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Organizational Constellations: Basics and Special Situations

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*From **Praxis der Organisationsaufstellungen** (2000). Carl-Auer-Systeme Verlag.*

This article looks at organizational constellations as an autonomous consulting method for initiating useful changes in organizations. The content of this article is limited exclusively to the practice of organizational constellations. For those, however, who have been working for some time with this approach, it is obvious that the realizations and insights gained through organizational constellations can be useful in longer term consulting projects with organizations and companies and can unfold good effects there (see also Grochwaik and Castella 2001.) In organizational constellation seminars I repeatedly apply forms and elements of constellations that were developed and increasingly refined by Insa Sparrer and Matthias Varga von Kibed as structural constellations. (For example, decision constellations, Tetra-lemma constellation, or problem-solving constellations. See Sparrer and Varga von Kibed 2000). Since both of them have extensive articles in this book, information on structural constellations will not be elaborated on in this discussion. An earlier foundational article (Weber and Gross 1998) already described essential principles and procedures for organizational constellations. In the last two years since that article was written (in addition to early encouraging applications of Bert Hellinger's insights from the "movements of the soul" to organizational constellations) different perspectives on the process of setting constellations have developed, and these perspectives have carried over into other areas of application (see also Ruppert, in publication).

The purpose of this article is, on the one hand, to convey basic insights about the practice of organizational constellations, and, on the other, to illustrate how these constellations stimulate changes in the organization's situation.

I. Two Approaches to the Situation in Organizations.

For me, the systemic constructivist and the systemic phenomenological approaches prove equally effective in consulting with organizations and in organizational constellation seminars, and prove to be especially effective in a mutually complementary and potentiating combination. (See also Madelung 1998 and 2000; Sparrer in publication, Hellinger 2000, p. 209 "The Ability".)

The systemic constructivist view provides us with a theoretical framework applicable to the



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principles of living systems. This framework tells us how to understand and manipulate mutually interconnected structures, and the techniques that were developed in systemic therapy and counseling have proven to be transferable and useful methods for initiating changes in organizations. Circular questioning (see Tomm 1994, Simon and Rech-Simon 1999) allows us within the flow of the conversation, to instigate the next step of stimulating changes in measured doses and in harmony with the verbal and nonverbal responses of the client.

The phenomenological opening of our perception, however, enhances our ability to be in the present moment, and our ability to perceive and be sensitive to our relationships. This new perception brings to light that which was previously not known or seen, and leads us, therefore, on different paths to good resolutions. Bert Hellinger has shown very clearly and forcefully in his 1999 presentation, "Insight through Renunciation," the differences between the scientific and the phenomenological quest for knowledge (Hellinger in publication, see also Mahr 1998 "the knowing field.") He writes, "the second movement unfolds when we pause within the movement of grasping and we direct our glance not so much on tangible specifics, but instead we direct our glance upon the whole, and the glance is therefore ready to absorb everything at once. If we consent to such movement, for example, in the face of a landscape or a task or a problem, we realize that our glance becomes both full and empty at the same time. We can only expose ourselves to the fullness if we first refrain from looking at the particular. In doing this, we pause in mid-leap and retreat a little until we attain that emptiness which can withstand the fullness and rich variety ... The phenomenological attitude requires we be poised for action, and yet not act. Through this tension we become highly able and ready to perceive. He who can withstand this tension knows after a while how the fullness within the horizon settles around a center, and he suddenly discovers a connection, an order, a truth or a step that leads further. This insight comes, as it were, from outside. It is received as a gift and is, as a rule, limited."

Hellinger takes the scientific and phenomenological quests for knowledge as two different yet complimentary approaches to reality. "This movement, first pausing, then withdrawing, I call phenomenological. It leads to different insights than focusing on the specific, and yet, they complement each other. Also with the "reaching out" scientific way of knowing we have to halt sometimes and direct our glance from the narrow to the wide, from the near to the far. The insight gained phenomenologically also requires checking the specific and near by."

What seems to me to be the only fundamental difference is that Bert Hellinger assumes there is access to the Being behind the visible, and that there are natural laws and orders



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which for him are given by nature itself, therefore found, not founded, and which, according to his insight, one is better off consenting to and following than resisting. He refuses the epistemology of constructivism and he attacks especially the main idea of radical constructivism, that we construct our reality and language together. In my opinion, he overlooks the fact that this approach to reality is in no way about arbitrary or random constructions, but about the question of whether the layers of meaning and the actions that result are viable and fitting and therefore are suitable for our lives. (See von Glasersfeld 1991.) The representatives of constructivism, however, declare that we cannot gain objective knowledge about the Being in and of itself and that the rules and patterns that form in the human sphere are to a large extent founded through consensus and are upheld communally. (See Maturana and Varela 1987). This does not mean, however, that for the survival and prospering of relationships and organizations there do not also exist more or less useful patterns and rules, just as there are, metaphorically speaking, better or worse places to stand in a constellation. Bert Hellinger himself sees the Orders that he describes as a flow. For him these are not carved in stone as eternal and generally valid certainties, but rather living principles that unfold and that at the same time set limits and provide space. (See Hellinger 1998, p. 45 about Order and Plenty, Madelung 1998, and, still in press, S. Essen, in press, Mücke 2000.)

II. Space and Language as Dimensions and Ways to Create Differences.

Even though we define ourselves through language, with organizational constellations the spatial representation and use of spatial images and their changes are more in the foreground than language. This has the great advantage in that in the shortest time, it is possible for inner images of a system to emerge that everyone experiences simultaneously. The changes that arise within the constellation are something everyone present can experience, from an internal or external perspective and through their own visceral response to the situation. The evidence for the solution images that develop is significantly enhanced by the collectively created process of those inside the constellation and of those experiencing the constellation from outside. A commonly created subjective reality is more real than one that is not shared. These spatial images are also easier to recall later and remember longer.

The implementation of especially important solutions in organizational constellations is deepened and reinforced with short and powerful sentences which express distinctly changed attitudes.

"Now I acknowledge you as..."



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"I thank you for... ",

"I am sorry that ... ",

"You were here before me..."

(See below, Hellinger 1995, "*Sätze der Kraft*"). In the constellation work, the process of creating distinctions using spatial images and using language compliment each other and activate all senses.

III. Basic Distinctions Between Various Kinds of Difficulties in Organizations.

Those consultants confronted with difficulties in organizations or enterprises should ask themselves the following questions:

1. To what degree is the situation being reported also shaped by the personal patterns of the workers, that is, could the issues originate in their personal life experiences or in the dynamics of their families of origin? How are those patterns possibly reproduced in the organization, or how do they mirror themselves in the situations described?
2. To what degree are the organizational problems being described connected with relationship conflicts or dysfunctional communication patterns amongst the co-workers or departments (via rivalries, power struggles, privileged relationships to important persons, or conflicts about status or privileges; by reciprocal put-downs, forming of coalitions, triangulations or dynamics of revenge because of imagined or real discriminations or lack of acknowledgement; by context mix-ups between private and professional areas)?
3. Are leadership and guidance tasks and functions being executed adequately?
4. Are the organizational structures constructed to function well or are apparent relationship difficulties possibly a result of dysfunctional structures?
5. Have there been changes in the environment (for instance, changes in the market) which the organization hasn't adjusted to sufficiently yet, or are those changes about to happen?



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Often more than one of these factors contribute to the same situation and possibly amplify each other. The consultant has to consider what changes in which area could inspire the furthest reaching solutions. Organizational constellations can give important information in response to all of these questions and often provide fundamental insights into the situation at hand.

Later some of these areas will be looked at separately.

IV. Situations in Which Organizational Constellations Are Carried Out.

1. The Group Setting in Constellation Seminars.

In setting organizational constellations with a group, it is most effective to have a group of people who do not know each other in advance come together to work, and then return to their original organizations or workplaces. In this case, it is important that the facilitator have sufficient experience in dealing with groups and with the constellation work. In this setting, all participants are of equal value, can freely reveal themselves and are sufficiently uninfluenced by limiting context factors of their own work system. Those who set the constellations can then freely and honestly "expose" their inner images, come to terms with the solution images, and be affected by these images in the way that is good and right for them. And the representatives, on the other hand, can honestly share what they experience in their position in the constellation. In a newly assembled group it is also easier to establish a climate of reciprocal appreciation, respect and mutual trust, than in a work group that has been together for a longer time. A work group may already have hardened projections and established relationships patterns, or sub-groups who have established their territory and watch each other suspiciously. Organizational constellations are, of course, also quite useful as an element in different continuing education or theme centered groups (such as, in supervision groups, seminars on leadership themes, etc.) If we limited constellation work to such group settings, however, we would narrow down its useable potential unnecessarily, because, except in continuing education, where does one have regular groups with 15 to 20 people available? Organizational constellations seminars can also have a disadvantage: one who registers for such seminars expects that he can do a constellation. One needs to check, however, whether a constellation is the appropriate procedure for an issue or concern. As Watzlawick says, if you only have a hammer, you only look for nails.

2. Study Groups and Inter-vision Groups



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Since there are still very few trainers to teach continuing education courses in organizational constellations, study and inter-vision groups are a creative alternative to formal courses.

