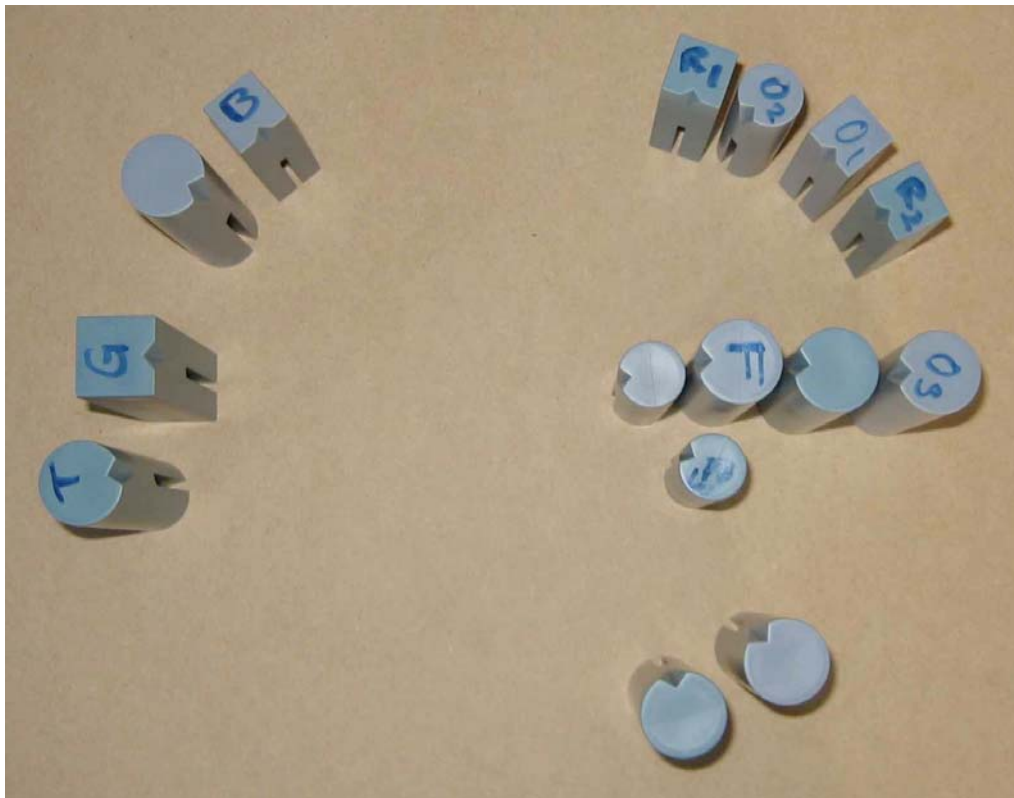


# **An Exploration of Career Issues Using the Systemic Structural Constellation Approach**



**PYN008: Project**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Master of Counselling  
in the School of Psychology and Counselling  
at Queensland University of Technology**

**Preeti Helena**

**2005**

## **Abstract**

This report summarises a research project into systemic structural constellations in an individual setting. This study was undertaken because few publications about this model are currently available in English. A literature review gives a brief overview of the systemic family constellation model according to Hellinger (2001), including off-shoots, such as organisational constellations and structural constellations, and the process of a systemic constellation. In addition, a closer look is given at research trends in this field. A brief overview of the technique in general is given, to inform the reader of this addition to family therapy, organisational consulting and personal coaching. The research design includes a more detailed description of the process used in this study. By using a problem or goal constellation, the research used qualitative and phenomenological case studies in a systemic exploration of career issues. A wealth of information has been received in both constellation session facilitation itself, and the client feedback from the post-session interviews. The cases are individually summarised and evaluated, followed by a general discussion on the findings. The constellations revealed unconscious agendas of the clients, shown clearly in three of the five cases where the client uncovered a larger issue during the process. In all cases, the clients reported a benefit and an appreciation for systemic constellations. Several paths of further research into systemic constellations were identified, including an investigation of their effect over time, with follow up three, six or twelve months after the process.

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1.1 Focus of the study .....	6
1.2 Rationale .....	6
1.3 Background and hopes .....	6
1.4 Aims and research questions .....	7
1.5 Definition of key terms .....	7
1.6 Structure of the report .....	8
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.1 Systemic family constellations: An introduction .....	9
2.2 The process of a systemic constellation .....	10
2.3 Other types of systemic constellations .....	11
2.4 Existing research in systemic constellations .....	14
2.5 Research Proposal .....	16
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	<b>17</b>
3.1 Research design .....	17
3.2 Selection process .....	17
3.3 Data collection instruments .....	18
3.4 Stages in the constellation process .....	18
3.5 Analysis procedures .....	21
3.6 Validity and trustworthiness of design and procedures .....	21
3.7 Ethical issues .....	21
<b>Chapter 4: Results of the individual case studies</b> .....	<b>22</b>
4.1 Case 1 .....	22
4.2 Case 2 .....	27
4.3 Case 3 .....	31
4.4 Case 4 .....	38
4.5 Case 5 .....	43
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion</b> .....	<b>51</b>
5.1 Discussion of results .....	51
5.2 Implications for counselling, psychology and organisational consulting .....	53
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion</b> .....	<b>57</b>
6.1 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research .....	57
6.2 Concluding statement .....	57
<b>References</b> .....	<b>58</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1, Case 1: Initial constellation .....	22
Figure 2, Case 1: The client is facing his mother .....	23
Figure 3, Case 1: Figures knocked over .....	24
Figure 4, Case 1: A little group coming together.....	24
Figure 5, Case 1: Final constellation.....	25
Figure 6, Case 2: Initial constellation .....	28
Figure 7, Case 2: New position for the Goal .....	29
Figure 8, Case 2: Focussing on a larger than life vision.....	29
Figure 9, Case 2: Final constellation.....	30
Figure 10, Case 3: Initial constellation .....	32
Figure 11, Case 3: Adding the bigger goal .....	33
Figure 12, Case 3: Aligning support and facing Obstacle 1.....	34
Figure 13, Case 3: Final constellation.....	35
Figure 14, Case 4: Initial constellation .....	39
Figure 15, Case 4: Claiming the right to have a business .....	40
Figure 16, Case 4: Final constellation.....	41
Figure 17, Case 5: Initial constellation .....	44
Figure 18, Case 5: The Focus is facing the Future Task.....	45
Figure 19, Case 5: Balancing the Hidden Benefit .....	46
Figure 20, Case 5: Facing the Goal again, this time with support.....	46
Figure 21, Case 5: Facing the biggest obstacle.....	47
Figure 22, Case 5: Facing mother and grandmother.....	47
Figure 23, Case 5: Asking permission to have a child.....	48
Figure 24, Case 5: Final constellation.....	48

## **Acknowledgements**

Apart from all my friends who have given me so much support in the last three years, I want to thank in particular, Malcolm Duffield, who helped me stay focussed in the last few months in so many ways, from cooking dinner to proofreading.

My thanks also go to Bubula Lardi, for her encouragement and willingness to share her skills. She let me join her family constellation workshops on many occasions. I am also grateful to the organisers and faculty of both the International Intensive Workshop in Family Constellations and International Organisation Constellations Training Intensive in 2004 by helping me with sponsorships and excellent teaching.

I want to acknowledge the volunteers for their courage to lay out their issues so openly on the table by participating in the constellation sessions and giving valuable feedback in the follow up interviews.

Finally, my thanks go to my supervisor John Clarke for his clear, thorough and encouraging guidance in this project.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Systems theory and the exploration of systemic constellations go beyond the current perceptions in psychotherapy, organisational development, management consulting or performance coaching. Originally developed as family constellations by the German psychotherapist Hellinger (2001), who is among the most well-known, influential and controversial practitioners living in Europe, systemic constellations are virtually unknown in Australia and the United States.

Even though the practice of family constellations was originally referred to as psychotherapy, the originator Bert Hellinger, who is 80 years old this year, now distances himself from this categorisation. He prefers to refer to this work as "applied philosophy" (Hellinger, 2004).

### 1.1 Focus of the study

Serving as a contribution to scientific work, this report discusses a research project focused on a specific form of systemic constellations in a career context, using a structural problem or goal constellation, as developed by Varga von Kibéd and Sparrer (2003) and Sparrer (2004). This is done with the hope of making this fascinating new way of perceiving social systems more accessible to psychotherapists, coaches and consultants. Now that emotional intelligence has been broadly accepted by the professional world, collective consciousness might be ready for a new concept - systemic intelligence. This concept will hopefully bring a better understanding of this world and help resolve conflicts in a more peaceful way.

I have chosen "career issues" as a topic for this study as I have an interest in applying the constellation approach in organisations, to create an opportunity to improve their life for people who do not normally seek psychological help. People typically spend eight hours a day at work, five days a week. If this environment can be made better, it can have a ripple effect onto family life and people can live a happier life.

### 1.2 Rationale

Practice has shown that systemic constellations can be set up not just on families, but on almost any social system and even abstract subjects. They are stimulating and offer insight in many areas. Amongst other things, a systemic issue can be recognised when emotions do not make sense in the client's context (Stam, 1998).

The desire for research is increasing in both the community of systemic constellation practitioners, as well as clients and the interested public. The more popular systemic constellations become, and the more varieties of the original family constellation model are created, the stronger the questioning of the effectiveness of systemic constellations becomes. Ulsamer (2005) states this question even stronger and wants to know "*what* has an effect and *how*?"

### 1.3 Background and hopes

The first time I heard about family constellations was about 10 years ago, when a friend, visiting from Germany, recounted her personal experience and described it as the latest trend in Europe and that it was rapidly gaining in popularity. I was left with a slightly uneasy feeling, in particular on the effects of this new form of psychotherapy. Despite having had many years of experience in personal growth modalities, and generally being very courageous, I didn't immediately follow up. Many more accounts from other friends followed and the desire to participate in a family constellation workshop and "set up my own family" took form. Finally, in 2001 the opportunity arose when a workshop was offered in Byron Bay.

