

Pro-DEENLA

LEUPHANA
UNIVERSITY OF LÜNEBURG

Steinbeis Innovation Center
Logistics and Sustainability

“SYSTEMIC VISUALISATION” METHOD CARDS

“DEALING WITH CONTRADICTIONS”
LEARNING MODULE



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“SYSTEMIC VISUALISATION” METHOD

What is this method all about?

“Systemic visualisations” use three-dimensional spatial pictures to represent relationships.

People (representatives) denoting relevant elements take up different locations within the room. Their positions, their viewing directions, and the distances between them produce a network of relationships which can assist in discussing and understanding the links between the elements.

How long does it take?

- About two to two and a half hours including introduction and reflection

What is needed?

- Flip chart and paper and appropriate markers, or a blackboard and chalk instead
- A room that is as large as possible, in which tables and chairs can be moved out of the way
- Pen and paper for each participant

Who is involved?

- Facilitator (1 person)
- Representatives (4–8 persons)
- Observers (rest of the group)



1 YOU ARE THE FACILITATOR

What is that?

- In your capacity as facilitator, you lead the trainees through the “systemic visualisation” process.
- You are responsible for ensuring that the trainees use instructions and key questions to set up a network of relationships between representatives and that they then discuss this.
- The trainees have already identified a contradiction between sustainable action and their everyday working life, and they will now recreate this together with you.

What needs to be done beforehand?

- Read through your cue cards carefully so that you understand the sequence of the “systemic visualisation”. If you need to, make notes to help you conduct the facilitation process.

Important!



- Make sure the trainees/students have worked through the previous tasks contained in the “Dealing with contradictions” learning module.

2 INTRODUCTION

What needs to be done?

- Welcome the trainees/students to the “systemic visualisation” of the contradiction they have chosen.
- Reiterate the idea behind this method to the trainees so that everyone can prepare for the visualisation together.
Possible question: *“What is your understanding of ‘systemic visualisation’?”*
- When the trainees take on their roles as representatives during the visualisation, it is a good idea to address them in a relatively informal way in order to break through any hierarchical barriers. Think about whether this is a possible approach for you and agree together with the trainees/students what mode of address will be used.

Important!



- The idea of carrying out a “systemic visualisation” is to understand and discuss a network of relationships, not to find a perfect solution. There are no “right” and “wrong” outcomes.

3 TOPIC

What needs to be done?

- Get the trainees to explain the contradiction they have chosen, record this in writing, and display it in a prominent position in the room.
- Stipulate the stakeholders involved who will be moving within the context of the contradiction and of the initial situation.
For example: *customer, head of department, lorry driver*
- Then determine polarities which create a conflicting relationship.
For example: *light – dark, quality – quantity*
- Prepare signs for the participants to wear around their necks. The names of the elements should be written on these.

Important!



- A stakeholder is a person performing a function or an institution.
- A polarity denotes an abstract premise.
- The term “representative” refers both to stakeholders and polarities.

4 REPRESENTATIVES

What needs to be done?

- Ask the group for volunteer representatives for the stakeholders and polarities.
- Place the signs face down on the floor or a table and allow the volunteer representatives to select an element. They then put on the signs they have picked up.
- Instruct the remaining members of the group in their role as observers (see role card for the observers) and ask them to sit down in a half-circle.



Important!

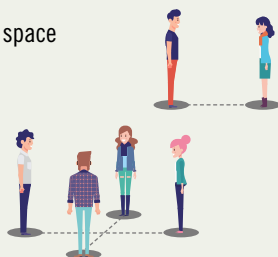


- Trainees should volunteer to act as representatives, as there will otherwise be a risk of inner barriers.
- A stakeholder is a person performing a function or an institution.
- A polarity denotes an abstract premise.
- The term “representative” refers both to stakeholders and polarities.

5 VISUALISATION – CREATING THE PICTURE

What needs to be done?

- Allocate the polarities a spot to stand in the open space within the room.
 - a. Two polarities form a straight line and thus stand opposite each other.
 - b. If there are four polarities, a rotated square is formed in which the elements also face one another and look towards the interior of the square.
- One after the other, ask the remaining stakeholders to enter the space created and to move around in it. Possible request: *“Stakeholder X, enter the space and find a place in which you feel secure and comfortable. When you’ve found it, stay there.”*
- The stakeholders may position themselves both inside and outside the field of vision of the polarities.



Important!