About twenty groups already exist in German speaking areas. *[Ed. note: Twenty groups existed at the time this article was written in 2000.]* Some have already been around for several years. (See address of the O.C. Network in the appendix). *[Ed. note. Translation for this list is not provided in this article. Contact Carl-Auer Publishing for this information.]* So far the groups mostly consist of business and organizational consultants or of people who are training to become facilitators. Occasionally, executives and people working in psycho-social contexts also attend these groups. The study groups primarily serve as an information exchange network about organizational constellation methods and theoretical principles, and as a means to experience and learn how to set up organizational issues under mutual guidance. These groups generally adopt clear rules in order to prevent competition between group members and confusion of responsibilities. This allows the constellation process to develop in an efficient and structured way without the paralysis that comes from too many interruptions or lengthy discussions and reviews. For example, a person who wants to set a constellation asks a participant from the group to facilitate his or her constellation. The facilitator may ask someone else in the group to act as a resource for him while he facilitates. These groups also serve as a source of self-supervision, which means a participant may use the group to set up questions or look at issues from organizational constellations that he or she previously facilitated. More experienced study groups invite executives and others with organizational conflicts or problems to use the group to as a place to examine their issues. Executives from consulting businesses are also brought into the group to set their own issues. Those study groups have another great advantage: because participants gain on-going experience as representatives, their perception of the sensations and emotions connected with a specific location in a constellation become faster and more precise.

3. Constellations in a One-on-One Consultation Session.

In the one-on-one session, the client sets up his issue using puppets, things, pieces of felt or carpet, pillows, shoes, cards, etc. (in the place of human representatives) on a table or on the floor. This procedure has been extensively described elsewhere in reference to family constellations, and it is easily transferable to the organizational work. (Schneider 1998, Franke 1998, Lenk 1998, Asslander 2000, Heidi Baitinger in this volume.) These methods have become more and more refined over time. For example, Ursula Franke, Sieglinde Schneider and others allow the client to imagine that the persons who are represented by



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shoes, or pillows, etc. are truly present. The client may then say the solution sentences below in order to resolve the issues they have with that person or persons. It is especially important in one-on-one constellation sessions that there is a room available where one can work undisturbed. Interruptions by telephone calls, co-workers entering the room, etc. pull the person setting the constellation abruptly out of their imagined world.

4. Constellations within Organizations.

Continuing education teachers, personnel development trainers and consultants are often disappointed to learn that this kind of organizational constellation has limited applicability within corporations and organizations and that the implementation in such a context requires a lot of experience. In such situations especially, they often hope to gather inspirations and widen their repertoire. An explosive crisis situation is not a suitable time for employees to set up their system by themselves. A conflict situation is an especially delicate moment for the person setting the constellation to expose his or her inner picture of the organization within the context of their co-workers. The person is influenced by feelings of dependency, hierarchical structures and differences in rank, fear of negative consequences, and lack of trust and doubts as to whether one can count on the benevolence of his or her co-workers. The perceptions of the representatives are obscured by current relationships, ideas and judgments, and everyone is wary of bringing up taboo topics or exposing secrets. In these situations, the art of concealing the truth and the fear of getting serious flak from co-workers or triggering further arguments by showing precisely what is happening in the system causes team members to set up harmonious, but less than truthful, pictures of the system, and representatives to make non-committal or vague statements. A mild example of this can be found in an article by Friedrich Asslander. (Asslander 2000, p. 29, diagram 1.) In a constellation set within a company by one of the directors, the managers formed a symmetrical circle around the directors, who stood together in a cozy group in the middle. Obviously, the person setting the constellation avoided showing any differences in the relationships of the representatives. The picture rather suggests that the director setting the constellation deliberately displayed his projections rather than his true perceptions: all employees look expectantly towards the directors. In this case it was possible for the facilitator to work creatively with this picture, however, in teams with a lot of conflict working with such a shallow representation is more precarious. It is easier within a company to set up parts, elements or relationships of one area to another, such as the market, the customer, another department, a problem, resources, goals etc. In this way individuals cannot be directly questioned or exposed. If one does set constellations in this way, however, it is very important to pay attention to the fact that in such constellations parts often turn into the people involved and one has to be



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attentive towards the statements of the representatives. A part who's representative feels pushed aside can represent someone who has been excluded from the system.

An example:

In her constellation a colleague chose for one of her potential visions for the future a representative for "science." She selected for this role a middle-aged man and positioned him directly behind her representative. The way they stood it looked more like an excerpt from a family constellation. "Science" would have been most likely her father or an ancestor. Her representative immediately felt threatened by "science" and felt oppressed and used. It turned out that the colleague had a private relationship to the professor who was her PhD advisor, and then separated from him because she felt used. He then tried to undermine her future scientific career. It was interesting that the representative for "science" reported afterwards as soon as he was selected for the role, he knew he represented a man and not "science." In a certain way he represented both.

Insa Sparrer and Matthais Varga von Kibéd have especially developed the art of working covertly in such situations. (See also Sparrer and Varga von Kibéd 2000, in this edition.)

5. For Which Situations Are Organizational Constellations Suitable?

It is advisable to use organizational constellations sparingly. Constellations these days are sometimes used too often and like a parlor game according to the motto: "let's see what comes of it when we set it up!" Experience shows that a constellation makes a stronger statement if the person setting the constellation has a burning, important issue and is willing to put something valuable at stake to risk finding a solution. If a facilitator allows someone in an un-centered state to set a muddled or questionable constellation or set a constellation out of idle curiosity, he weakens himself, the person setting the constellation and the whole group. The attention of the group is diffused and the expectations and tension turns into general unrest and the group's concentration is gone, at least for a while. The same thing happens when one doesn't stop a constellation soon enough, or when someone sets up a previously thought out or falsely harmonious picture and the facilitator doesn't confront him soon enough with questions. Bert Hellinger said in an interview, "I would use organizational constellations only where it is necessary and to solve an immediate problem." (Bert Hellinger in this edition, p. 318)

Since the frame of this book doesn't allow for a detailed description of the many situations



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and questions that are suitable for organizational constellations, I have listed in the appendix some of the possible areas of use (see Appendix I).

VI. The Process of Setting Constellations in Organizations - Development of Hypotheses and the Generation of Differences.

This chapter has two intentions. It intends to describe the unfolding of organizational constellations and especially to draw attention towards culmination points during the organizational constellation process. The decisions made by the facilitator at these choice or branching out points have a formative influence on maintaining positive tension, on keeping the focus on essential core issues, on the potency of the effect of a constellation and on its further course. The second intent of this chapter is to follow the phases of the unfolding constellation, and simultaneously, to notice when and how a constellation inspires differences to the existing structure the client presents.

1. The beginning of an organizational constellation seminar.

It is more effective and leaves a deeper impression to experience organizational constellations directly than reporting about them. That is why it is good to begin setting constellations as soon as possible in a constellation seminar. In groups whose members had very little group experience and for whom the constellation work is very foreign, I begin a seminar with 20 to 30 minutes perception exercises in small groups. For instance, I invite them to form groups of four. In these, three participants, one after the other, focus on the fourth, and allow their impressions of him to work on them, then they share in short sentences with him or her what they perceive. The fourth person doesn't take any position with regard to that which the others share; he or she simply allows it in. At the end of the round, when the four have shared, they are often astonished about how accurate their perceptions were and to what degree the perceived is in alignment with the actual.

Otherwise, in such groups, I begin most often with a round, in which each participant says who she is, where she works, what her issues are for the seminar, and how a good result for the seminar would look to her. By sprinkling in concrete and challenging questions, the seminar leader can, already in this round, create an atmosphere of suspenseful attention and convey certain basic attitudes (such as, orientation towards solution, appreciation, respect, valuing what is.) Such questions can be for instance: "How would you or others notice that the solution has happened?" "What could be the benefit for you in your situation or your problems?" "Assuming tonight a fairy came to you and brought the solution to you, how would you (would others) notice this tomorrow morning, and what



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would you do differently?" "May I ask you something about your family of origin?" "Where do you stand in the line of siblings?" "When in your life did you begin to take so much responsibility for others or for trying to please others."

Often before the first break, the first constellation is set. Usually I have only briefly instructed the one who set the constellation (about being collected when setting the *inner* image, without talking, each place is valid, no further instructions to the representatives and so on). And I have explained the tasks of the representatives (again standing in a collected way, condensed sharing of that which is perceived on the place, no "I" centered or pleasing sentences, getting out of the role of the representative at the end.)

2. How much information does one need in order to set a constellation?

There are different ideas about the amount of information the facilitator should get before the setting the constellation. While for instance Guni-Leila Baxa and Christine Essen (Essen and Baxa 1998, Baxa and Essen 2000), support a detailed information-gathering phase (i.e., making the context of the constellation clear, after the model of the *Neuen Heidelberger Schule*, see Simon and Weber, 1987), in order to have sufficient information about the work or constellation and its environment, today, I limit the information gathering phase before the constellation to the minimum. I neither allow long descriptions of the problem nor detailed descriptions of the professional situation, because I do not want the perceptions of the representatives to be too strongly influenced by such accounts. The representatives should, as much as possible, stand in their places untroubled by the ideas and judgments of the one who sets the constellation. I ask for the issue, how the person who sets the constellation imagines the solution will be in a concrete way, and I ask a few questions about the composition of the system to be set. If I need additional information (for instance about special events in the past) I ask for those during the constellation.

Here we come to the *first of three central points*, at least for me, of a constellation.

3. Choosing the kind of constellation and the system to be set.

The facilitator needs to make the decision at this point in time, which kind of constellation he wants to use (a decision constellation, a problem constellation, an organizational or family constellation, etc.) and who is to be set. *The issue and the desired solution determine the system to be set as well as the kind of constellation to use*, and the decision is made in agreement with the person who sets the constellation. The facilitator makes a suggestion and asks



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whether the person who sets the constellation agrees with it, or he asks him which system he would like to set and suggests, if he deems it appropriate, modifications.

The art of the appropriate, well-focused and condensed explanation is important here, which means, to find a good balance between too simple a description and descriptions that are too complex and long-winded. Who must I have represented to recreate the issue and the solution? Conversely, who can I leave out without repercussion or consequences? How many levels of hierarchy should be included, and which environmental factors that strongly influence the situation should be represented for the core system? And so on. Which group of people can I possibly allow one person to represent? A proven guideline is to initially limit the constellation to not more than five to seven representatives, including the representative for the person who sets the constellation.