I was very impressed by what I saw and experienced in this workshop. After having experimented with many different modalities, this powerful, yet gentle model captured my interest and created a desire to work with it as a facilitator. I took every opportunity to join a workshop, and in the same year, when Bert Hellinger made a tour through South East Asia, I visited Tokyo to experience the originator of this work first hand. On this visit, I heard for the first time about organisational constellations and that this work had started to be used in businesses. Having worked for many years in the IT industry in the corporate world, this news sparked a special interest. Books and videos were ordered from Germany where there was a large selection to choose from. My being

able to read German was particularly helpful with literature on organisational constellations, as no translations existed in English. Training in Europe, in both family and organisational constellations followed.

My passion for this work grew and I started holding my own workshops and individual sessions. At the same time my respect for the power of this work grew as my personal experience of constellations resulted in improved relationships within my own family. This led to my desire to communicate this to the wider community. To help make this work more accessible and understandable, in particular for business, a scientific research project on the effectiveness of the model seemed a natural next step.

To conduct a research project within an organisation would have stretched the scope of this project too much, so an exploration into career issues was chosen. Even so, I am hoping to identify a potential commercial application and to find ways to turn this research into a product or service.

## 1.4 Aims and research questions

This research does not suggest to value one method over another. Rather, it is anticipated that this process will bring an addition to the field of personal coaching and organisational consulting. As systemic constellations approach client issues phenomenologically, a qualitative research model is drawn upon, involving case studies with five clients. The case studies consist of a systemic structural constellation session and two interviews, one immediately after the session and an informal follow up interview six weeks later. The process and interviews are investigated on the basis of the process evaluation questions:

- Is there a movement towards a solution, and how was it found? and
- How does the final picture of the constellation look, compared to the initial one?

And the client feedback questions:

- What was the experience of the clients after completing a systemic constellation?
- How useful was the information, received in the constellation process, to the clients? and
- How did the clients value systemic constellations as an addition to existing methods in career development?

## 1.5 Definition of key terms

The following terms are used regularly throughout the report.

Constellation	Spatial representation of a system.
Family constellation	Original form of systemic constellation in a family and multi generational context.
Miracle question	Centrepiece of Solution Focused Therapy (SFT) to approach a solution in the future.
Organisational constellation	Systemic constellation in an organisational and business context.
Representative	Person or figure standing in a constellation for a person in the client's life or an abstract element.
Set up a constellation	From a group of persons or figures, representatives for system elements are chosen and arranged in relationship to each other.
Structural constellation	Form of systemic constellation using predefined sets of abstract elements.
System, systemic	Group of people and/or abstract elements, such as body parts, goals, decisions, resources, obstacles and alternatives, interacting with each other.
Systemic constellation	Process through which an individual reveals the hidden dynamics of his or her family, another human system, such as the work place, or a mental system involving abstract elements.

Goal or problem constellation	Specific form of structural constellation as described in section 3.4 Stages in the constellation process.
Ritualistic phrase	Structured speech addressing a representative, the client repeats after the facilitator.

## **1.6 Structure of the report**

This report incorporates chapters on the theoretical background for the research and a documentation on the practical investigation on the application of a systemic structural constellation to career issues. The theoretical section includes a comprehensive literature review of both English and German literature on the application of systemic constellations and on official research that has been conducted on its use. It also contains general descriptions on various systemic constellation models, and different types of its use in an individual or a group setting. The chapter on methodology holds the research design as well as a detailed explanation of the procedure used in the session. The practical section contains summaries and individual results of each case and a general discussion of the findings and their implications for counselling.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Systemic family constellations: An introduction

#### 2.1.1 Systemic family constellations according to Bert Hellinger

Family constellation is a process through which an individual reveals the hidden dynamics of his or her family, or another situation with people, such as the work place. Stiefel, Harris and Zollmann (2002) place this work within a phenomenological model, but also find numerous systemic and group dynamic components and indicate that it overlaps with historical schools of family therapy, especially Boszormenyi-Nagy's contextual model (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1987; Le Goff, 2001).

Hellinger in an interview with ten Hövel (Hellinger & ten Hövel, 1999) explains systemic family therapy as an interest in discovering a client's entanglement in the fates of previous family members. By bringing these hidden dynamics out into the open, with the help of a family constellation, the client can find a resolution to the entanglement more easily.

In a recent lecture *Family Constellations as Applied Philosophy*, Hellinger (2004) spoke about the beginnings and further developments of Family Constellations and described its essence as follows.

But experiences we collected with family constellations have shown us that the world is different to what we imagined. For example, through family constellations it came to light that a system has a governing authority, however you name it. For example, as common conscience or as common soul or as morphic field (The Philosophy section, para. 6-7).

The family constellation model has spread widely, in particular in Germany, over the past twenty years and has generated a great deal of interest in therapeutic circles. Hellinger's (2001) use of family constellations to restore or create order in a system has caused vehement reactions, both positive and negative.

Psychotherapists and founders of other modalities distance themselves from Hellinger and the constellation work (Mindell & Mindell, 2002). The German press coverage ranges from critical opinions to extremely negative reporting (Berth, 2005; Buchholz, 2003; Krause, 2002; Lakotta, 2002). In these articles Hellinger is often referred to as "guru" and constellation practitioners as gullible "disciples". I get the impression that many Germans harbour a deep fear of controversial authorities and not quite explainable methodologies, possibly rooted in the experience of the third Reich.

On the other hand, the same press articles state that, in Germany alone, there are 2000 practitioners and that the question "Did you set up your family already?" is heard more and more in conversations (Buchholz, 2003; Krause, 2002; Lakotta, 2002). One of these practitioners, the registered psychologist Kaden (2004), reports that Hellinger's work has helped her to work as a German with Jewish people in Israel, where many of the participants in her groups had lost members of their families in the holocaust. Kaden is not prepared to distance herself from a person and a methodology that explores the reconciliation of our deepest wounds, both, in a personal and a historical context.

In addition many renowned German publishing houses, such as Carl-Auer, Herder, Goldmann, Knauer and Kösel, print books by Hellinger and other authors writing about this method.

#### 2.1.2 Philosophical background of systemic family constellations

Franke (2003b) traces the origins of systemic family therapy back to the 1950s in Palo Alto where Gregory Bateson and Don D. Jackson examined the possibility of connections between family processes and schizophrenic illnesses. According to Marc and Prichard (as cited in Franke, 2003b), they revealed the significance of the "system" for the individual. Franke also refers to Boszormenyi-Nagy for providing insight into the basic structures of systems therapy as he discovered that sometimes relationship patterns could be traced across several generations. They are not obvious and happen without the affected family member's awareness of them.

Franke (2003b) further states that in practice, the family constellation method is related to psychodrama, introduced by Jacob Moreno, and family reconstruction, used by Virginia Satir. In psychodrama, as developed by Moreno, emotional information is presented and acted on a stage. Thoughts, feelings and perceptions are externalised and can be altered in the course of a session. It

is assumed these alterations have a continuing effect as an internal image which replaces the image of the problem situation. This also happens in family constellations, where a deep understanding of belonging to the family system and in a larger context, the world, is created. This concept was already part of Moreno's work. The family reconstruction developed by Virginia Satir is a method for making the family structure more visible. She had as many family members as possible attend sessions together to act out typical scenes from their daily life. Relationship patterns between the family members and their effect on individuals were revealed and could be modified.

## 2.2 The process of a systemic constellation

### 2.2.1 An overview

In a series of lectures in the *Training in Family Constellations as Developed by Bert Hellinger* in ZIST near Penzberg, Germany, from April 29 to May 6, 2004, Hunter Beaumont elaborated on the process of systemic constellations as summarised below. This process has also been described by other teachers and authors (Erb, 2001; Hellinger, Neuhauser, Beaumont & Fischer, 2000; Ulsamer, 1999, 2003).

A systemic constellation session can be divided up into six basic steps, (a) definition of a good outcome for the constellation, (b) decision about who and what is important for the constellation, (c) constellation setup, (d) study of the presented picture, (e) development of a movement towards a solution, and (f) completion of the constellation.

In an initial interview, the facilitator discusses with the client the request for the constellation to define a good outcome for the constellation. The interview can be led with the help of solution focussed therapy techniques (Sparrer, 2004). The conversation is very focused to find the intention close to the core and heart of the client. This ensures a powerful constellation process.

After gathering information about who belongs to the social system relevant to the client's request, the facilitator decides about who or what is important for the constellation as a representative. Groups of people, such as a company department or customers can be summed up into one representative. A hypothesis might be formed.

The client now chooses representatives for each person or element defined by the facilitator and sets up the constellation. In a collected state, the client places the representatives, who will be in immediate contact with the larger field. When the constellation is set up, the client sits down and watches.

A picture is presented by the representatives standing in the room in a characteristic relationship to each other. This picture represents an inner image of the client and can show unconscious elements of the situation or reveal hidden dynamics. One can feel where there is strength in the system and where not. For example, it can be seen who is respected in the system, who might be excluded, and where there are points of disturbance.

The facilitator then follows steps to bring the constellation to a place where movement towards a solution starts to happen. Representatives are rearranged and ritualistic sentences suggested by the facilitator are repeated by the representatives to either create more clarity of the current situation or as a resolution for a new inner image for the client. For example, a manager honours an employee that has been dismissed unfairly. In this process, the facilitator is in constant contact with the representatives and the client to receive feedback about the interventions and find information for the next step.