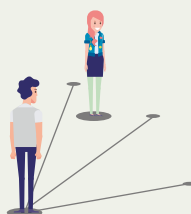


- Address the stakeholders by the title of their role, not by their real names. This will make the distinction between reality and visualisation clear.
- Give the stakeholders time to perceive and feel the atmosphere and the influence of the other stakeholders.
- Check that the remaining group members are carrying out their observational task.

6 VISUALISATION – CREATING THE PICTURE

What needs to be done?

- When all the stakeholders have taken their positions, start to ask both the polarities and the stakeholders about their sense of well-being within the space. Possible questions: *“Stakeholder X, how secure do you feel in your position on a scale of 1 to 10?”*
“Polarity X, how secure do you feel in your position on a scale of 1 to 10?”
- Follow up this enquiry about well-being by asking why the stakeholders have chosen the figure they have given. Possible question: *“Why did you decide on this number?”*
- You can also ask the representatives to use adjectives to describe the way they feel.



Important!



- Address the stakeholders by the title of their role, not by their real names. This will make the distinction between reality and visualisation clear.
- Give the stakeholders time to perceive and feel the atmosphere and the influence of the other stakeholders.
- Check that the remaining group members are carrying out their observational task.

7 VISUALISATION – DEVELOPING THE PICTURE

What needs to be done?

- Once all of the representatives have been asked how comfortable they are feeling, the stakeholders who have stated the lowest score are offered the chance to move somewhere else. Possible question: *“Stakeholder X, you gave a score of (the amount). Would you like to change your position?”* This stakeholder is now permitted to move freely within the space and seek out a new position. The polarities are not permitted to shift their position because they depict the framework of the picture.
- Once the stakeholder has found a new position, he or she is again asked to rate the experience on a scale of 1 to 10 as well as give a reason for this decision. Possible questions: *“Stakeholder X, how secure do you feel now in your position on a scale of 1 to 10?”* *“Why did you decide on this number?”*
- The other stakeholders are also asked to state how they feel after having changed position. If very low figures are stated, another chance to move can be offered to these stakeholders in accordance with the same principle.

Important!



- Give the stakeholders time to perceive and feel the atmosphere and the influence of the other stakeholders.
- Keep asking the representatives to describe their own perceptions.

8 VISUALISATION – INTERPRETING THE PICTURE

What needs to be done?

- The picture will slowly start to “consolidate” once the stakeholders have moved around the space and experienced how they feel in different positions. Finish by asking the representatives about the power structure in the picture.

To do this, get the representatives to point their fingers at one another and remind the observers that they should be noting the results.

Possible questions:

“Which stakeholder in the picture do you think is the strongest?”

“Which stakeholder in the picture do you think is the weakest?”

“Which polarity in the picture do you think is the strongest?”

“Which polarity in the picture do you think is the weakest?”

Important!



- Give the stakeholders time to listen to their instincts and to perceive and feel the atmosphere and the influence of the other representatives.
- Check that the remaining group members are carrying out their observational task.

9 VISUALISATION – DISSOLVING THE PICTURE

What needs to be done?

- Explain that the visualisation is now ended.
- Speak to the observers to ensure that they have documented the final positions of the representatives. They can be given more time if they have not yet completed this task.
- When the observers give the signal that they have finished, thank the representatives for their stamina and openness.
- Discharge the representatives from their roles by saying: *“You can now leave your roles. Take off your signs and spin around a few times.”*
- It would be a good idea to give the whole group a 15-minute break at this point.



Important!



- The representatives need to leave their roles behind so that they can present arguments from their own perspective in the reflection phase and not feel bound by their role when giving their interpretation.

10 REFLECTION – DESCRIBING THE PICTURE

What needs to be done?

- Start by using the following key questions to allow the group to describe what has happened.

Record the contributions made on a flip chart or board.

Ask the observers these questions:

“What did you see? Describe the positions and movements of the representatives.”

“How can the final picture be presented graphically?”



Important!



- Make sure that no evaluations are (as yet) expressed during the picture description.
- The contributions made by the representatives and observers should be presented separately so as to avoid any mixing of self-perceptions and external perceptions.

11 REFLECTION – INTERPRETING THE PICTURE

What needs to be done?

- Use the following key questions to allow the group to interpret what has happened. Record the contributions made on a flip chart or board.
- Ask the whole group the following questions:

“What could the stated movements, constellations, and descriptions mean for the overall structure?”

“How harmonious or irritating do you find the picture or pictures?”

“To what extent do you think that the picture represents the contradiction originally stated between sustainability and everyday company practice?”

Important!



- Make sure that the group is given enough thinking time.