4. Setting a constellation.

The choice of representatives and setting the constellation itself should happen in a collected and swift way. If this process drags on, it is mostly an indication that the person who sets the constellation isn't sufficiently collected and in contact with themselves. Here supportive challenges can be helpful. ("It is not important whom one chooses for a role. "They all don't fit perfectly. " "It is good not to think too much and simply be guided by the inner image, and according to your feelings, set the constellation swiftly and collectedly.") If that doesn't change the behavior of the person who sets the constellation, and the energy level appears to continue to be lukewarm, it is always a good time to consider whether interrupting the constellation (which usually has a good effect on the group's concentration) should be the next appropriate step. For this one needs sensitivity and courage. Interrupting a constellation is also appropriate when the person setting the constellation puts the representatives up quickly and mechanically in pre-determined spots without inner guidance. It is not accidental who gets chosen as a representative. Experiences show, however, that several persons put onto the same place one after the other, perceive similar things on that place. The more clearly and collectedly the representatives are placed, the stronger they will resonate with the other representatives and the system as a whole.

5. The process of forming a hypothesis up to this point.

Similar to systemic consulting conversations, a constellation can be understood as a simultaneous process of on-going information gathering, and of information creation for all involved (for the person setting the constellation, the facilitator, the representatives, the



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observers, and under certain conditions, those members of the system who are not present).

A. The first impression and the initial round.

First, we sometimes get an initial idea of possible meaningful connections, reciprocal effects and relationship patterns simply by the way someone registers for the seminar (for instance, how urgent a person is to register or how much a person reassures themselves about registering or how ambivalent someone is about registering). Then we get new information when we see the participants in the seminar and let their appearance and expression make an impression on us.

- How emotionally nurtured do they appear, do they radiate fullness or scarcity?
- Do they show themselves younger or older than they are?
- Do they appear more like a father's or a mother's son or mother's or father's daughter (see for this, Weber 1993, p.106), pulling responsibility towards themselves or giving it to others, willing to communicate or keeping a distance?
- What do you feel invited to do based on their behavior? ... Already with the first impression and the observations during the initial round we can get important indications about their fundamental assumptions ("worldviews") and habitual behavior patterns.

B. How do clients describe their problems and their issues?

When the participants introduce themselves and describe their issues, the facilitator's hypotheses become more specific and concrete and thus also the possibilities to intervene.

- Do they tell a problem or solution oriented story?
- Do they have a victim role in it or do they own part of the responsibility in creating the situation?
- What key words or sentences are mentioned?
- What results are feared or anticipated?



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- What role in the "story" is assigned to the facilitator?
- To what degree is the one who tells the story capable of taking an external perspective to the story he or she presents? (See narrative approach, White and Epstein, 1990, Grossmann, 2000, Schneider & Gross, 2000.)

The facilitator's response to these patterns or behaviors (for instance, with questions) can already in this early phase instigate useful changes.

C. Information that comes to light from putting up a constellation and the resulting image.

The next phase in the forming of the hypothesis happens through putting up the constellation. On the one hand it is informative how the constellation is put up. Which representative is chosen first, which is placed first, which representative is placed last? How is it set? More important, however, is the picture of the constellation itself. The more constellations a facilitator has experienced and led, the more he or she has learned to open up to the phenomenological access to realities and to surrender to the "knowing field", the clearer, more specific and faster the basic patterns and special aspects of the constellation emerge for the picture of the constellation. The facilitator gets a feeling for how explosive the situation is in the system, and what tendencies individuals and the system as a whole demonstrate.

- Who looks to the outside?
- Are the members of the system more related to each other, i.e., cohesive, or are the members drifting apart?
- Where is the dynamic of the system focused, and to what degree and in what way is the person setting the constellation involved or affected?

D. The meaning of the perceptions of the representatives in their places and the differences made by their remarks.

On the one hand, the facilitator's highly attentive phenomenological comprehension of the constellation as a whole, and, on the other hand, the individual representative's remarks as they stand in their places, are the most important sources of information. These sources often flow together as if to create something new. The representatives' remarks and the facilitator's phenomenological view of the constellation often bring surprisingly plausible



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and new insights to the surface for all participating. Those who are not set up in the constellation are often completely off the mark with their assumptions about what the representatives experience in their places. Said differently: the representatives get access to information about the system (often events in the system's history) from their places in a way that we can't explain, since often these events or information weren't knowable from an outside perspective. By sharing their feelings and perceptions, all present now get additional, focused information previously inaccessible to them. This new access to reality and this understanding of the fundamental processes of systems fundamentally enlarges and adds a new dimension to the repertoire of systemic consulting to companies and organizations. Such processes also happen continuously in everyday life, but aren't perceived or noticed there or aren't given any meaning. Here these processes appear, are allowed to unfold, and are given a particular meaning. The "choreography" aims towards this point as the first "act" of the constellation.

6. Questioning the Representatives.

Before one questions the representatives, it is best to give them a little bit of time to get into the role and into the feelings in that position and so that they can feel systemic reciprocal effects. ("I give you a little bit of time to feel and perceive what you feel in your roles and your function on the place assigned to you.") The following order of questioning has proven to be effective:

One turns first to those who show particular reactions in their places, in order to bring them to a more secure place (often moving them a little outside the system if the position is too big a burden), or one starts with those representatives whose positions seem to have accumulated conflict. Other than that the orientation is such that you start with the person who has the hierarchically highest position in the system, and then continue to question people further down the hierarchy. After the first movements of representatives in the constellation, it is not necessary to question all of the representatives about their reactions (changed or not), but rather one should focus on repositioning key players in response to the fundamental dynamics which become apparent.

7. The second pivotal moment in a constellation.

The moment when the representatives have shared, in a brief and focused way, what they feel in their positions marks the second pivotal point in the constellation. This is often a moment of focus and bundled energy. The next place you direct your attention and the next steps you take as a facilitator often decide whether this level of energy and suspense



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can be maintained.

What is the next powerful movement?

It is crucial to pause at this point and to wait courageously until the next steps become apparent. A good facilitator is also a good director who is capable of showing with brief direction what is essential, who can heighten the tension anytime, or take it away with humor for instance, and who at the same time is striving to keep the highest level of attention and get the greatest possible effect. The more experience a facilitator has, the more he will chose to place fewer representatives and question them less and the steps he takes in the constellation will be more direct and powerful.

8. Transitions to the Solution Constellation

In this phase, you can tell if there is a difference in the reaction of the representatives when they take a gesture or phrase you offer, when you move them to a new position or when they themselves move to a new position. There is no one right step or difference in the response of the representative that should arise when you question them after making an intervention. In the course of each constellation various different forms of the situation are elicited, and one cannot predict which of those fall on fertile ground and lead to lasting change, and which do not. Even when there are repetitive patterns and similarities no system is the same as another. A facilitator can only acquire knowledge of the procedures and steps most likely to be effective after he or she has facilitated an increasing number of constellations, and even then he or she might be groping in the dark and approaching the solution in a tangential direction. Every facilitator in the long run develops a personal, specific, idiomatic style of proceeding in creating differences and searching for solutions.

Here we can describe only a few basic patterns and possibilities in the repositioning phase of the work, up to the solution constellation. The basic orientation, in light of the issue presented and the structure of the organization of the system as a whole, is to discover which steps have the most potency to move something in the client's system. In the very first place, a constellation is in the service of the client who sets it. The facilitator also feels in the service of this system as a whole, and considers at the same time the reciprocal effects and consequences of changes for all involved.

A. Expressing or enhancing existing tendencies.

If it becomes apparent in a constellation that a relevant member of the system standing to



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the outside is pulled away, we often lead him away from the system and then notice his reaction and the reaction of the remaining people. These reactions determine the next step. Does he or she want to turn around? The person may still have ties to the system, or fear of the new may be too big. The separation may have happened too early and the person wasn't prepared or he or she still has business to finish with something or someone in the system before leaving. If the person feels much better outside of the system, and everyone else also feels unburdened and able to work again, that may already be the solution.

An example:

An employee of the social services department of a big car company set up a constellation of his department. One after the other several coworkers had left. His issue was that he was no longer sure of his place in his department. Those who were set: the manager of the department and four co-workers (three men and one woman.)

The relevant excerpt here: The coworkers stood in a quasi semi-circle in such a way that they related to each other. The manager stood to the right, but with his back to the team and with his gaze directed into the distance. He had the tendency to turn around. The facilitator, however, had the impression that the manager wanted to do this only out of curiosity and not out of a real desire to turn. The facilitator, therefore, led him in the direction in which he was initially oriented, out of the system. There he felt visibly better and the four coworkers also felt better. Their "lead feet" became light and they felt like they could move again and be active. Unusual fluctuations in staff in a department often indicate that employees have been unjustly treated or unjustly fired. Here, there had been several unjustified firings at once. When a representative is set for the unjustly fired employees, it becomes easier for almost everyone, and when this injustice is acknowledged to the representative of the fired employees some weight drops from the coworkers who remained. The pressure in the area of their stomach disappears. Also, the person representing the assistant manager did not manage to turn towards the unjustly fired women employees and his representative mentioned he might have to leave the company, too. When the assistant manager was placed outside the system, everyone else inside felt even better.

In the follow up discussion, one of the participating observers asked an important question. He was occupied with a degree of influence of the facilitator on the course of the constellation. The facilitator did prevent the representative of the manager from turning around. The observer asked himself whether the whole constellation would have taken a



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different course if the facilitator had allowed the manager to turn around. The facilitator took this question up and let all representatives go back to their original positions, had them feel their roles again and then asked the representative of the manager to follow his tendency to turn around. He turned towards the employees and the arrangement seemed from the outside substantially more ordered and functional. But one could read in the faces of the representatives of the coworkers an increasing discomfort. Now the facilitator asked all representatives to follow their inner tendencies. The result was that the manager stayed in his position, and all coworkers spread out in different directions.

