taking care of himself/herself and avoiding intervening in other's destiny.

Most personal difficulties, as well as problems in relationship are results of confusions in families' systems.

That confusion happens when, without being aware of that and without wanting, we incorporate in our life the destiny of another person from our own family, despite the fact that such person lived in a distant past. That makes us repeat the family members' destiny who were excluded, forgotten or not recognised at their belonging place. We try to live that destiny for them or create misfortune to diminish our guilt <http://www.curezone.com/Hellinger/default.asp>

The discoveries about family systems have been extended to other systems, such as those in organizations and communities. The concept of a 'natural order' explains why, if it is broken or denied, people experience blockage and 'sicknesses'. Constellations works by enabling people to build up an experiential representation of the natural system. It begins with what they first say about what is involved in their work, which will be an incomplete and 'broken' version. The facilitator then dialogues to explore what is missing – both in terms of parts of the system and also in how the parts relate to each other. When the representation becomes more complete, the persons involved can feel an equivalent to the 'order of love' and understand how to fulfil it.

The representation is done through people and not abstractly in words. As the client describes the situation, he or she is asked to bring forth members of the participating group to literally 'stand for' elements in the system. Such elements are the key individuals, groups, organizations, roles, forces, etc. The client is left to choose and place the representatives. The facilitator then 'reads' what is displayed and enquires into what it means, speaking in dialogue with the client, the people in the roles and the audience. He or she looks at how the people stand in relation to each other, how they happen to direct their gaze and asks about how they *feel* in taking their position. With often quite subtle direction, the facilitator changes how the people in the representation are arranged. A critical point is reached when it is recognised that *something is missing*, that something has not been included that is being ignored or denied but nevertheless might be essential for understanding the whole system.

Once the missing element has been seen and acknowledged and someone is brought into the group of people to represent it, the work continues in shaping the relationships between the elements. The participants are asked to experience or feel the new element. By bringing more of the whole system and the relationships between its terms into the representation, there is a greater consciousness of the 'natural order of love' by which the whole can be healed.

Judith Hemmings writes:

The systemic approach

Many of us meet significant hurdles in our lives. Sometimes the situation is simply 'stuck'. It can feel irresolvable, despite our best efforts to change things. We try looking at the issue from different angles, consulting experts and trying out different alternatives. And yet there is no resolution.

Even with the best use of our analytical skills, intuition and creativity, it is not always possible to locate the core of the issue and solve the problem. It may require us to shift perspective...

You are undoubtedly aware of yourself as an individual who belongs to a range of groups or 'systems' - your family group, ethnic group, work group, etc. The relationship between you and each environment you belong to is unique. The way you experience and operate within the wider system holds a key to the challenges you meet.

The systemic approach looks at your specific issue as an element of a larger system - *one* part of the whole picture. By opening up the view of the issue to a wider context, you can literally **see before your very eyes** a visual **living map** of previously unseen and unimagined elements. The invisible dynamics and entanglements that are revealed offer deep insights, and enable you to explore possible ways forward leading to resolution.

Movements made in the Constellation not only address the particular issue, but actually *strengthen* you as an individual, and the wider system itself.

<http://www.movingconstellations.com/whatwedo.html>

Spelling out the method:

- Enquiry and dialogue about the situation and what agencies are involved.
- Selection of members of the audience to play the roles of these elements.
- Placing them together in a group just as it comes to the client to do so.
- Enquiry and dialogue into what appears in the posture, gaze, feeling and spatial relationships of the elements.
- Adjusting these to bring out felt connections.
- Opening to a sense of what may be missing through further enquiry and dialogue.
- Introducing corresponding new elements.
- Developing a sense of what is needed to adjust in the relationships.
- Enactment of these.
- Review and interpretation.

LVT and CONSTELLATIONS

The method of LVT (logovisual thinking) derives from work on structural communication dating back to the 60s. It involves five main stages, which can be described in the following way to bring out correspondences with Constellations:

- Focus – dialogue to arrive at the significant question to ask
- Gather – representing the situation in terms of a set of MMs (molecules of meaning) or written statements on movable objects.
- Organise – looking into the meaning of relationships between the MMs
- Integrate – building a representation of the whole system to include elements neglected or unperceived at the beginning
- Realise – dialogue on the meaning of the disclosure of the whole system

<http://www.logovisual.com/business/guide.asp>

It is easy to see that in Constellations the MMs are expressed in people taking on the roles. Also, that these sorts of MMs are whole complexes in their own right – an MM in Constellations might represent thousands of people employed by a big organization. This is a more natural approach in that it is *people* who are the most obvious manifestation of ‘molecules of meaning’ – people express meaning as *themselves*. It is also true that people are able to play roles and take on meanings in the most versatile way. When people use statements in LVT on the other hand, they have to *invest* them with meaning.