To complete the constellation, the client might be placed directly into the constellation. Then the constellation is dissolved. In the final conversation with the client, some ideas and suggestions might come up on how the solution just seen can be transferred into reality. However, the facilitator reinforces the phenomenological approach and suggests to the client to let the constellation do "its work" unconsciously. Analysing what had happened might diminish its strength.

### 2.2.2 The phenomenon of the knowing field

In systems created by human beings, such as families or organisations, there is an energetic layer that is not talked about (Erb, 2001) and somehow systemic constellations have access to this layer. It is difficult to describe what actually happens in a systemic constellation and why complete strangers who have been chosen by chance can act and feel like a family member they know

nothing about. Hellinger, in his interview with ten Hövel, (Hellinger & ten Hövel, 1999) stated that there is no way to explain this.

The curious thing about these constellations is that once the chosen representatives are in place they begin to feel like the real family members. Sometimes they even begin to have symptoms of the real people without knowing anything about them. Once, for example, someone representing an epileptic began to have an epileptic seizure. Often a representative will report a pounding heart, or he or she will feel cold on one side of the body. If we ask about the real person, it often turns out that the symptoms reflect something in the situation of the real people in the family. There's really no way to explain this, but you see it again and again in thousands of constellations. (p. 3)

Hellinger (2001) describes that, through a phenomenological posture of everybody participating in a constellation, the soul of the client transmits a knowing field of which representatives and the facilitator can be part. This phenomenon, which Hellinger also calls the "family soul" or a "knowing soul", is a deeper knowing of a person that appears in every constellation. This layer is most widely known as the "knowing field" but has also been referred to as the "morphic field" (Hellinger, 2004). Mahr (cited in Ulsamer, 2003) calls it a "field of wisdom" and Ulsamer has "chosen to call it the 'informing field' because it is the field which forms the connections and also reveals the form and dynamics of the system, i.e. it forms and it informs as well" (p. 23).

Attempts have been made to place the dynamics of the knowing field revealed in systemic constellations into a bigger picture with links to indigenous traditions. In a presentation at the *International Congress for Family and Human Systems Constellations* in Würzburg, Germany, Mason Boring (2003), a member of the Native American Shoshone Nation, talked about her experience when she first encountered constellation work. "I felt I somehow remembered this work, and I felt that my Grandmother would know this work" (para 4). For Mason Boring, family systems constellations have to be placed in the context of her own multigenerational experience of the "field" which she refers to as the "indigenous field". She further states that "walking the 'field' for many indigenous people is a way of life" (para 6), that this field is prepared or opened by prayer, and that when the ancestors are present in the field, healing can happen through rituals and ceremonies.

Likewise, van Kampenhout (2001) was fascinated about the similarities between shamanic rituals and systemic family constellations. He entered into a correspondence with Hellinger to explore the relationship between shamanism and family constellations. In the book that followed, van Kampenhout describes spiritual principles which form the basis of both shamanic practice and systemic family constellations.

### **2.2.3 Other ways to facilitate a systemic constellation**

In an email conversation on a newsgroup on June 4, 2005 Max Dauskardt described a variance to the standard procedure of facilitating a constellation. He conducts a pre-constellation interview with the client over the phone to find out important facts in the family background and to construct a genogram. This gives the advantage that the representatives do not know who they are representing and cannot add their own interpretation to the role.

In addition to applying the method to family systems, systemic constellations can be used to find out more about other human systems such as organisations, businesses and institutions. More abstract themes such as cultural issues, health, goals, decisions, inner conflicts, difficult circumstances and phobias can also be addressed.

## **2.3 Other types of systemic constellations**

### **2.3.1 Organisational constellations**

In recent years the systemic constellation model has found its way into companies and organisations (Weber, 2002). Called organisational constellations, this form is only ten years old. Gunthard Weber talked about the beginnings of organisational constellations in his introductory lecture to the *International Organization Constellation Training Intensive* in Bergen, The Netherlands, on October 18, 2004. The development started in 1995 when two business consultants invited Hellinger to test his systemic approach on other human systems that are less long lasting than families. Hellinger was personally not interested in pursuing this path and handed the responsibility over to Weber. Organisational systems differ from family systems in that organisations are public and its members

can leave the system (Erb, 2001; Weber & Gross, 2000). The brochure for the *International Organization Constellation Training Intensive* (Bert Hellinger Institute, 2004) describes the systemic concept in organisations as follows.

We live in systems and we work in systems. The dynamics in these systems support us to be who we are and do what we do. The dynamics in organizations should, in theory, also support us. When organizations can provide strength and a structure that allows for the continuous, lively exchange of talents, products and services among the elements of the organization, they are environments in which we can grow and develop ourselves. The organization can offer us, simply, a good place to be. (p. 15)

Erb (2001) finds that constellation work in organisations increases awareness in participants. Feelings can be felt more clearly and placed into a bigger context. It trains participants in cross-thinking and to recognise connections and dependencies between elements of the system. Through an external view of one's own system, solutions can be found.

Stam (1998), an organisational consultant working with system dynamics, reports that clients often call it "telling the truth" when an issue is addressed from a systemic point of view. Not every issue can be helped with a systemic constellations and Stam found some indications for systemic issues. When a client talks about the issue three kinds of emotions can be sensed, (a) primary emotions, (b) secondary emotions, and (c) systemic emotions. Primary emotions are an instant and direct reaction to an event such as an attack. Secondary emotions act as a substitute for another emotion, such as anger for feeling helpless. The client continues to talk about the issue but the consultant senses that the issue is really about something else. Systemic emotions are feelings taken on from the system. It is as if the emotions are not really expressed by the client, although they are very authentic. Another indication for a systemic issue are situations such as the length an issue has been present and how many consultants have worked without lasting success on the issue before, or when the consultant stumbles on secrets and taboos during initial explorations.

Horn and Brick (2005) discuss the systemic structure of a team, company or market and use systemic constellations with feedback from individuals who are not involved in the problem situation to reveal hidden dynamics and to indicate solutions. They report this approach has been used in companies such as Daimler-Chrysler, IBM, and BMW and the successes play a part in growing interest in this method in Europe.

### 2.3.2 Health and issue constellations

When looking at health issues, a constellation can be set up to try and understand what is going on. Usually the constellation is started by setting up two representatives, one person for the client and another one for the diseased organ or the illness. These constellations can either stay on the level of the illness and sometimes show the client a movement to a solution, or evolve into a family constellation and place the client with the illness into the larger context (Hellinger, 2003; Hellinger et al., 2000).

Peterson and Lee (2004) describe issue constellations as an additional type of systemic constellation. Instead of setting up family or organisational members in a constellation, components of the client's issue are used. Several representatives are set up with each one standing for one particular part or "voice" in relation to the issue the client presents. Ulsamer (2003) also refers to constellations that include feelings, personality characteristics and inner qualities. Peterson and Lee describe an example where one inner part of the client wants growth and another one resists. In this case a constellation would be started with three representatives, the two parts and the client, him or herself. These constellations can reveal whether the issue has roots in the family or organisational system the client belongs to. An example, which is a combination of a health and issue constellation, can be found in the fifth constellation of volume 3 of the "Holding Love" video (Hellinger et al., 2000) where the client presents a series of health concerns. Hellinger starts the constellation with three representatives, one for the client herself, one for her illness and one for her soul. An issue is not necessarily linked to a family or organisational system. Externalising inner struggles by means of a constellation can shift profoundly a client's beliefs or "inner system".

Issue constellations can create an opportunity for the client to see, hear and feel other ways to deal with the issue. Peterson and Lee (2004) proposed in their paper five subcategories of issues which lend themselves to this type of constellation, (a) decisions between two or more possibilities, (b) conflicts with one or more internal parts, (c) something unknown is interfering with or blocking a

choice, a course of action or change, (d) difficult circumstances or experiences the client is not able to process, and (e) phobias and fears.

Madelung (see Madelung & Innecken, 2004) approaches systemic constellations from a Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) background calling her work Neuro-Imaginative Gestalting (NIG). She created a set of structures that incorporate NLP elements into a constellation.

### 2.3.3 Structural constellations

A more specific form of issue constellations is the systemic structural constellation model as developed by Varga von Kibéd and Sparrer (Sparrer, 2004; Varga von Kibéd & Sparrer, 2003) where abstract elements are placed into a set of predefined constellation structures. Influenced by hypnotherapy, systemic therapy and family therapy, Varga von Kibéd and Sparrer developed a specific style, procedure and posture for their work with constellations. In the systemic structural constellation work, various topics are set up in a constellation such as body systems, decision structures, goals, resources, alternatives, internal parts and mental structures. The client is set up in the constellation as the "focus" which includes the question the client has for the constellation. A constellation in this context is an externalisation of an inner image. This externalised image has an advantage to the inner image, in that this image can be changed in a way that the parts of the system can feel better. This in turn can have a positive effect on the problem situation.

In their model, Varga von Kibéd and Sparrer worked out constellation types such as (a) the problem constellation, (b) constellations of the excluded (hidden) theme, (c) tetralemma<sup>1</sup> constellations, and (d) value triangle constellations. With the assumption that there is no problem without a goal and no goal without a problem, the problem constellation contains all basic elements important for attaining a goal; the focus, the goal, the hidden benefit in not reaching the goal, the future task when the goal has been reached, challenges and resources. The constellation of the excluded theme consists of three sub-forms of the problem constellation with three positions each, (a) focus, goal and obstacle, (b) focus, goal and hidden benefit, and (c) focus, goal and future task. The tetralemma constellation is used for decision making using a thinking system from eastern society. Elements of the negated tetralemma according to the Madhyamika Buddhism of Nagarjuna are set up in the constellation. This is particularly helpful in either-or situations that are unresolved. The tetralemma constellation has the six elements, the focus and two options, which can be described as options a and b. The options can be combined into five possible outcomes: a, b, a plus b, not a or b and "not even this and not even that". This constellation form is helpful in organisations, with coaching and when working with teams. Finally, the value triangle has its roots in the religious principle of insight, love and order, but can be adapted to other contexts such as "truth, clarity and right action", or in organisations as "people, organisation and market". The three positions of the triangle are set up fixed or flexible with a constellation evolving around it (Erb, 2001; Sparrer, 2004; Varga von Kibéd & Sparrer, 2003).