This proved impressively that it would be better if the manager left and that if he stayed it would lead to further fluctuations in the staff. The two different approaches did inspire different arrangements, but the result was similar: it became apparent that a fruitful working relationship between the manager and his employees was no longer possible.

B. The (re)inclusion of missing or excluded members of a system.

In this constellation, another solution-creating step was demonstrated: the inclusion of those that are unjustly excluded. Like families, work systems seem to have a conscience, too, a conscience that looks out for those who are forgotten too early (for example, co-founders who are no longer mentioned), those who have made an important contribution to building or maintaining an organization and haven't been honored, those who were treated unjustly or fired without cause and those who are put at a severe disadvantage. I have rarely seen (except for family owned businesses) employees so identified with a previous employee who was unjustly fired or harmed in some way that they actually repeat the destiny of the previous employee. Never the less, one sees again and again that such unjust exclusions from a system create unease in an organization. The bonds of loyalty are weaker, diffuse anger towards the "responsible" person persists. The employees feel insecure. Often there are more sick leaves and staff fluctuations. The successors in the positions of those who were excluded often feel especially uneasy and burdened there. It is often sufficient to place the excluded ones in the constellation, acknowledge the injustice towards them and honor their contribution. Günter Schricker sent me an article a while ago from the *Süddeutschen Zeitung* that said that mass firings in major corporations often do not result in the desired and previously calculated economic advantages, and that employees who stayed did not feel more grateful or motivated afterwards, but rather were insecure, less ready for action and thus were covertly loyal to the fired employees. Also exploitation of workforces can lead to situations where the successors or later generations of those who profited from the injustice later atone or gamble away the company or "ill-gotten gains." (See quotation: Slaves in America, "Foreign Workers in the Nazi Era" or those used for the building of the railroads



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or freeways, of whom many died.) Bert Hellinger reported about a constellation in the United States, in which such a dynamic became apparent. I remember a constellation with a similar story: the grandfather of a client had built a waste management company and might have become prosperous by illegally trafficking the garbage. His grandson had to sell the company way below market value, and finally wound up working in the security office in a waste management plant of this company. After the constellation he chose a completely different profession.

C. Carrying out/enacting the missing or needed inner movements which lead to solution.

As part of the movement towards solutions for the system, especially for the person setting the constellation, it is sometimes important to enact certain new and unfamiliar inner movements and release old habitual ideas and behaviors. To facilitate such movements, one often allows the representatives, and especially the client when he or she stands in the constellation at the end, to say sentences (see Hellinger 1995) to certain people in the constellation. These sentences initiate or accomplish the new movements and allow the client and representatives to experience the freeing effects for themselves. Such accomplishments can be:

- acknowledging what is instead of holding on to something. (For instance, "I now agree to all of this as it has occurred and look to the future.")
- expressing honor and recognition instead of turning away and degrading the person. (For instance, "I recognize this as your contribution and honor you as a co-founder of the company/former team member...")
- expressing appreciation and asking for support instead of demanding or refusing support or acknowledging what one has received. ("I thank you (the company) for what I have learned from you and honor it, and please look friendly when I soon create a company of my own." Or to the boss, "in order to be able to do my work here well, I need your support and I ask you for it.")
- acknowledging one's own guilt and unfairness instead of denying it and shifting the blame. (For example, "I am sorry now that I caused you harm, and I am ready to offer appropriate compensation in measure with the harm I caused.")
- ceasing interference in the affairs of others and giving back what doesn't belong to you, instead of identifying with and taking on other's difficulties. (For example, "I



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cannot carry the burden/responsibility for you. It belongs to you and I give it back to you." Or, "I leave your destiny with you and honor it. Please look friendly on me when I take my own destiny fully and am successful."

- standing up straight with dignity instead of slinking away in shame and humiliation. (For instance, "You do not deserve me, my dignity remains intact and I stand tall.")
- saying goodbye instead of disappearing without a word. (For example, "An important phase of my life is ending. I enjoyed working here and thank you all for our time together, and I will remember you fondly. And now I go.")
- setting strong boundaries, instead of enduring. (For instance, "I will never forget this and you have to carry the consequences.")
- finding one's proper place instead of inappropriately assuming a wrong place. If a person has presumptuously taken a position in a work system or has behaved presumptuously for a period of time, bowing down in front of the person who's position was either taken or who was devalued and treated contemptuously is sometimes an important and necessary step towards accomplishing a solution. (For example, the client makes a shallow bow, and says, "You were here before me, my place is third and I take my proper place now. I honor you as the one who was here before me and has previous rights.")

One could describe many more situations and sentences depending on the distinctions one makes.

D. Taking the Opposite Position.

Occasionally it becomes apparent that the person setting the constellation cannot (yet) carry out a needed step towards the solution. For example, someone is unable to acknowledge his or her guilt, cannot bow down appropriately, or thank, ask, take or let go as is appropriate. It is sometimes useful, then, to go to the opposite extreme, to emphasize what is stuck, to take things to their logical conclusion, even if it is absurd, in order to increase the tension of the situation and help the client face possible consequences. Such sentences could be, for instance:

"I'd rather renounce ... instead of ..."



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"I'd rather drown than leave the ship."

"Before I take something from you or ask for support, I'd rather become ill."

"You won't get rid of me. I'll harass you with lawsuits even if it costs me my fortune."

E. Creating Order."

Constellations often show directly that something is out of order in a work system. The leaders cannot lead adequately from their positions, the co-workers are not relating to each other, or have lost sight of the task, goal or client; accomplished, older co-workers are marginalized and younger ones claim places that they haven't earned, etc. The principles listed below that guide us in repositioning people as we work towards a solution constellation in organizations are based mostly on the insights of Bert Hellinger (1994). These principles have been broadened and modified specifically for work systems. All principles listed below are guidelines and when in doubt, the feedback of the representatives must be taken into account, also. Here I'm of a slightly different opinion than Bert Hellinger, who always places less importance on the statements of the representatives.

The Right to Belong:

All co-workers have the same right to belong assuming the balance of give and take between employer and employee is appropriate and the employee who fills that position completes the task sufficiently. As opposed to families, the right to belong in organizations has conditions attached and is limited by time. (See also Vargas von Kibéd in this edition.) The survival of the organization in an emergency takes precedence over the rights of the individual to belong.

Leadership has priority:

The group or profession that carries the most responsibility and is most essential for the survival and continuation of an organization has priority within the system.

When positions are equal, the general rules are:

Those who were there first have precedence, and within that sub-group, the older ones have precedence.

Achievement and innovation have to be acknowledged:



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Leaders must acknowledge special accomplishments and effort employees give on behalf of the organization, especially when the employees have equal rank with other coworkers. Employees with special competencies or creativity must also be acknowledged. The acknowledgement in an organizational constellation does not happen by the assignment of a particular place, but through a verbal acknowledgement, and in reality also through special rewards (time off for continuing education or other bonuses).

The Acknowledgement of Impermanence:

Organizations have the tendency to maintain themselves (preserve themselves). Does an organization lose its purpose? The possibility of dissolving the organization has to be considered.

In the second phase of the constellation, the facilitator re-positions the representatives (possibly after hearing their feedback), and offers them good and appropriate places according to these principles. In the solution constellation, the person who has priority or was there first stands to the right of the other persons.

F. The constellation of the customers, the task or the goals...

Organizations and companies are defined by their purpose. Especially when there are distinct relationship conflicts that exist over a longer period of time, the goals, tasks and customers often are lost from view. After questioning the representatives in organizational constellations, it is often useful to set the task (or someone for the customers or goals.) This immediately focuses the employees on the task for which they get paid.

G. Trying out alternatives.

Organizational constellations are especially well suited for possible alternative solutions, one right after the other. For the person setting the constellation, it is like a dress-rehearsal without immediate consequences. Such questions can be: staying or leaving? Change positions within the company or look for something new outside? Take an offered promotion or not? Join an existing team or not? Hire a particular person or not? Who to choose of the three applicants to succeed the manager of a family company? And so forth.

H. Persons who are supportive and strengthening effect.

In work systems, the leaders often lack support from behind. They waver or shake in their



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places. These leaders are often lacking support from higher-ranking superiors or from the family of origin. One could place, for instance, a parent behind the client. (With male employees I mostly set representatives for the father, with female employees, the mother.) This has the additional effect that gender identity is strengthened.

I. Including the dynamics of the family and including elements from family constellations.

We will report about this in detail later.

J. Allowing Movements of the Soul.

In the last few years, Bert Hellinger has often proceeded without questioning the representatives once they have been placed, rather he has asked them to follow their inner movements without speaking. He does not intervene as long as there is an intense interaction occurring, and as long as there is an autonomous process unfolding that makes sense. If these movements become stagnant, he sometimes gives further impetus to the constellation. The process can last longer than half an hour or just a few minutes. Often deep and unexpected actions unfold and solutions emerge, as if these acts were judged by a higher, wiser court whose scope far exceeds our own. (Hellinger, in press).

For organizational constellations, proceeding in this fashion has proved itself to me especially in the following situations: in decision constellations, when I get the impression that the representatives are expressing a readiness for reaction or movement (that means I observe the representative make a subtle, usually unconscious movement), and in explosive situations where something must be done immediately to avoid negative consequences. When the representatives are left to follow their feelings of movement, the previously repressed explosiveness of the system shows itself through their immediate reaction. From this we see that the solution draws near when the need is the greatest. When I have decided to set only two or three persons, and see they are deeply moved, then I allow them to follow their inner movements more frequently than I have before. This is a more intuitive decision that arises from what occurs in the moment, the characteristics of which I cannot yet describe concretely.