However, the method of LVT was developed to allow for *any* kind of embodiment of MMs and there is in abstract principle no essential difference between the two methods.

In gathering and displaying MMs, both Constellations and LVT appear to place them at random, but in the former how they ‘happen’ to be arranged provides significant information. This can also apply in LVT when (a) the number of MMs is relatively small (less than a dozen or so) and (b) people are allowed to place them where they ‘see fit’. If this is so, then the people are already engaged in Organising.

In the third LVT stage of Organize, MMs are usually just clustered to form small significant groupings that form subsets of the whole complex. It is then another matter to 'read' them and find out their meaning. In the simplest approach, the clusters are given names and descriptions and it is only when people are dealing with a relatively small number of MMs that they can look more deeply. In Constellations, attention is paid to the feeling of what lies between any two or three MMs *that includes bringing to awareness how the MMs themselves feel*. This empathetic action can be brought into LVT but it requires special guidance.

In the fourth stage of Integrate the basic process of LVT takes the various groupings previously identified and brings them together to make a representation of the whole. It is at this stage that the participants might become aware of critical 'missing MMs'. In Constellations, the facilitator has the main responsibility for carrying a sense of wholeness by which an awareness of things missing can arise. This is an intuitive affair. It depends on having had a wealth of experience that has become distilled into an intelligent perception of wholeness.

In Constellations, the stages of Organise and Integrate merge just as the stages of Gather and Organise do also. The representation is being gradually adjusted as the process goes on. In standard LVT, the steps are discrete and separated. As said before, this need not apply if the number of MMs used is relatively small.

Perhaps the most critical comparison and contrast is that between the MMs of LVT as statements written on movable hexagonal shapes and the MMs of Constellations as being embodied in real people who take on meaning roles. However, the *same concern with dealing with meaningful wholes is present*. It is only that in LVT the participants have to make the extra step of what we have called 'investing' the inert objects they use with much the same charge of existence (place, posture, etc.), feeling and relatedness as people naturally have. This can be done and it is the case that then 'manipulation' of the MMs as flat physical objects on a surface is actually also *at the same time an inner work on oneself*. It is quite possible for someone to interrogate an MM in LVT just as one might interrogate a person taking a role as an MM in Constellations.

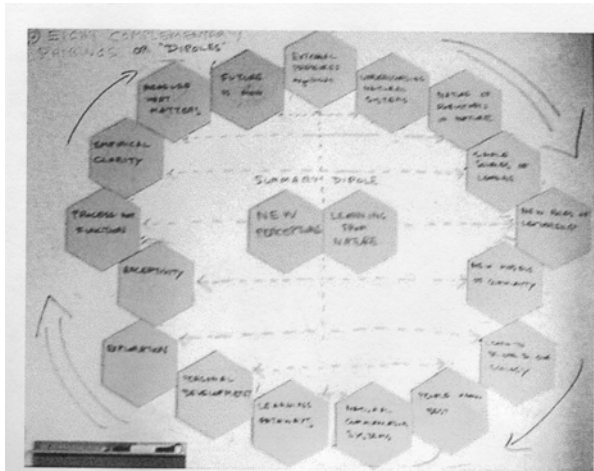
SUMMARY

LVT and Constellations exhibit similar features. Foremost among these is the use of 'molecules or meaning', elements of situations that can be complex in their own right, which are identified and displayed in a space shared by many people and made visible as physical entities. These are then arranged and the subsequent arrangements (and the operation of *arranging*) exhibit degrees of organization and release new meanings that can be called 'insight'. From this insight, the arrangement is developed to create a representation of the whole natural system. This step of integration may include identifying key elements missing from the original picture.

The differences between the two methods stem from the different nature of the MMs. In standard LVT written statements are used to signify MMs, which are obviously lacking in the obvious richness and feeling of a human enactment. In LVT, the participants have to invest the MMs with feeling and experience, and treat them as sentient and capable of entering into dialogue with them. This has been done in some applications of the method, when the number of MMs is of the same order as that found in Constellations (usually less than twelve). Because of the small number, each one can be dwelt upon and interiorised.

Recent developments in LVT have led us to articulate the stage we call Integrate in more detail than before. It is now explicitly linked to forming what is called a Ring

Composition, which makes structural features of the 'system' clear. In essence, this displays the elements distilled from the previous stages in a ring, rather reminiscent of a dialogue circle (dialogue is one of the eight methods with which we are comparing LVT). In a dialogue circle, people sit in a ring to allow for maximum visibility and equality. In a similar way, meaningful elements are displayed in a 'ring'. However, there are some special features.



The ring is treated as a story and as a cycle, so beginning and end meet. This gives a key point of reference. To left and right of this point the two halves of the circle are taken as complementary. So pairs of elements across the circle can have significant meaning. In more sophisticated versions, threes and fours can be seen to fit together in significant ways. These various relationships are similar to those explored amongst people in Constellations.