In structural constellations, multiple levels of systems related to each other can often come to light, in particular with issues concerning corporate organisations. Personal or family levels, various hierarchy levels, fusions and global entanglements are interacting with each other (Erb, 2001).

### 2.3.4 Systemic constellations in individual setting

Practitioners have been very creative in adapting the original group setting of a systemic constellation to a one-on-one counselling setting, by using multiple forms of placeholders for the representative. Franke (2003a) believes, after almost ten years of experience with this form, that constellations in an individual setting can be just as powerful and valuable as constellations in a group with live representatives. She has published a book to address the issue specifically.

Franke (2003a) points out that body awareness is important in individual constellations to give information about the client's dynamics and relationships. When the client does not have much

---

<sup>1</sup> As a logical extension to the work of Aristotle, the tetralemma is the Buddhist argumentation model for decision making or "dilemmas" with four alternatives. "They represent four logical possibilities of the form: (1) affirmation, (2) negation, (3) both affirmation and negation, and (4) neither affirmation nor negation" (Sawamura & Mares, 2004, p. 1).

experience with therapy and in particular constellations techniques, it is therefore important to introduce the work in steps. She suggests exercises with one simple dynamic, such as standing opposite the father, before guiding the client into more complex inner images. Ulsamer (2003) further describes that when doing constellations with figures or symbols clients identify with the figures surprisingly quickly and finds that “in a certain way, the work is lighter, more playful. Even children can set up a family very clearly in a free and easy way. At the same time, it often has an astoundingly deep effect” (p. 182).

Baitinger (2000) reasons that, in particular, in organisational constellations, a group setting is inadvisable because of the level of discretion that needs to happen when executives or board members address intra-company problems. Apart from the importance of keeping confidentiality, it is often difficult to find a neutral group of representatives large enough at a time when the problem is at a critical point. In addition, if employees would be used as representatives, they might be inhibited out of fear of repercussions to express how they experience a position in a constellation.

Constellations in an individual setting can be differentiated into three types, (a) constellations with floor markers, (b) constellations with figures, and (c) visualised constellations, where the client stays seated and plays out the process in his or her mind’s eye (Franke, 2003a; Madelung & Innecken, 2004; Schneider, 2000; Ulsamer, 2003; Weber & Ehrig, 2004). Franke describes constellations with floor markers or figures as follows.

The picture shown in the client’s first configuration is a representation of his or her view of the problem. The therapist changes the positions of the representative objects in the direction of an image of resolution. The constellation process and the changes are basically directed towards a reaching out movement between the individuals. (p. 111)

In constellations with floor markers the client places pieces of paper, cardboard or felt on the floor in the same way as life representatives would be placed within the working space (Franke, 2003a). I have also used shoes and cushions as floor markers. Any object will do. Once the markers are laid out, the client can either watch the constellation from outside of the system, stand on the different markers to feel the different dynamics in the system, or take their own place in the system. By standing on these placeholders in turn, the client experiences the dynamics in his or her own setting. This can be very powerful and supports an understanding of other members of the family or social system the client sets up. The possibility of remaining outside the system and standing on a dedicated marker, the “meta-position”, allows an inner distance to the constellation, a witness state (Franke, 2003a; Madelung & Innecken, 2004). Madelung includes an element of art therapy into constellation work by letting the client draw sketches with the non-dominant hand onto each piece of paper to open up another level of communication. In this context, Madelung considers the idea that psychotherapy might be closer to art than science.

Another way to look at the constellation from the outside is by using figures, dolls or blocks as representatives. In these constellations, complex family systems, even multiple family systems, can be represented in clear and tangible way in a small space (Franke, 2003a; Schneider, 2000; Weber & Ehrig, 2004). Jakob and Sieglinde Schneider are using Playmobile figures in this form of constellations in an individual settings. The figures, representing men, woman and children, have various dress and hair shapes and colours and show minimum “character” to help prevent pre-conceptions and distraction from non-essentials.

In visualisations, the constellation usually begins with the relationship with one other person only and the picture is developed slowly and systematically. This allows for a specific exploration of each relationship (Franke, 2003a).

## 2.4 Existing research in systemic constellations

Numerous publications and training videos present many real life examples of systemic constellation work, but hardly any official research has been conducted on its use. The only publication in English is the translation of Franke’s (2003b) doctorate, a qualitative research using case studies. Franke investigates the use of family constellations in individual counselling. Cohen (2004) finds that even though Hellinger has ignited a revolution in therapeutic practice in Europe, his work is unknown in American family therapy circles because his contributions are not documented in peer-reviewed journals. Cohen (newsgroup email communication, 12 October 2004) stated that he is planning a research project to provide the professional and scholarly communities with both an introduction to the principles of constellation work and a credible piece of research to suggest its promise as a form of treatment.

Only one quantitative research project on organisational constellations has been published, and it is in German. In this study, Ruppert (cited in Weber, 2002) examines work relationships by setting up systemic constellations involving security experts in industrial companies. Executives and managers are set up as constellations of important individuals in their work situation, using small figures. These constellations were then reconstructed with the help of students as live representatives. The constellations and feedback of the representative students standing in the constellation were then statistically analysed by creating various variables that describe the form of relationships between the participants. Ruppert focussed on emotional relationships between individuals in the constellation or to the company structure at large, in both positive and negative expressions. He also focussed on whether a relationship between two people was cooperative for the organisation or not, and whether an individual showed responsibility in their position. The outcome of the research on 61 constellations showed more negative than positive emotional relationships, in particular relationships involving security experts. Although, generally, the cooperative relationship was balanced, the cooperation with the security experts in particular was very low. Ruppert demonstrated in this study that systemic constellations are a rewarding field for empirical studies both in content and method. He expressed the hope that constellations of relationships in the workplace would help in understanding informal structures in companies and organisations.

Three other studies are currently under way, covering a wide field from organisational constellations through to product testing and on to the application of systemic approaches in schools. In Germany, Schlötter (2004) is conducting a verification process on systemic constellations to answer the question, "Does the universal symbol language 'position in space' exist and do people have a tendency to understand it, speak it and find with its help lasting solutions?" The researcher was unavailable for further information on the project.

In the Netherlands, Jurg (2003) is addressing the opinions of brand experts<sup>2</sup> on the usefulness of the application of systemic exploration to branding issues. Jurg calls this form of constellation "SEBI, from 'Systemic Exploration of Branding Issues'. It is meant to give CEOs and brand managers a tool to check whether their research question is the most relevant one for the brand, or whether another question should have priority" (p. 2).

In the United Kingdom, a pilot study is being conducted by the Nowherfoundation (2004) on how teachers can use systemic approaches to enhance children's learning. "The project was an exploration of the use of practices that enable teachers and children to view and experience their class groups and schools as systems – and apply their insights to removing blocks of learning" (p. 3). The research team reports that the effect on the informants has exceeded expectations and that the teachers developed a better understanding of the students' needs and capabilities, and enhanced their skills in addressing the needs of the students and creating an environment that supports learning.

The above findings show a lack of documented research on systemic constellation methodologies, even though the importance and influence of a system for the individual was shown fifty years ago (Franke, 2003b). In addition to this, I am not aware of any research on systemic structural constellation. However, the research that has been done along with the anecdotal evidence from workshops and training programs, strongly suggests that constellations have a beneficial effect on personal and professional relationships.

---

<sup>2</sup> "Branders" or "Brand Experts", more commonly known in Australia, the UK and the USA as "Brand Managers", are the individuals responsible for creating enhancing and maintaining their Brand's "perceived values" through the use of consumer research, marketing communications, package design, product redesign, etc. These 'perceived values' typically include both the customer's rational *and* emotional response to the product or service (or company, political party, etc). Brand values may be seemingly tangible, such as 'expected performance' or 'expected residual financial value', or as intangible as 'friendly', 'caring', 'honest', 'trustworthy', 'sexy', 'attractive', 'aggressive', 'sporty', etc. The perceived values of established brands are so delicate - even those built over several generations, as to require the Brander Managers of such products to think of themselves as "Brand Custodians" rather than "Brand Inventors".

## **2.5 Research Proposal**

Having reviewed the literature in the field of systemic constellations, a study on systemic structural constellations in a work, business or organisational context is suggested, as currently even a publication on the basic techniques of this promising new methodology, is missing in English.



## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Research design

The objective of this project is to collect the opinion of professionals on the application of systemic structural constellations to address their career challenges. The study follows a qualitative phenomenological research approach (Bolger, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Morrissette, 1999), focusing on evidence from personal reports of the systemic exploration experience in relation to career issues. The participating clients are the primary study subjects.

A total of five cases was investigated with the clients being seen twice by me, once for the systemic constellation session with a short interview immediately at the end the session, and a second time for a follow up interview. The data analysed is collected from two areas:

- my experience of the constellation; and
- the client's feedback after the session.

The process of the systemic constellation session is evaluated using the questions:

- Is there a movement towards a solution, and how was it found? and
- How does the final picture of the constellation look, compared to the initial one?

And the client feedback is investigated on the basis of the questions:

- What is the experience of the clients after completing a systemic constellation?
- How useful is the information received in the constellation process to the clients? and
- How do the clients value systemic constellations as an addition to existing methods in career development?