9. The Ending Phase of a Constellation.

For me, ending a constellation at a good point is the third important factor in the course of an organizational constellation. Experience shows that even when organizational constellations do not arrive at a satisfying solution, they often have as good an effect as



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constellations with a closed gestalt. Incomplete organizational constellations cause an intensive search for solution among those setting the constellation, often more so than after family constellations. Those setting the constellation then often find solutions that appear completely different than those exposed during the course of the constellation. When a good degree of enlightening information is generated, especially regarding the issue of the person who set the constellation, or some possible solutions are exposed, I often end organizational constellations very early. I often observe that facilitators working with organizational constellations attempt to do too much with one constellation, wanting to find a good solution for everyone in the constellation, or they continue repositioning representatives too long in their search for a solution. This unravels the constellations, the attention is diminished and the representatives get tired legs. Cutting off a constellation early often has much better effects than one that drags on for a long time. This also happens when the facilitator gives the representatives too much time to repeatedly express their impressions and desires. Understandably, everyone experiences constellations as especially satisfying and impressive when, for many of those involved, a good solution is found. Here, too, the restraint of the master facilitator shows. A constellation, in my opinion, should last at the most, thirty to forty minutes.

A. When does one let the representatives find the solution steps and when does one let the person setting the constellation stand in their role in the constellation?

This question is often asked. I let myself be led by the following thoughts: I prefer to let the representative carry out the solution steps or movements when I assume 1) that those would be more difficult for the person who set the constellation, or, 2) that the person cannot "yet" carry out these steps herself, and 3) when I see that the representative has given herself sensitively and with presence into the role and carries out the steps with sensitivity. This procedure protects the person who set the constellation, but also confronts her. She can follow the process from the perspective of an observer and is free at the same time to let in only what is good and right for her. Sometimes I will then let her stand in the constellation and repeat some of the steps she has seen the representative carry out for her. However, there are also situations in which I take the person who is setting the constellation in early. I might do this: 1) when I include elements from family constellations in the current constellation, or 2) when I experience the person as very ready to face the issue directly, or 3) when I come to the conclusion that the person should expose him or herself to a confrontation (for example, with a giving back ritual or owning up to the consequences of something he or she has done.) If a constellation doesn't get completed and, for instance, remains unresolved due to a lack of information, then I do not put the person who set the constellation into his or her position.



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B. The discussion after the constellation.

For the group discussion after the constellation, the following rules have proven successful: by sharing their body experiences and the effect the constellation had on them, the representatives may affect the client's understanding of aspects of his or her constellation. The representatives' comments must be in service of the person who set the constellation, and may not disturb his or her inner movements. The person who has set the constellation may decide whether he or she wants to leave the group for 15 minutes or so in order to process the experience of the constellation and feel its effect, or whether he or she would rather be part of the discussion. When the client remains in the group for the discussion, I include him or her in a limited way or not at all. Often in our seminars many participants are interested in learning the method. In these post-constellation discussions, questions about hypotheses, principles and procedures may be asked. The facilitator must be mindful of the time allowed for these questions and limit them when necessary. The basic principle is always: brevity over hashing things to pieces. I also repeatedly point out to the participants that it is rather irritating to have "helpers" rush up during the break to someone who has just set a burdensome constellation.

C. Dealing with the aftermath of the constellations.

Clients must understand that whatever shows up in a constellation and what appears to be a solution to his issue should not be taken as a prescription for action. It would be a misuse of the constellation if someone returned to his workplace and shared that his constellation showed that the problems of the department had their origin in the familial entanglements of a certain co-worker or that the boss has to go, etc. It is good to tell the group that an appropriate way of responding to a congruently set constellation is to repeatedly bring the solution image, and the steps that led to it, to mind, yet refrain from taking immediate action. It is often helpful to the client to record the solution picture or ask a group member to draw a diagram of the constellation and take notes during the constellation. The effects of a constellation often unfold over a period of two to three years, and even though the constellation itself showed powerful and concrete solution steps one must be patient and wait to see what naturally unfolds. Those powerful solution steps will show themselves when the time is right and the necessary changes may happen unnoticed and without awareness of what prompted them. It is also good to wait a while before one tells others about the specific details of the constellation. To immediately tell those not involved all the details of constellation and do so with a missionary zeal is a good way to shock and confuse them.



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10. The constellation as a mutual work of art.

Certainly, the facilitator has an influence on what happens in a constellation and a special role to play. (See also Klein 1998, p. 171 and following). Since the course of events is often impressive and also touching, there is a danger that the facilitator will develop ideas of grandiosity and be idolized by the participants in a seminar. As a leader, the facilitator always has the possibility of emphasizing certain information, of selecting the direction of the work and in choosing which steps to follow. If he doesn't act in harmony with the knowing field of the constellation, his way of working appears mechanical and flat. The soul doesn't resonate with it, and the constellation doesn't reach the depth and density it could have. What characterizes constellation work and its effect is that it is a mutual effort. The group is a sensitive and supportive framework and all those exposed to the vibrating field through the ever-changing roles of the constellations, make reciprocal contributions to one another. Thus, the members of the group also carry the issues of the individual group members and their attempts to solve their issues. At the same time the group members are also enriched repeatedly by new insights and impulses. In other contexts it has already been discussed, constellations can be regarded as modern transition ritual (Weber)

11. The work with rounds.

While Bert Hellinger still offered constellation courses with 25 participants, he also worked regularly with rounds (see Weber 1993, Hellinger 1999). This means, during his seminars, he would go to each participant in the circle one at a time and invite them to share what moved them in the moment and where they were with their issues. He used these rounds to get additional information, to give brief elaborations on subjects, and to disrupt habitual patterns, to tell stories or to answer questions. This work with rounds is also suitable for seminars for organizational constellations. The rounds also allow the facilitator to get a picture of how the group is developing and to talk to and include those participants who have been quiet or remained in the background. It also becomes apparent in the rounds which participant is "ripe" or ready to have a constellation set. The statements of the participants can also provide the occasion to make use of the extensive repertoire of the procedures of systemic consultation or other methods of consultation, or to give additional impulses, to validate, to support or challenge the participants.

VII. Fundamental Attitudes and Orientations in Constellation work with Organizations.

The description of the attitudes and bearing with which facilitators create relationships with the people who come to them is astonishing and not co-incidentally similar between



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the systemic-constructivist view (for example: A. Ratthaus 1989, Ludewig 1992) and the systemic-phenomenological oriented conceptualization. These fundamental orientations can be described here only in summary.

1. Acknowledging What Is.

One assumes that the solutions found, thus far, in a client's system are the best possible given the conditions at hand, and that all the participants deserve acknowledgement for what they contributed. Acknowledging what is promotes motivation and a willingness to contribute on the part of the participants. It also creates a positive conversational atmosphere and supports a willingness among clients to deal with the steps needed to create improvement and open up possibilities of change.

2. Respect and Esteem.

All members of the client's system are seen as persons of equal value and equal validity, no matter whether they are present or absent, and they get the same level of respect. (Inclusivity and social neutrality in the systemic consultation see Simon and Weber 1988). Even though we respect and include all persons of the system, the assumptions and behaviors that are at the root of the problem may be directly and ruthlessly challenged (see Cecchin and others 1996). There is no space for assigning negative attributes.

3. Orientation Towards Resources.

One assumes that all necessary abilities for sensible solutions already exist within the system (see also Berg and Miller 2000). One doesn't focus on deficits and mistakes, but on the existing and un-utilized competencies and potential for development that is already present. It is mainly about "igniting the sense of possibility" (R. Musil 1952) and orienting the participant towards the future. (Penn 1986, Simon and Weber 1988)

4. Orientation towards Solution.

The attention of the facilitator is totally directed towards solutions. Together with the client, the facilitator allies himself with the next possible steps for the client. That is why most facilitators prevent long problem descriptions by the client. Long descriptions of problems can be understood as an invitation to the facilitator to share the client's attitudes and convictions, which serve to maintain the problem rather than solve it. These stories often lower the energy and resourcefulness of the client and burden all involved. If clients



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experience a consultant as respectful and oriented towards resources and solutions, then they immediately feel that they are in good hands. The clients are more likely to trust the consultant early on in the process, and be generous with him when he on occasionally takes a circuitous route to a solution, or loses his neutrality momentarily, or simply doesn't know how to continue for a while.

5. Lack of Intention and Restraint.

Phenomenological perception is only possible with an attitude of renunciation of habits and judgment, a lack of intention and restraint. Only if the participants expose themselves to the whole of the constellation can they gain insights and surprising, new information about their conceptions of reality, and only then can the system that is set up itself point to possible solutions.

For another reason it makes sense to challenge intentions without having intent about the outcome. If a facilitator explicitly pursues his own idea and intention of change, and has not previously negotiated concrete and attainable goals with the client, and he begins to influence or push the client in a problem-oriented direction, this often elicits an adverse reaction within the client. This is often labeled as "resistance" on the part of the client. We once called this procedure, "the royal way into the tight spot." (See also the concept of responsibility and neutrality towards change. Simon and Weber 1999; von Schlippe and Schweitzer 1996; Sparrer in press.)

Basic concepts postulated by a consulting method and viewed by the company or organization as beneficial often have the most persuasive effect when facilitators use them right at the beginning of the consulting situation. This attitude is especially successful in organizational constellation seminars. Seminar participants are often amazed how easy it is to get along with each other in the shortest amount of time if they accept everyone present as they are and honor them as they show themselves. The bases of creating a good working relationship when using organizational constellations are: respect, acknowledgement and renouncing the urge to "know better than your client." (See expertise of not knowing, Buchinger 1998).

VIII. The Effects of Family Entanglements, of Special Family Dynamics, Constellations and Personal Patterns on Processes in Organizations.

When someone describes their issue or problem situation, their use of certain key words often gives good indication of whether family dynamics overlay the work context.