12 PROJECTING THE PICTURE INTO THE FUTURE (OPTIONAL)

What needs to be done?

- You can also transfer the picture to the future, for example in order to visualise the consequences of something.
- You can ask the following questions for this purpose:

“What could the picture look like in the year 20XX and why?”

or

“How would the picture change if nothing alters over the next ten years?”

Important!



- You will need to adjust the questions depending on the starting point.

13 REFLECTION – DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

What needs to be done?

- Use the following task to allow the group to draw conclusions regarding the contradiction formulated at the outset:
“Describe the extent to which the pictures that have emerged can help you to deal with the contradiction initially selected.”
“What courses of action do the relevant stakeholders have against the background of the two perspectives of efficiency and sustainability?”
“Use the ‘think, pair, share’ method.”
 1. The trainees/students answer the questions individually and make notes (5–10 minutes).
 2. The trainees/students pair up to discuss their results. They should both compare their notes and summarise what they feel to be the most conclusive outcomes on a flip chart (15–20 minutes).
 3. Finally, all the pairs present their results in a plenary session (3 minutes per team).

Important!



- Make sure that the relevant facts (contradiction, results of the reflection, task) are recorded for the group in a way that is clearly visible within the room (e.g. on flip chart paper).

14 REFLECTION – DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

What needs to be done?

- Allow the trainees to finish by discussing the results and transferring these outcomes to their work environment.
- The following key question may be of assistance:
“To what extent may the results that have been worked out be relevant for your everyday work?”
“Write your ideas on cue cards and pin these onto the presentation board.”



Important!



- Make sure that the relevant facts (contradiction, results of the reflection, task) are recorded for the group in a way that is clearly visible within the room (e.g. on flip chart paper).

1 YOU ARE A REPRESENTATIVE

What is that?

- As a representative, you embody either a stakeholder (e.g. the customer) or a polarity (e.g. efficiency).
- You are actively involved in the visualisation and move in a defined space together with the other representatives.
- You are responsible for portraying a possible perspective adopted by your stakeholder or polarity. You do this by trying to put yourself in the position of the stakeholder or polarity.
- During the visualisation, follow your instincts and attempt to sense the changes in your environment so that you can react to them.
- You interpret each respective stakeholder or polarity in your own individual way. There is no “right” or “wrong” approach.

Important!



- Listen to your instincts.
- Sense your environment.
- Express your thoughts when you are asked, regardless of how unimportant or odd they may seem to you.

2 YOU ARE A REPRESENTATIVE

What needs to be done?

- You have just drawn your stakeholder or a polarity. Hang the appropriate sign round your neck and spend five minutes attuning yourself to this role.
- Silently say to yourself: "I am ..."
- Answer the following questions in your mind:
 - "How does my stakeholder or my polarity feel?"*
 - "What are the objectives of my stakeholder or my polarity?"*
 - "What characterises my stakeholder or my polarity?"*
 - "With whom does my stakeholder or my polarity sympathise?"*
- During the visualisation, pay careful attention to the instructions and questions of the facilitator.
- Listen to your instincts at all times and let yourself be guided by your intuition and perceptions.



Important!



- Listen to your instincts.
- Sense your environment.
- Express your thoughts when you are asked, regardless of how unimportant or odd they may seem to you.

1 YOU ARE AN OBSERVER

What is that?

- As an observer, you are responsible for looking at the visualisation from the outside without being actively involved in the process itself.
- You follow the visualisation attentively and make notes so that you can present the events from your own perspective during the subsequent reflection phase.
- The visualisation cannot be evaluated without your records.
- Your role is an important supplement to the accounts given by the representatives because you remain impartial whilst keeping an overview.

Important!



- As an observer, you act in a neutral way and remain quiet.
- You avoid making eye contact or commenting so that you do not intervene in the visualisation process.



2 YOU ARE AN OBSERVER

What needs to be done?

- Sit in a half-circle, taking pens and paper with you.
- Note the contradiction and the relevant representatives (polarities and stakeholders).
- Follow the visualisation and make bullet point notes on the following aspects:
 - positions of the representatives
 - positional changes of the representatives
 - directions in which the representatives are looking
 - explanations of the representatives

Also note the impression that the representatives make on you. You might use the following pairs of terms:

confident – uncertain

strong – weak

quiet – nervous

supportive – obstructive

appealing – hostile

steadfast – inconsistent

Important!



- As an observer, you act in a neutral way and remain quiet.
- You avoid making eye contact or commenting so that you do not intervene in the visualisation process.