The client feedback is collected in the form of interviews, with both informal conversation and specific questions. In interview 1, immediately after the session, the clients are asked:

- How are you feeling after doing the constellation?
- Did it answer your request, did it give new insights into your career?
- How useful do you find the information that emerged from the process? and
- How does the constellation process compare to other methods of career development that you have experienced?

Interview 2, the follow up interview, is held approximately six weeks after the session to investigate whether there have been any changes in the life of the client as a result of the systemic constellation session. Open ended questions are asked, such as:

- What insights did the constellation give you?
- Does the constellation influence your way of thinking about your career, and if so, how?
- Does the constellation give you reason's for changes in your career, and if so, which one(s)?
- How did you feel right after the session? and
- How has work been since the session?

These interview questions are used as a framework in an informal conversation. Unless asked directly, often clients don't notice changes in their lives after a constellation because this change feels so normal to them.

Both, the systemic constellation session and the interviews were led by me.

### 3.2 Selection process

For the case studies, five volunteers had to be found to participate in the project as clients in a constellation session and as informants in the interviews.

Through extensive contract work in the IT industry, I have wide-spread contacts with members of the business sector. In addition, I have a number of clients working in this environment, who have either had an individual systemic constellation session already, or have participated in one of my workshops. Initially, potential participants were approached through personal contact or referrals. If interest in the project was shown, the recruitment process continued with a meeting to describe the process and offer the information sheet and consent form.

Ideal participants for this study are members of the workforce in a variety of jobs and positions in the corporate world. It is intended to deliberately form a diverse group of people for the potential participant pool. This includes, but was not limited to: skilled personnel; account managers; consultants; and managers in different stages of their career.

As will be seen in the results, one participant did not fit the criteria of working in the corporate world. Instead, she is building up a physical therapy business. I decided it was worthwhile to include her in the study as it added to the variety.

The most suitable participants are those who are interested in enhancing and developing their career. This manifests itself as dissatisfaction with the current career situation, a desire to reach a particular goal, and/or a desire to resolve a particular conflict currently influencing their career. These criteria are discussed at the initial meeting with potential participants, in addition to the description of the process, to determine eligibility for inclusion in the study.

### **3.3 Data collection instruments**

For this project, a constellation is set up in a one-on-one setting. Instead of setting up the constellation in a group setting with other group members as live representatives, clients set up the constellation with abstract figures as representatives.

In the constellation session, a set of abstract figures the size of regular chess pieces are used to represent the ideas and people in relation to the client's career issue and/or workplace. Seen from above, male figures are square and female figures are round. Figures representing a child are smaller than the ones representing adults. A cut out triangle indicates the way the figures are facing.

The figures are placed on a board located at knee height in between the facilitator and client, who are sitting on chairs facing each other. The figures are also marked during the session with whiteboard markers according to what they represent. The arrangement of these figures and the associated interpretation is used in the session to determine future career actions for the client.

For investigation of the process, an audio recording of the session and interviews is taken. To keep a visual record, digital photographs of the constellation with the abstract figures are taken at various stages of the session. Some of these photographs are used for illustration purposes in chapter 4. No photographs of clients or facilitator are taken.

A summary and analysis of each session and interview, with transcripts of essential sections, have been created and can be found in chapter 4.

### **3.4 Stages in the constellation process**

People seem to have an unconscious inner image of how things are. The application of human systems constellations to career challenges can help reveal the inner image to this issue. An indication is given as to the type and quality of relationships a person has with people who have an influence on his or her career and with career elements such as goals, challenges and supports. The way the people and the elements interact add up to the "constellation" influencing a person's career.

In the constellation session for this study, the people and elements are represented by figures. These figures are moved around on a board during the session to reflect not only the current set of relationships, but also to explore new possible arrangements. The implications of these arrangements are discussed during the session. Used in this way, systemic constellations create the possibility to help change an original inner image to a more beneficial one.

The structural constellation model as developed by Varga von Kibéd and Sparrer (Sparrer, 2004; Varga von Kibéd & Sparrer, 2003) was chosen for this study. In this approach, abstract elements according to a predefined constellation structure are chosen instead of representatives for people. The problem or goal constellation presents itself as a suitable approach for a career context.

The structure contains elements important for attaining a goal, such as:

- the Focus, which is the client asking the question;
- the Goal;
- the Hidden Benefit in not reaching the goal;
- the Future Task when the goal has been reached;
- up to three Obstacles; and
- up to three Resources.

Obstacles and Resources can stand for people, circumstances or ideas in relation to the client's issue. In fact, the client does not even need to know what it is when setting up the constellation. With the exception of the Goal, this is also valid for the other elements of the constellation.

The Hidden Benefit represents the benefits the client gets for staying in the present situation without reaching the goal. This benefit is usually unconscious and is the most complex concept in this structure. It is derived from the assumption that there is no goal without a problem, otherwise the goal would have been reached already. And in turn, there is no problem without a benefit for staying with the problem. This is usually unconscious; therefore, the Hidden Benefit element in this constellation structure helps to shed light onto an unconscious dynamic.

The Future Task stands for whatever comes once the goal has been reached. Life goes on afterwards and needs to be in vision for the client, otherwise, reaching a certain goal might be too scary.

Here is an example to describe the importance of these two concepts, Hidden Benefit and Future Task. A student, still financially supported by his or her parents, has the goal of passing through the final exams. The benefit of not passing the exams and staying a student would be financial support by the parents, and the task after the exams have been passed would be finding a job and starting to work.

The constellation session, including a short interview, took about 70 minutes, and the follow up interview generally lasted 30 minutes. For the session and the interviews I proceeded as follows:

### **3.4.1 Explanation of the process**

At the start of the session an explanation of the process is given to the client, including a description of the figures, what they represent, and which way they were facing. This is usually not audio recorded.

### **3.4.2 Definition of a good outcome for the constellation**

For a successful constellation, it is very important for the client to formulate a clear and strong intention. In an introductory interview, the request for the constellation is discussed with the client until the intention can be formulated in one sentence. For this project, the goal is limited to career challenges. The discussion includes topics influencing the goal, such as other people involved, challenges presenting themselves, and available support. The aim of this conversation is to find an intention for the constellation that is close to client's core and heart. This ensures a depth in the work that follows.

In the introductory interview we explore how the client would recognise when the goal is reached, what would happen and who else would see it. Here the "miracle question", as developed in solution focussed therapy (SFT), was drawn on (Sparrer, 2004), with questions such as "lets assume this constellation is a success – and a little miracle happens – and when we are finished with it, you know exactly what to do. How would you recognise that?" and "Who else would notice that you are on track?" and "How would they recognise it?"

### **3.4.3 Decision about who and what is important for the constellation**

In the problem or goal constellation used in this study, the representatives for the constellation are predefined. In other constellation sessions outside the study context, structure and representatives are chosen according to the client's request. I have prepared the client in the selection process for

this situation and chose only participants who had an issue that this constellation model could benefit.

For the elements of the constellation, the client has a choice of four types of figures, adult male and female, and child male and female. The figures are then marked with a whiteboard pen as follows:

**F = Focus**

**G = Goal**

**B = Hidden Benefit**

**T = Future Task**

**R1, R2 and R3 = up to three Resources**

**O1, O2 and O3 = up to three Obstacles.**

The constellation process is then used to create a support system for the client and bring the goal into focus.

#### **3.4.4 Relaxation and focus**

As a preparation for the setup of the constellation, the client is taken on a guided journey through the body. This helps create awareness of sensations, aches and pains in different parts of the body, breathing pattern, heart and mind - and is done with two aims. One is to help the client relax and approach the constellation more from an intuitive and non-thinking place. The other aim is to help create a reference point for the client to be able to recognise new thoughts and feelings when figures are placed in different positions during the session.

#### **3.4.5 Constellation process**

The constellation process itself consists of five phases, the constellation setup, the study of the presented picture, the development of a movement towards a resolution, the completion of the constellation and the release of the constellation. Digital photos are taken throughout the development, from the initial picture to the final constellation.

Generally, a constellation is facilitated as follows: After the client has placed the figures on the board a picture is presented by the representatives standing in a characteristic relationship to each other. This picture represents the client's inner image of the situation showing unconscious elements. The facilitator and the client are then able to feel where there is strength in the system and where not. For example, it can be seen who or what is respected in the system, who might be excluded or even missing, and where there are points of disturbance. The constellation is then rearranged slowly and with constant discussion to find better positions for the people and elements involved.

In the problem or goal constellation, better positions for the figures could be that the Focus is facing the Goal with the Future Task still in vision, a bit further away than the Goal. The Hidden Benefit, along with Resources and Obstacles are often placed in peripheral vision. Obstacles can turn into resources during the process, and Resources can also be placed behind the Focus as a support for the client.

Sometimes ritualistic phrases are spoken, to either create more clarity of the current situation or, as a resolution and a new inner image for the client. For example, a manager honours an employee that has been dismissed unfairly. The figures are placed opposite each other to help the client's imagination of the conversation. The facilitator suggests phrases, usually short, with a strong message. If the Focus is involved, the client repeats the phrases, suggested by the facilitator, and reports whether saying it feels right. Sometimes the facilitator invites the client to find his or her own words, with something like "Is there anything you would like to say to this person?"

Once a movement towards a resolution has developed, the session is completed with a short final conversation. The constellation is *not* analysed; trying to understand mentally, what just happened, would take away the phenomenological power of the process. But ideas and suggestions might come up on how the solution just seen can be transferred to the current career situation and how it could be interpreted to determine future career actions.

### **3.4.6 Interview 1**

During the interview immediately following the constellation session, the client gives feedback on the experience of the constellation and answers the first set of the research questions as described above in the research design section.