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If terms and descriptions of a personal nature increasingly emerge, such as words like "longing," "feeling abandoned" or "loneliness" which are more often used in personal relationships, this can be an indication that there is an unresolved relationship dynamic in the background, either current family or family of origin. Tone of voice and way of expressing can give additional indications that unprocessed experiences from the past come into the present.

An Example:

In a constellation, an approximately 30 year old woman complained about difficulties with her boss, the manager of a consulting firm, whom she felt patronized and rejected her. We set up her work team. Her representative felt fearful and at the same time defiant, and expressed this feeling in a way that looked childlike. After inquiring it turned out that the woman setting the constellation had grown up with her grandparents after her mother's death. She had been afraid during her childhood of her unpredictable grandfather who, according to her accounts, did not want to have her with him.

Since our private lives and our work lives are the two central arenas of human experience it is unavoidable that they influence each other. Positive developments or difficulties in one area inevitably have consequences in the other. Thus certain family issues either from the present or entanglements that were constellated in the past, can be felt in both areas. Similarly, issues from work life can spill over into family life. It makes immediate sense that this is especially so in family businesses. I differentiate between dynamics whose origin lies in trans-generational entanglements, dynamics based on unresolved parent-child conflicts, and dynamics that have to do with certain siblings' roles and relationships.

1. How Parent Child Dynamics Can Be Reflected in Organizations.

Authority conflicts often have a familial background for instance. But there are also completely different contexts.

Some examples:

A. The Un-Respected Father.

This constellation was about a consulting enterprise that formed when two internal consultants who had worked in a big energy enterprise started their own business.



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The two founders and their firm were placed. The one setting the constellation was one of the two founders of the firm. In the constellation his representatives stood in a good leadership position, he felt, however, weak and like a boy not a man. It turned out that he was very proud of his grandfather, but devalued his own father completely. We find repeatedly that if a person devalues his parents it often leads to the person feeling powerless himself and he lets himself fail. After he had honored his father in the constellation and "taken" him, he stood, relaxed and powerful, in the solution constellation with his father and grandfather behind him. Next to him the representative of the co-founder stood, glad to work together with him on the tasks at hand.

B. Fear of losing a "father" a second time.

An approximately 55 year old woman brought the following issue: her boss would retire soon and she had difficulty facing that. Could a constellation be of help in this situation? The grief that showed in her face immediately reminded one of a child experiencing a loss. After inquiring, it turned out that her parents had separated when she was a child. She had stayed with her mother and had not seen her father for a long time after the divorce and she missed him painfully. In this situation, I was able to offer the client a family constellation instead of an organizational constellation, and she agreed. We found a good solution for her. I could have tried to find the solution to the problem with an organizational constellation, however, in principle I have the tendency whenever possible to lead issues back to their origin and resolve them there.

C. I cannot leave my boss (mother) with all the work (siblings).

An approximately 40 year old woman wanted to check her place in her work system. She contemplated becoming self-employed and thought she was capable of doing so, but she kept pushing out the time to start her own business. In the constellation, her boss, the owner of a trading enterprise, stood in front of her and facing towards the side, and she stood in the center of the system. When her representative was moved towards the outside of the system, she felt powerful and relieved, however, her boss felt abandoned. Her co-workers also missed the client. (She reported that she was the person many of them came to confide in and talk with.) However, the co-workers soon began to rearrange themselves. The background was that the person setting the constellation was the oldest of seven children in her family of origin. She had supported the mother by setting aside her plans for her own life for a long time in



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order to provide for the care and education of her younger siblings. She projected this pattern of parentification onto the work situation. Thus, for her the most important thing was to permit herself to regard her own needs as important.

D. I'll never experience something like that again.

The client, a 37 year old consultant, wanted to do an organizational constellation because of the following issue: A married couple (both about 50 years old) owned the consulting firm she worked for. In this firm the client worked as a free-lancer. The couple offered her the opportunity to join the firm as a 10 % share holder. She wasn't sure whether or not she should do this. I will not refer to the details of the constellation placements here. The representative of the husband expressed that he felt attracted by the free-lance consultant and would like to have her in the firm (the way he said it the attraction was more than professional.) The representative of the wife was rather skeptical and voiced concerns that the client stood too close to her husband. The client felt burdened and felt used in her position. When I let her create some distance from the married couple by walking backwards slowly, she visibly felt better. The client confirmed these feelings. The client's outer appearance reminded one of a "father's daughter" (daughter who remains in the sphere of influence of the father. (See Weber, 1993, p. 106.) I asked her whether she had experienced a situation like this one previously in her professional life, and she reported a similar situation with a professor during her university studies. Since the group had developed a good reciprocal trust in each other and me, I dared to ask her if I could add someone from her family to her constellation. She agreed. I let client take her own place in the constellation, set a representative for her father and asked her to look at the father. I saw immediately the longing, sadness and panic in her eyes, but did not comment on that. I let her say a few sentences to the father, which unburdened her a lot, and allowed the constellation to end. During the following break she told me that she loved her father very much, but that she felt responsible for him as a child. They had a special relationship with each other, and when she was 14 years old she had retreated a little from him. He had then killed himself. Now her behavior towards her bosses made sense. She didn't want to re-experience having someone kill himself or having something terrible happen when she made her own needs more important than the other person's.

"Father's daughters" as one can see often work in organizations as responsive and capable "assistants" of the boss.



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2. The Effects of Unresolved Couples Dynamics in Organizations.

An example:

The place wasn't free yet.

The manager of a larger non-profit was intensely concerned about his professional future. Within the frame of the organizational constellation seminar he wanted to get clarity with regard to which of several possibilities were most powerful for him. (Here we only highlight the important facets where couples and organizational dynamics are entangled.) One of the possibilities the solution constellation showed was to found a consulting firm with his partner, who was also present at the workshop. In the constellation the participant who represented the consulting firm felt abused by the man's partner. Initially, all efforts to find the partner a good place both in relationship to the work and to the man failed. Her representative distanced herself from him again and again, and the man's representative didn't really notice her. When an additional piece of information was brought to bear, it led to solution. It turned out that the man didn't have a place readily available for the woman. He hadn't yet divorced his first wife, although they were separated. Only the inclusion of his wife, honoring her and the fair parting of the man from his first wife enabled the current partner to take a place next to him.

3. Influences of Siblings' Order on Constellations

What one gives attention to often shows up more in the foreground and occurs more often. For a year, I've paid more attention to how sibling order in the family of origin repeats itself in organizations. It became apparent to me that, next to the patterns of parent child relationships in the family of origin, siblings' birth orders are very often reproduced in organizations.

Two Examples:

A. "At home I was the fourth here I am the second."

The issue of an approximately 45 year old psychologist was to find out whether he should again re-engage more deeply with an institute for spiritual psychology or become completely independent. We set up the following representatives: one for the founder of the institute who wished that the client would take up more



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responsibility and activities with the institute, one for the client, two for younger trainers, and one for the customers of the institute. It was striking that the client was welcomed by everyone else in the constellation, but that he himself left a gap between himself and the representatives who stood to his right. He reported that he had to decide soon because there were younger trainers making a mark who would like to take his place. It seemed to me as if he waited for the other two to place themselves between himself and the founder. After asking whether or not he had siblings and if so where he stood in the birth order, he said in his family of origin he was the fourth of four children. I let him then step next to the founder and tell the other two trainers, "At home I was the fourth, here I am the second, and I take this place now." This was a good solution for everyone.

B. The brother stayed behind.

This constellation was about a sporting goods store. An approximately 45 year old man, who had a flourishing full time consulting practice, had founded this store at the request of an athlete who was three years younger than he was. To the man's surprise, the athlete dropped out after a certain time. The client then willingly took over all the debts and appointed a new manager. Now he wasn't sure whether or not he should continue owning the store. His wife did the bookkeeping part of the business. In the store there were two more employees, of which one went to graduate school and probably would leave soon.

In the initial constellation it was striking that the athlete who had co-founded the business stood directly opposite the client, and the employees stood more out of the way and in the field of view of the wife. The representative of the owner reported a close bond to the athlete. The athlete, however, said he was not interested in the man and that the relationship was over. Because of the strong bond of the owner to the athlete, the intensity of which was not explainable simply through the organization and the history of the two men, I asked the man if he had a brother. It turned out he had left his family of origin when he was 17 years old after his parents had divorced. His brother who was 4 years younger at the time stayed behind and felt abandoned by him. This brother, his mother and his step-father had a difficult time. It appeared that the client now took care of "younger brothers" like the athlete or the youngest employee who needed to overcome a difficult disease. Guilty feelings towards siblings who suffered a worse situation in life than often lead the successful ones to take care of others in organizations, as if they were taking care of the disadvantaged siblings. (See also 5. in this section.)



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4. The Effects of Familial Entanglements on the Workplace.

Familial entanglements, for instance, identification with excluded family members or with family members who had difficult fates, often have an effect on the workplace. When co-workers show intense feelings that are exaggerated or inappropriate in the context of the workplace, one should always think of possible family dynamics in the background. These entanglements can also be present when a worker shows a commitment over time that goes way beyond what is asked for, or when someone is fanatical about fairness or justice.

Two Examples:

A. A manager who marched off to rescue her co-workers.

This is about the manager of a small department of the federal forest office in Canada. The department made and maintained the equipment used to fight forest fires. Of the employees, some had been injured in fighting fires and could no longer work on the front lines, hence their position with this department. Half of the employees were of native American descent. A number of the employees also had a history of alcoholism. All but one of the employees faced some kind of personal difficulty. The manager of this department was an approximately 45 year old woman who was unusually concerned about her workers private worries and struggles. She spoke as if she had to save all of them from their difficult fates.

In the constellation the manager's representative felt completely responsible for the co-workers. This involvement appeared so unusual to the facilitator that he thought about the possibility of a familial issue being in the background. His question to her was: "Who in your family of origin would you liked to have saved?" With much feeling, the manager reported that her older sister had wanted to visit her when the client was 18 years old and that she had canceled the meeting with the sister. That very weekend, the sister had then gone out with friends and suffered a fatal car accident. The client blamed herself for her sister's accident and felt guilty for not caring enough about the sister at that time to prevent it. The solution of the constellation was for the manager to honor the fate of the sister (for whom a representative was placed.) Finally, the sister stood to the woman's right in the solution constellation and the client herself stood in, and said in a friendly and assertive voice to her co-workers, "Now I won't rescue you any more. I'm just your boss."



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B. "I just want to lay down."

A consultant had very different partners in his professional network and felt that this broadly spread palette of possibilities had become a burden for him. Since he often felt weak and without strength, he was thinking about which activity he could give up and where would be the most rewarding place for his energy. In his place, his representative showed an extraordinary reaction: he felt very weak and only had the desire to lie down on the floor. He was asked to follow this tendency and he laid down on his back, closed his eyes like a dead person and remained motionless. The facilitator thought of someone killed in action in war and asked about that. It turned out that the consultant had an uncle on his father's side who died in the last war. The consultant had been named after this uncle. This uncle, with whom the consultant was identified, was included in the constellation. In the end the representatives for the father and the uncle stood behind the consultant in the solution constellation. Now his representative could turn with energy to the various work opportunities that faced him and assertively set priorities.

This constellation caused me further reflection. The question that engaged me was whether work and family systems cause different and overlapping fields (in the sense of the morphogenetic fields described by Ruppert Sheldrake; see Mahr, 1998, Hellinger, et al, 1999, Sheldrake, et al, 2000). I wondered whether by choosing one type or the other of constellation or by focusing on specific themes, one field could be activated more intensely than the other. Prior to this constellation, I had already implicitly included family dynamics many times in organizational constellations. In having the consultant set his constellation, did I perhaps foster the connection to the field of the consultant's family of origin, and thus contribute to the familial entanglement coming to light in an organizational constellation?

5. Foregoing Professional Success and Refusing to "Take" Because Other Family Members Couldn't Be Successful.

When someone denies himself professional success, although he has all the prerequisites for it, one always has to consider that he could be demonstrating loyalty to someone in the family whose professional success and luck was thwarted for some reason. After questioning, one often learns that someone in the family, due to a difficult fate, was hindered (for instance by war time or handicap) from unfolding professionally or developing in a manner appropriate for their age. Often those who are born later balance the luck they received by foregoing their full success and limiting their own luck because of feelings of guilt. In this way they avoid the risk of distancing themselves too far from the



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family or from the supposedly disadvantaged ones, there by preserving their sense of belonging to the family system. (See also Bert Hellinger's early insights about guilt and innocence in human relationships (Hellinger 1998, p. 19-42.)) This realization was an important contribution in the development of constellation work.

6. Weakening or Strengthening?

When a facilitator plans a next step in an organizational constellation, it is useful to check in to determine whether that step had a weakening or strengthening effect. If one asks the client this question, the question itself often already makes a significant difference. The weakening patterns often have their roots in old relationship experiences and ingrained emotional reactions.

In the workplace some people re-enact situations in which they repeat weakening ("familiar") feelings, known from childhood and that serve primarily to maintain problems by giving responsibility to others and avoiding taking appropriate action (see paragraph about secondary feelings in Weber, 1993, pp. 259-273, Hellinger, in press.) *Two Examples:*

A. "I always come off badly."

A seminar participant reported that in the town she worked there were two psycho-social organizations and they were active in the same field. She worked for the organization that she considered less innovative and which she perceived as offering fewer activities. Because she felt loyal to the one organization, she didn't feel she could move to the other organization even though she was offered the opportunity. In the constellation she stood with her back close to her own organization and looked to the other organization. While in this place her representative began to cry and felt burdened and disadvantaged. Then the facilitator remembered that twice before this particular participant had felt disadvantaged while in the seminar group. In the initial round, she had demonstrated this feeling in a reproachful way because she was one of the participants who hadn't heard ahead of time observer places were available for a reduced fee. The solution in the constellation was very simple: she changed over to the other organization, and the co-workers welcomed her. I wondered, however, if the client could handle such success if she did decide to move and belong to the privileged ones, and thus get something others did not. Might she not while there also find "a hair in her soup" and find a good reason to join a sub-group within the new organization who were less advantaged?



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After this regression into deficit thinking and ominous "croaking", I reverted again to the side of optimism and solution-orientation and assumed that she found a permanently good solution for herself in the meantime, and I put my support behind her.

B. "Once again, I'm left standing in the rain."

Elizabeth complained, that she had been lured into the department of a company and then "was left standing in the rain." The way she shared this, it sounded like an old feeling. It turned out that her parents had to marry. Three months after Elizabeth was born her mother became pregnant again. After the birth of Elizabeth's brother, her mother turned her affections completely towards her son. In the family constellation, her representative stood far outside and the brother and the mother stood very close and faced opposite each other. Seen through this information, her feeling "being left standing in the rain" made perfect sense.

7: To What Degree Should One Take Family Dynamics into Account and Also Set Family Constellations Within Organizational Constellation Seminars?

This lone chapter and these examples might imply that I support the interweaving of family constellations in organizational constellation seminars. This is not the case. The paragraph served first to sensitize organizational facilitators and those who want to become facilitators to such dynamics and connections. I also think that it is useful to those who would like to offer organizational constellations to acquire a basic understanding of developmental psychology and family dynamics, and to set up their own family systems prior to facilitating constellations. I also consider it sensible if they participate as observers in a few family constellation seminars, in order to deepen their abilities to perceive family dynamics. If, as facilitators of organizational constellations, they do not have sufficient experience with family constellations, they should discretely advise participants whose constellations show family dynamics that it might be good to set up their family system in a family constellation seminar. More and more I offer seminars for family *and* organizational issues, because then I am free, with the client's consent, to decide which area to explore in the constellation. I also noticed that it is easier for managers to come to such a seminar if they want to resolve something in their private life. In the beginning, they "officially" come with a professional issue and their goal is to set a work situation. Later in the seminar when they feel more trust they set their family constellation. One has to pay attention that the family side in such seminars doesn't get too much weight because of the higher emotional intensity of family constellations. Those who want to learn more about organizational constellations



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sometimes no longer dare to ask that this side also adequately be taken into account.

In the area of organizational constellations, and especially with constellations internal to a company, the understood agreement and contract is to set up work systems. Any focus beyond this, especially into the private lives of participants, always needs prior and explicit permission from the participant and from all the other group members as well because they are then taken into someone's confidence and are confronted with an unexpected area.

IX. Leadership and Organizational Constellations.

By setting many organizational constellations over time, it becomes evident that the quality of leadership and leadership behavior have a big impact on the functionality of enterprises and organizations. The lack of good leadership and leadership behavior appears to be one of the most common reasons for difficulties in work contexts. In my experience, it is worthwhile to pay special attention to the placement and comments of the representative of the person who has the official leadership function in the system. If the leader takes a position from which he or she can lead, this contributes significantly to the work system feeling secure and "in order." In a solution constellation a leader always stands beside and to the right of his staff. The more authority he has, the more he stands opposite his departments/employees. In a solution constellation, for instance, a leader who advanced from the ranks of the co-workers and who is now their superior, stands as *primus inter pares*: also to the right but closer to his co-workers. Appendix II indicates different ways in which leadership problems can become visible in organizational constellations.

X. Disfunctionally Built Organizational Structures and Constellations.

When dealing with difficulties in organizations one must always consider the possibility that the organizational structure itself can be dysfunctional. Such structural contradictions support conflicts and make it hard to fulfill tasks without friction. Organizational constellations often give important indications of such contradictions and out-of-synch structures.

An Example:

The manager of a distribution department of a big engine manufacturer came (nervously and under pressure) to a constellation seminar because he wasn't content with his work situation anymore, yet he could not name exactly what he wanted to solve. To the facilitator his demeanor suggested that his health was in danger. This



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manager finally set one representative each for himself, his superior, his co-workers and the department's tasks. After he had placed all of them the representatives reported consistently about a conflict-like situation between the manager and his superior; a conflict which hadn't been previously mentioned. It turned out that the superior headed only two departments: the big and important department that the client managed, and another smaller, and in the context of the organization, insignificant department. The manager had the repeated feeling that the superior too often and too directly interfered in his well-functioning department. This constellation showed the central conflict to the client.

In the break after the constellation all of the manager's long repressed anger erupted. In the constellation, the elimination of the position of the superior was the appropriate solution. When this representative was taken out of the constellation everyone felt better. The real result, however, was that the manager allowed himself to be transferred into another branch of the organization, and there he felt significantly more free and able to work. It happens quite often that constellations inspire different solutions than the ones that are shown in the solution picture. Constellations seem to encourage the clients' general optimism and increase their ability to co-create a solution to their problem. By showing alternatives to the existing situation, the client's "possibility horizon" widens and this instigates intensive search processes and impulses towards action.

XI. Dangers of Constellation Work.

The constellation work is a highly effective and impactful method, and thus requires an especially attentive attitude and sufficient prior experience. Even if organizational constellations are not as moving, emotional processes are still set in motion, although these are less powerful than in family constellations. Once and a while it can lead to intense emotional reactions and stressful experiences – for the representatives as well as for the clients. Those who want to offer organizational constellation seminars should therefore know how to deal with, for example, fainting or circulatory problems, hyperventilation, asthma or migraine attacks, suicide danger, abrupt withdrawals from the group and emotional escalations (for instance, panic attacks, crying fits, etc.). I don't want to create fear, and I want to remind you to be equipped for such situations. Recently a colleague of mine came into one of my supervision workshops. During a workshop of hers a participant had developed a heart attack. The first distinct physical symptoms were wrongly interpreted by the facilitator and by the participant as the aftereffect of a constellation, in which the participant had stood in a very stressful place.