### **3.4.7 Interview 2**

As a preparation for the follow up interview, the facilitator listens to the recording of the session, this helps refresh the memory and with making notes for additional interview questions specifically related to the client's story. This makes the discussion more personal and creates an environment for the informant to remember, in more detail, what happened in the past weeks. Special focus is set on the outcome for the constellation that was defined in the initial conversation with the client and on the completion of the constellation. In addition to this, the second set of research questions, as described above, are discussed.

## **3.5 Analysis procedures**

In order to do justice to the therapeutic process of systemic constellations, a qualitative approach is used for this study. The individual cases presented contain various aspects of the client's professional life and career development, and thus demonstrate widely varied individual constellations. These aspects would have been difficult to elicit in a quantitative context. In contrast, qualitative research can take them into account with summaries, evaluation of the individual processes and feedback of the clients. The aim is to employ a phenomenological methodology to find out how people experience a systemic constellation session and whether they notice any changes in their lives afterwards. Therefore five case studies were chosen. Based on the characteristics of the object, no objective truth was waiting to be discovered, rather, features of the session, and time after, are interpreted in terms of experiences. The focus is the essence of human experience concerned with systemic exploration, and what happens in the life of the client in the first weeks after the constellation was carried out.

## **3.6 Validity and trustworthiness of design and procedures**

It is difficult to find a research concept for constellation work because the outcome of a session is often intangible, and changes in a client's life happen often so naturally that a client does not notice the change unless special attention has been drawn to it. Therefore, the questions in the follow up interview had to be formulated to be able to extract this information.

## **3.7 Ethical issues**

During the development and modification of a constellation, there is a small possibility that the clients may experience some emotional distress because the process involves the acknowledgement and exploration of relationships with people and elements influencing their career and life in general. Similarly, during the time following the constellation, there is again a small possibility that the informants may experience feelings of unrest in relation to their career because the outcomes of the constellation process may suggest the need for adjustments to their career.

These risks are addressed in two ways. For the exploration of deeper personal issues, if they come up in the session, I ensure a safe setting. The ability to hold this space is based on my background of over 20 years in personal growth, meditation and group processes combined with the skills acquired in training in counselling, coaching and leadership. I have also studied family and organisational constellations in depth with Bert Hellinger and other leading practitioners in Europe. In addition to this, the follow up interview gives the client an opportunity to talk about any issues that might have arisen from the session.

With Brisbane being a relatively small place, where people know each other and move from business to business or one government agency to another, additional care has to be taken to keep confidentiality. Anonymity and confidentiality is safeguarded in any publication and clients are only identified by gender, age group and occupation.

## Chapter 4: Results of the individual case studies

A wealth of information has been received in both the sessions and the interviews. In this chapter, each of the five, very varied, cases are presented with summaries, direct quotes, evaluations, client feedback and photographs of the constellations with the abstract figures. Both the sessions and interviews are investigated for each research question. Full transcripts of the constellation sessions and the interviews can be found in the appendix.

### 4.1 Case 1

Male; Age group: 50-60; Occupation: Insurance Underwriter.

Experience with systemic constellations: One individual session.

#### 4.1.1 Summary of the constellation session

##### *Definition of a good outcome*

This client was looking for a better understanding, awareness and acceptance of the career choice he had made. At the time of the session, he was in a senior clerical position, at the "top of the ladder", as he called it, and there wasn't much he could do without moving into management. He didn't want that, he had been in management before and chose to step from it. Nevertheless, he was looking for ways to accept more responsibility and accountability in his work and for a more supervisory role. He wanted to make his work more rewarding, both personally and financially. His goal for the constellation was formulated as follows:

**CLIENT:** To have and allow more responsibility overall, as defined by a larger underwriting authority, more supervisory role over my junior colleges, and a recognition of that - both in title and financially.

##### *Identification of figures*

Figure representations in this constellation are:

F = Focus = Client;

G = Goal = More responsibility and a recognition in title and financially;

B = Hidden Benefit = Internal feminine aspect that had replaced the missing mother;

T = Future Task = Not defined;

R1 = Resource 1 = Not defined;

R2 = Resource 2 = Not defined;

O1 = Obstacle 1 = Client when he was a small boy; and

O2 = Obstacle 2 = Mother.

##### *Constellation process*

And after some adjustments the initial constellation looked as follows.



Figure 1, Case 1: Initial constellation

This client understood the meaning of the Hidden Benefit immediately and talked about it when he had a first look at the constellation.

**CLIENT:** Ok, what I see is I start with myself as the focus. So, starting there I want to understand the Hidden Benefit of why I am choosing to be here in the first place. I want to understand the benefit of being here.

Initial observation prompted the client to explore the symmetry.

**CLIENT:** The ones at each end (*Focus, Hidden Benefit and Goal, Future Task*) have got the same height, yet in the middle I've got one (*Obstacle 2*) that is the same height and three smaller ones (*Obstacle 1, Resource 1 and Resource 2*). I am conscious of this, that really chunks it up. Everything else is symmetrical and this is there. And that really breaks it up.

When I pointed out that the big figures are usually adults and the small ones could be children, he commented:

**CLIENT:** It feels like this is the mother and these are the children. That's all I'm getting there, it is mother and children, mother and children. And they're all wrapped in together and the mother is an obstacle. The mother is the biggest obstacle.

When asked whether this resonates with a figure in real life, the client reported that his mother had died when he was five years old. He was emotionally touched when he realised that she showed up in the constellation and had been placed as an obstacle. She was looking at him and he was looking away, at the Hidden Benefit, which was also female. The client explored the Hidden Benefit a bit further.

**CLIENT:** It could be the feminine aspect of me that is comfortable just doing what I'm doing without doing the masculine ambitious thing of getting on. . . . And yet a certain degree of masculine energy is needed to function. So the benefit can sit here with my feminine matched in balance.

When the attention was drawn to the Goal, which was also female, the client noted that both, Focus and Hidden Benefit, and Future Task and Goal, were male and female and facing each other.

**CLIENT:** I am just struck with looking at this now. I have the masculine and the feminine facing this way here and the masculine and feminine facing another way over there. It's still almost a similar space apart.

But the Focus and the Goal were not looking at each other and in between them stood all Obstacles and Resources, blocking any potential view. I rearranged the Focus to face Obstacle 2, he had defined as his mother.

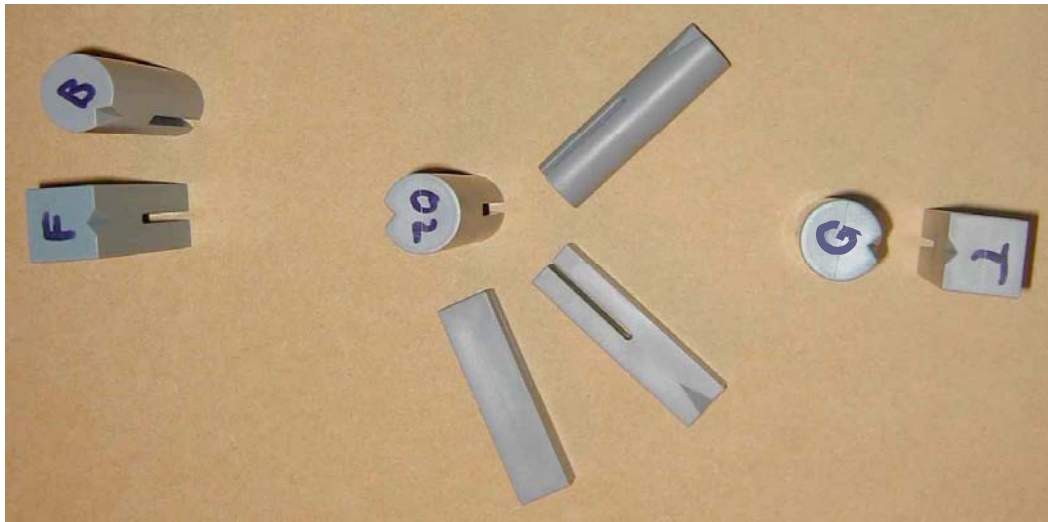


**Figure 2, Case 1: The client is facing his mother**

The client reacted strongly.

**CLIENT:** In looking at that I just feel like moving all these others, like knocking them away. This is the obstacle - and I almost feel like, there is nothing else than this in looking at this group. All I'm seeing is *this*.

And knocked over Obstacle 1, Resource 1 and Resource 2.



**Figure 3, Case 1: Figures knocked over**

After an invitation to look at his mother in his mind as she was in real life, the client was guided through the following:

**FACILITATOR:** And accept her as your mother and maybe you might hear her say, that "you are my son and I will always be there for you. Even if I am not in my body any more I'm still the big one, you are the small one. And I'll carry the female principle for you".

I placed the mother, and also a new figure representing the father, behind the focus as a support and invited the client to externalise the Hidden Benefit. He felt comfortable with this, although no specific person came up.

Next, the three figures lying on the board were returned to standing position; Obstacle 1 was identified as the small boy the client was when his mother died. The figure was placed to the left of the Focus in front of the mother. Resource 1 and Resource 2 were placed on the right side of the focus without having a specific identity, except for being the masculine and feminine balance.



**Figure 4, Case 1: A little group coming together**

The client commented:

**CLIENT:** I love the feeling of this little group coming together.

The Goal, still looking away from the Focus, could now be turned around and brought closer.

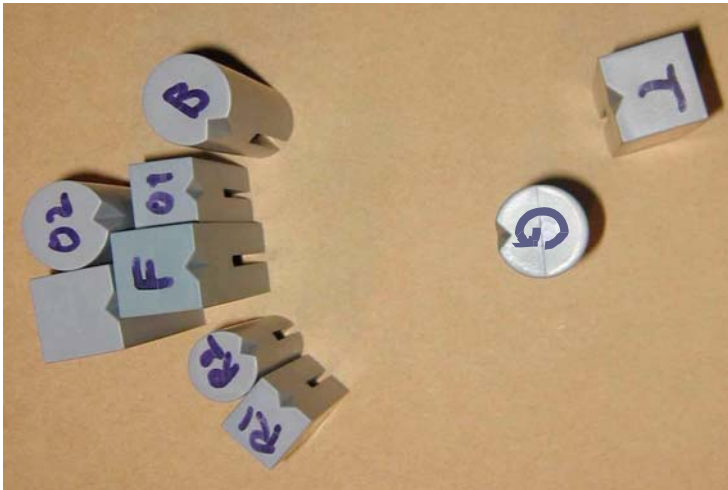
**FACILITATOR:** So, for the first time now you have a direct view of the goal.

**CLIENT:** Yes, and that feels good. I was really feeling the block of this wall here. Specially the tall figure. Now that it's over here, it's so much more complete, more whole, more integrated. All of those things. It feels very empowered and powerful, this group here. So, we are all looking at the goal.

**FACILITATOR:** Let's turn it around. What would be the right distance for it?



**CLIENT:** As the goal, it doesn't feel that far away. It feels quite close. Yes, it feels close. It feels a lot closer than when I started.



**Figure 5, Case 1: Final constellation**

The client commented:

**CLIENT:** And I am feeling the energetic shift as compared to what I started with. It is a completely different dynamic. Barriers are gone, walls are gone, it's closer, within reach. It feels good. . . . I almost feel I want to hug them. It feels *that* whole. And it feels so easy, almost within arms reach. There is nothing blocking. It feels very complete.

#### 4.1.2 Evaluation of the constellation

##### ***Was there a movement towards a solution, and how was it found?***

In this constellation the career issue very quickly moved into a personal and family issue of the client, when he revealed the early death of his mother. A careful approach gave him the option not to disclose this information. I only asked him whether Obstacle 2, which he compared to a mother, resonated with a figure in real life.

This tragic incident seemed to have a big impact on the client's life, both personal and professional. This constellation showed it as a barrier for the client to move towards the desired goal. By letting the client look at his mother in his mind's eye and suggesting that she is still there in spirit, he could experiment with having her as a support. Adding the father gave the male balance. Once this figure could be moved, the Goal started to be in vision for the Focus.

##### ***How did the final picture of the constellation look, compared to the initial one?***

The initial picture showed a startling symmetry. Male and female figures were either facing each other or standing next to each other with the Focus and the Hidden Benefit at one end and the Goal and the Future Task at the other end. The Focus was not looking at the Goal. The Goal looked at the Focus in the first image, but after an adjustment was turned away to face the Future Task.

The final constellation had the Focus, surrounded by a group of balanced female and male figures, facing the Goal which had come much closer. Mother and father were behind the Focus to lean on, if required, and the small boy the client was when his mother died, stood next to him. Other unidentified figures were also there. The Goal was much closer to the Focus than in the beginning and the Future Task was not standing directly behind to Goal, so as to be in full vision for the Focus.

#### 4.1.3 Client feedback to research questions

##### ***What was the experience of the client after completing a systemic constellation?***

When contemplating the final constellation, the client expressed:

**CLIENT:** Oh yes, it's getting better by the minute. That feels great. I have to say, I feel lighter now that I have completed the process compared to where I was when I started. . . . And I really enjoyed soaking this picture in. Thank you. (End of session)

A few weeks later he still remembered feeling lighter after the session, this time it was placed in a larger context.

**CLIENT:** Very open, very calm, relieved, a great sense of understanding and "aha" sort of feeling. . . . a deep accepting. I know I had a really good deep sleep, like a load had been lifted. A lot has shifted. And it's a subtle feeling. It is more an awareness. Nothing to quantify. (Interview 2)

On his work he reported positive changes in relation to the goal for the constellation.

**CLIENT:** I have probably taken a little bit more initiative, more acceptance of responsibility. . . . I've just had a performance review, and the recognition is certainly there in terms of being seen and acknowledged positively. . . . And since doing this work with you, there have been a number of changes at work. And in the department I am in, we have gone from 6 people down to 4. So the work load has increased. And equally to my role and the tasks I have been given are more in recognition of the skills I have. . . . And also, matters I have been asked to have a look at are beyond my theoretical authority level to do. . . . And they get my input of what I think it is. . . . That gives me more stimulation, more challenges. . . . Working more with junior colleagues more as a mentor rather than a senior as such. I try to mentor them, which I enjoy doing. I also like sharing some of my life experience and ways of functioning that I have learned, that might help them relate or work better. (Interview 2)

The client also talked about the effect the constellation had on areas outside work.

**CLIENT:** That has also reflected on the things I am doing out of this particular work sphere in relation to the meditation group I just started teaching. It is something I have done previously, but I now feel so much more comfortable with that, much more easy and it's just there. . . . I feel like I'd far rather be turning up to teach meditation than doing what I am doing at the moment. . . . And through that, there is one woman participating who has connection with a number of colleagues who work in a fairly high stress area. And she is talking with her colleagues about possibly doing meditations or I might go to their space and do meditation with them. So, doors are opening, it's wonderful. It all seems to be flowing all at the same time. (Interview 2)

### ***How useful was the information received in the constellation process to the client?***

The constellation seemed to have a more subtle and intangible effect. He emphasised how the image of the final constellation stayed with him.

**CLIENT:** Not that I can verbalise it. It is more just an awareness. . . . Specially this picture – what will grow is this picture. . . . It feels useful and beneficial on a level that I can't really categorise. It just feels good. (Interview 1)

After I pointed out that obstacles had become a support in the process.

**CLIENT:** I was conscious in moving them from an obstacles to support it is all just part of the mind. (Interview 1)

In the follow up interview he was more able to formulate insights, the constellation had given him.

**CLIENT:** I felt a lot more aware of some of the stuff that had gone on in my life around my family and the directions that it had given me in the work I have done, the career I have chosen in general, and how I related to the people around me. . . . I also felt probably a lot more comfortable around what I was doing and where I am at. . . . It gave me a greater awareness about the impact of my family life experience on how I function and functioned. Particularly in my relationship with others, and also what I brought to my work environment as being who I am through that experience. . . . And it's also helped me be a little bit more aware in dealing with others who share with me their life experience and family. . . . That whole life experience of family has impacted on me into whatever situation I'm in, whether it's personal or professional. . . . There is a feeling of calm that came afterwards. "Ah, this is really who I am; ah, this is what happened to me. It's all ok, I am ok". . . . When I look at this stuff around my mother and her life and death, my feeling around that now is one of – it's a positive feeling. Whereas my thoughts around that at some time back were more of –

possibly of sadness or grief or loss. Now it's more acceptance, positive. . . . It's been a very powerful healing experience. Moving far beyond simply 9 to 5 work. (Interview 2)

When asked whether constellations had given him reasons to change in his career, he continued.

**CLIENT:** I am taking a bit more on and I am been given it, and I am accepting it. It flows from there. . . . I don't see, for me, any significant changes in career arising around the constellation. (Interview 2)

#### ***How did the client value systemic constellations as an addition to existing methods in career development?***

The client felt more at ease with the constellation process than other methods of career development.

**CLIENT:** I found it startlingly different. A lot more comfortable to work with and, in terms of how I am feeling after this process, I feel there is something there for me. For me this is a process rather than having to use my head with other stuff. . . . What I enjoyed about this process was the fact that it was clearly just an intuitive feeling process as compared to everything else I have done about work or assessments, which had all been about using the mind. (Interview 1)

#### **4.1.4 Further Comments**

This constellation went into private family issues in the context of career counselling. I knew from a previous session that this client was comfortable with including personal issues in a career context. If I would have had any doubts, I would have asked for his permission more directly before I included his mother and father in the constellation. If it wouldn't have been ok, I could have continued the session without naming the issue and worked with figures for female and male principles instead.

## **4.2 Case 2**

Male; Age group: 40-50; Occupation: Project Director.

Experience with systemic constellations: none.

### **4.2.1 Summary of the constellation session**

#### ***Definition of a good outcome***

The client wanted to use this session to find out whether he could get more enjoyment out of his work.

**CLIENT:** It would be nice, I suppose, in the last few years that I am working to do something that I really get enjoyment out of. . . . the work I do is just a means to an end to earn money. Whereas other people work and enjoy it and they work and they live. I don't do that. . . . I get a sense of achievement of what I do. But it comes at a personal cost, because I don't always enjoy what I do. The work is very stressful.

He formulated the goal for the session in one sentence.

**CLIENT:** A positive outcome would be for me to enjoy my work on a day-to-day basis on a personal level.

#### ***Identification of figures***

Figure representations in this constellation are:

F = Focus = Client;

G = Goal = Enjoy work;

B = Hidden Benefit = Self indulgence;

T = Future Task = Not defined;

R1 = Resource 1 = Not defined;

R2 = Resource 2 = Not defined;  
 R3 = Resource 3 = Not defined; and  
 O1 = Obstacle 1 = No sense of major obstacle.

### ***Constellation process***

The initial constellation showed all figures looking in the same direction.



**Figure 6, Case 2: Initial constellation**

An inquiry started to find out what could be missing in this system. I suggested to place a new figure for members of the client's family history, "who had to do work they didn't enjoy out of necessity". However, this figure pointed in the same direction as all the other ones and added more tension to the system. Before I explored this issue further, I asked the client about his thoughts on the individual figures in the constellation. He had comments on the Resources and the Obstacle.

**CLIENT:** I feel I can change if I really, really wanted to. I mean we all can, can't we? So I feel there is ample resources there to make the change. . . . I don't have the sense there is a major Obstacle there.