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XII. Concluding Comments.

In this article I intended to illustrate the developments of some organizational constellations with graphics and inserted comments, but I decided to procrastinate this endeavor for a later publication so that this article does not become too long.

Except for structural constellations, this method of using constellations in organizations is less than five years old. For this short period of time, the procedures are already astonishingly differentiated. Feedback regarding the effects of organizational constellations is more than encouraging. Constellation work can in no way substitute for the proven techniques of current organizational consulting, especially not in areas where highly complex change processes are indicated. In these cases particularly, a long term consulting relationship is valuable.

Addendum

Addendum I. Areas of use for organizational constellations.

1. About letting it become visible and about the analysis of structural "tight spots."

Organizational constellations give indications for:

- structural contradictions in organizations,
- unclear organizational structures, for example, unclear job distinctions and overlapping or inappropriate assignments of competencies and task areas. Do the structure of the organization and the tasks fit together?
- unclear roles and work descriptions,
- inadequate communication and coordination.

An example:

These phenomena became visible in the constellation of a department that resulted from merging two previous departments. In the constellation *all* seven members looked in different directions and all representatives said they



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had almost no contact with their co-workers.

- too much work with too few employees or the other way around (over- or under-staffing, over-or under-demanding.)

An example:

In an organizational constellation a representative said she had the feeling that she wasn't really needed in the department. It turned out after a restructuring and the departure of a superior, the four remaining employees of equal rank found there wasn't enough work any more for all of them. The employee had found the solution, however. One of them was always out sick or otherwise absent.

2. Preparation for implementing solution measures (analysis and trial testing).

- Finding an appropriate goal.
- Phases of planning (anticipating the effects of possible measures).
- Restructuring processes (for example, new organization structures), organizational development measures and project groups, etc.
- Team development measures.
- Founding companies and mergers, (for instance, with the founding of an institute, who becomes co-share-holders or founders and who doesn't?).
- Negotiations.

3. Preparing Personnel Decisions.

- Selection of personnel (for instance, hiring and evaluating suitability for certain positions, performance assessments, selection of personnel with regards to determining succession, checking of the consequences of possible personnel transfers or dismissals.) Here, for instance, one lets the representative of the employee whose dismissal is planned step out of the system in the constellation. Then the facilitator checks the employee's reactions and the reactions of the



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remaining employees.

- Personnel selection in the context of personal development.

4. Checking leadership quality and behavior (see also Addendum 2)

Is there adequate staffing of leadership positions and assumption of leadership functions? (Relationship between delegating responsibility and taking over responsibility, position vs. abilities, performance vs. payment, performance demand and support, etc.)

5. Creating meaningful hypotheses and supporting solutions in conflict-rich relationship situations.

Organizational constellations give indications for:

- Lack of respect and honoring.
- Forming coalitions (for instance, across hierarchy boundaries) and triangulations.
- Mixing private and professional contexts.

An example:

In an organizational constellation about a consulting situation the representative of the consultant expressed that he felt restricted and too close to the manager of a religious organization. After questioning it turned out that the consultant had frequent private contacts with the manager. Thus, as a consultant, he could not take the position of a neutral and uninvolved third party. This, however, had not been addressed by anyone although all who were involved knew about it.

- Presumptuous behavior, insubordination or refusal. Presumptuous behavior becomes visible when a representative takes a position that is inappropriately central given his or her actual position, feels her or she is especially important or behaves inconsiderately.
- The places not taken, promotions not taken, inner leaving while remaining present ("quitting" while still in the job), tendencies to leave the system, wishes for retirement or getting out.



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An example: In a constellation the representative of an assistant-manager, who temporarily stepped in for the manager for a year, expressed that she felt tired and would love to retire. It turned out that this woman at that time had already been on sick leave for six weeks and had already applied for early retirement.

- For exclusions, dynamics of mobbing.

6. Clearing the way to solutions for family businesses.

Organizational constellations here serve for:

- For clarification of relationships within a family business or between several family systems, for clarification of the reciprocal effects of family and management roles, or for balancing compensation.
- "De-tangling" family culture and enterprise culture.
- Clarification of succession questions.

7. Organizational culture and work climate.

Organizational constellations are useful for conditions indicated by:

- The energy level in an organization.
- (De-)motivations, boycotts, inner resigning from positions.
- The lack of a sense of community, solidarity, etc.
- Backgrounds and contexts for continuing employee fluctuations or high amounts of sick-leave in work units.

8. Gathering information about lack of support or backing

- From the organization and or
- From the family.



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9. The orientation of organizations (employees) towards tasks, goals and clients.

For instance, indications of difficulties in relationships between production, vendors, distribution and customers.

10. Checking one's own place in the organization or enterprise.

Is it a place which is clear, full of energy or weakened and coming with a past burden (for instance by bad treatment of a predecessor.)?

11. Consulting consultants.

Can be used as an instrument of supervision, see also (Schneider, 1998) or in the context of a coaching process.

12. Decision making.

For instance with questions like: leaving or staying? Taking a promotion or not? The one possibility and/or the other? Prioritizing this direction or that one? Etc.

13. Indications of danger.

When representatives show extreme feelings of weakness or sickness or stronger physical symptoms such as shortness of breath, pressure on the heart or headaches in their roles, then it is good to consider the possibility that the person's health they represent is in danger.

An Example:

In a constellation, the representative of a head of a development department showed intense heart problems. The representative did not have any such tendency himself. After the seminar was over, the client reported that the employee who's representative had experienced heart pain, had, in fact, been delivered to the hospital with a heart attack while the seminar was taking place.

Addendum 2. Images of Leadership in Organizational Constellations.



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1. The leader is hidden amongst his co-workers or is covert.

In constellations these leaders stand without an overview and in the midst of the often disoriented and disconnected co-workers. They are placed as if they don't want to stand out and from the outside one cannot recognize that they have a leadership function.

An Example:

In a constellation, the department head of a big telecommunications company stood in the midst of the employees. Most of them stood at his back and he looked through a gap between two employees into the void. The information given was that department head got his position because of certain professional qualities, not because of his leadership skills. In his work, he focused entirely on the development area. He felt completely overwhelmed by the leadership tasks and left those to his assistant manager. The assistant stood in a much stronger place in the constellation. When so called "democratic" teams are set, similar pictures often emerge.

2. Leaders looking out.

In constellations these leaders look away from the employees, or sometimes have their back towards the employees and face their superiors. They look either there for support, reassurance or to model themselves after their boss and try to please their boss. The employees feel neglected and without support.

3. Heracles or Atlas?

These leaders stand in the center of constellations, in the middle of the system, and all employees look towards them. They are mostly workaholics, do everything themselves, have a hard time delegating, don't have any overview or distance, have difficulties setting priorities and are of the opinion they have to do everything themselves and that they are the most capable. (See also Robinson, 2000.)

4. "Half-leaders."

In constellations these leaders look at only part of their employees. One can often observe this in constellations after mergers, when teams split, in old and new divisions, in "conservative" or "progressive" factions in an organization.



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5. *Eminence Gris*. Unnamed leaders in leaderless teams.

By setting a "leaderless" team or when there are two leaders of equal rank, it becomes immediately evident who or which sub-system has the most influence, or who leads more or less secretly.

6. Figureheads and Puppet-Masters in the Back.

Some leaders are used as figureheads. They officially have leadership functions, but are actually led from the back by others with more influence.

An Example:

A consulting team suggested a re-organization to the manager of an enterprise. The advice was to insert a new level of hierarchy of department heads and to create five departments. Another consultant was hired later because the cooperation between departments was poor. For his own supervision, he set this department and himself as their consultant. The constellation showed immediately that the newly appointed department head could not lead this area of work from his position. He stood the furthest to the left from the employees who stood in a half circle to his side. The representative of the manager of the enterprise stood in the leadership position on the right side of the employees and very close to this sub-system. After questioning it became apparent that the manager had formally carried out the re-organization but continued to feel completely responsible for the leadership of the department. For instance, he had made the decision that two deserving employees (out of five!) from this department should continue to work for him.

When there are leaders whose representatives feel strong in constellations, but get judged as weak by the employees, it is good to look for influential allies.

7. Lack of support in the background.

When the employees acknowledge their leader in a constellation, but he doesn't feel stable and cannot stand firmly on his place, it is good to set up the next hierarchical level. Often it becomes clear that the leaders are not being supported by their superiors or may be undercut and weakened by a higher level of leadership. In such cases the support of an important person from the family, for instance a parent, is lacking and when those persons are placed behind the leader in the constellation, he can stand more powerfully in his



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leadership role.

8. Consultant as manager.

In situations where the consultants of an enterprise are also placed, it often becomes apparent the consultants have taken on management functions. They then are unable to have the proper distance from the enterprise to have a perspective of the whole dynamic. They have become active and over-involved. These consultants stand in constellations mostly as part of the inner circle of the system, and their representatives feel responsible and ready for action.

An Example:

The representative of a consultant of a big social agency who stood in the middle of the constellation said, "Something needs to happen here soon, and I would roll up my sleeves right away if I could."

9. Unmotivated Leaders.

Disappointed leaders whose dreams didn't come to fruition or those who were demoted or feel treated unfairly often only "do time," wait for their retirement and covertly boycott new developments. In the constellation, they often look bored or disinterestedly to the outside. Organizational constellations support the idea that it is not good for the work system and the ones concerned when, after a demotion, someone continues to work in the same system in which he had leadership functions. It is only good if he himself wanted to step back to a lower position. It is better, as constellations show, when those concerned leave completely or get at least transferred to another department of the organization, but that can also be weakening for them.

Ed. Note. References for this article have not been translated from the German. If you would like a paper copy of the references (in German), please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

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We will make a copy of the list for you. If we get enough requests for the references we will either post them in German or, if we are deluged with requests, translate them.