Both the Goal and the Obstacle were smaller figures, but this observation didn't bring us any further either. We were still fishing in the dark. I returned the attention to the overall presentation of the constellation. I experimented with adding a new female figure in the position all the other figures were looking at. The client hinted at what this could be.

**CLIENT:** Maybe it's about who or what I would prefer to be. Possibly.

**FACILITATOR:** So that would be different to the goal?

**CLIENT:** Possibly, yes.

A slight change continued when I first moved the new male figure next to the female figure, and then placed them behind the Focus as the female and male principle. The client acknowledged feeling different with having this support behind him. In a more private constellation this could represent father and mother. He then was asked to place the Goal and the Future Task in a new position.

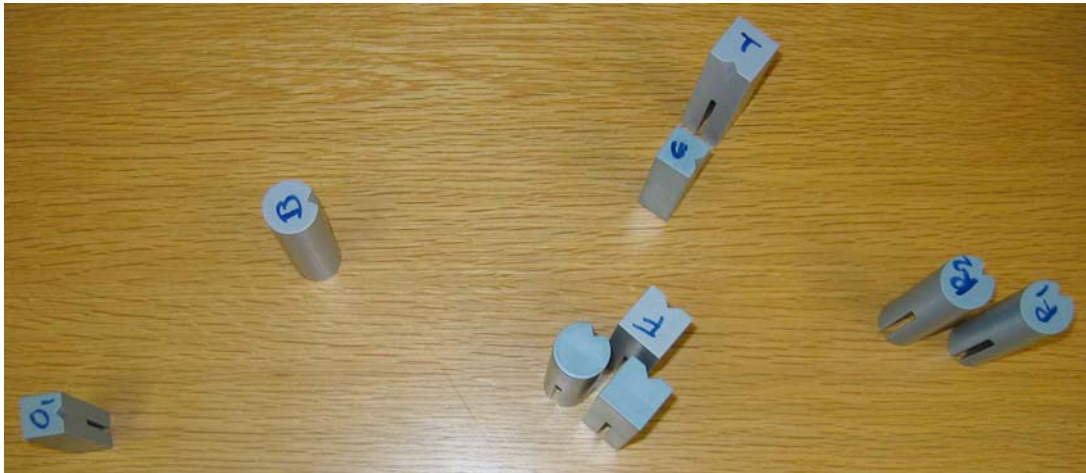


Figure 7, Case 2: New position for the Goal

Both figures were more in vision, but the Focus looked past them and the Goal faced the Resources; we explored possible reasons for this. I attempted to turn the Goal towards the Focus.

**CLIENT:** Yes. I don't know whether the goal in my mind is the only thing I am interested in. . . . My whole life is not going to live or die on whether I am going to achieve that particular goal – it's nice to have.

**FACILITATOR:** So what would you put then there? So what's really important then?

**CLIENT:** I put me there. . . . As another me.

An additional male figure was placed in the position the Focus was looking at. The client described this "other me" as more "aware and evolved" and as "enlightenment"; a new and much larger goal that was "many lifetimes" away. The initial Goal, of enjoying work more, could help, but was not necessary. It had to be moved much closer to the focus, as otherwise the proportions between the two goals were not right.

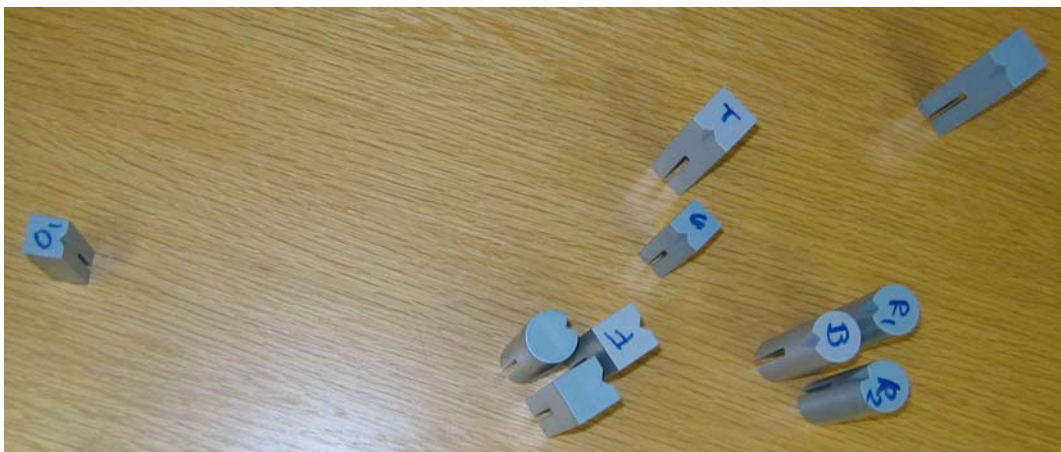


Figure 8, Case 2: Focussing on a larger than life vision

Next, the Hidden Benefit was identified as "some self indulgence". The client found the figure too big until it was placed to the left of the Focus. He agreed that it was less dominant there. The client arranged the Resources to support the path to the larger Goal, and the Obstacle was placed near them, possibly as another small goal on the path.



Figure 9, Case 2: Final constellation

Contemplating the final constellation the client commented:

**CLIENT:** That tells a story. . . . I think it probably represents my thinking about life.

#### 4.2.2 Evaluation of the constellation

##### *Was there a movement towards a solution, and how was it found?*

This constellation stayed on an abstract level and we worked mostly with the labels originally given to the figures. An offer to explore the family history was not taken up. The client responded vaguely and I took this as an indication that he was not prepared to work on a family level and did not ask further. Nevertheless, a story was developed which reinforces the understanding that the facilitator does not necessarily need to know facts.

Even though I could see from the initial constellation that something was missing, it did not present itself easily here, and the first figure that was added to the system was still pointing in the same direction. It took further experimenting until the shift occurred, when a much bigger goal emerged. The right context was required for the client and a new figure was placed in the same position I had worked with earlier in the process. Therefore, the experimenting earlier in the process could be looked at as preparation.

##### *How did the final picture of the constellation look, compared to the initial one?*

In the initial constellation all figures were facing in the same direction. This usually points to a missing element, or person, in a system. Here it was a much larger goal for the client, as the process of the constellation showed. The figures were widely spread with the focus standing alone, somewhere in the middle, disconnected from the rest.

The final constellation showed a more harmonious and compact picture, the missing element had been identified as a much larger and more important goal for the client, and added to the system. The Focus, supported from behind, had a direct vision of this new goal. Other figures in between represented resources and steps on the path to this goal.

#### 4.2.3 Client feedback

##### *What was the experience of the client after completing a systemic constellation?*

The client was vague about naming experiences that could be traced back to the constellation.

**CLIENT:** What I probably have noticed is that I have reflected on it. . . . I suppose I was more interested in the process rather than the potential outcome I had for that. . . . So I thought about it, but it hasn't really had anything come from it. That I sort of can identify. (Interview 2)

Nevertheless he reported on some changes at work that occurred in the meantime.

**CLIENT:** I have actually, in the meantime, taken a couple of weeks off because I was really tired and I just needed a break. So having come back from that leave I am a little bit more refreshed. (Interview 2)

And

**CLIENT:** Since you did that session I have actually had two people now come in and work for me, immediately underneath me. . . . They have just really started to come on board over the last 2-3 weeks and it made a big difference to the way I work. . . . So, when that really kicks in, that is going to be a really good support mechanism for me. Whereas before I had it, they were all coming directly to me. And I don't know whether that is a coincidence or whatever. (Interview 2)

The client also reflected on the larger goal that had emerged in the constellation. At the moment he is not able to pursue it because his job is too demanding.

**CLIENT:** Because I thought about it – and really, in this role I am in at the moment, I sort of live and breath it. I can't even switch off when I go home. And that's a problem. And if there is an end in sight, whether it will be 18 Months or 2 years, I am prepared to do that, then after that I take another view. . . . So I sort of accepted that. . . . And through that, the level of frustration I might have had before, maybe is less because of it. (Interview 2)

#### ***How useful was the information received in the constellation process to the client?***

The constellation gave some insights,

**CLIENT:** I think it just confirmed that deep down I have a compassion and a focus to something other than what I do day to day. (Interview 2)

And influenced the way he thinks about his career.

**CLIENT:** It just highlights it as the career and other focuses are probably the ones that mean more to me. But it does question whether in the longer term the career I am in is the right one to allow me to do what I want to do. (Interview 2)

#### ***How did the client value systemic constellations as an addition to existing methods in career development?***

**CLIENT:** I thought it was really interesting. I really liked the process. I thought it was a very good process. But what I assessed it to be, because I want to assess these things, that really the tool and the metaphors being used are really just aids to you as an individual sort of unearthing sort of beliefs. And you are actually using those as aids as you move through it. . . . They are powerful visual aids. . . . I think because they are three dimensional as well. They have size and sort of form more than just a diagram. (Interview 1)

#### **4.2.4 Further Comments**

This constellation tapped into a very large spiritual vision and a required life balance, that the client's current work did not allow. In this context the follow up interview was too early. It would be interesting to further follow this case with interviews at later stages.

Constellation work is not just about changing a client's frame of mind, it is also about inviting the environment to be more supportive. It is difficult to identify these events and the changes are often very subtle, as shown twice in this case where the client's work became easier. He had two weeks leave and was much more refreshed. He also had two new people directly underneath him and it made a big difference to his workload.

### **4.3 Case 3**

Male; Age group: 40-50; Occupation: Account Executive.

Experience with systemic constellations: None.

### 4.3.1 Summary of the constellation session

#### *Definition of a good outcome*

The client wanted to get a better understanding of how to respond in relation to a new tool that was recently introduced and said it in the first sentence.

**CLIENT:** I would like to know how to manage my manager's manager and his sidekick – who are making my life challenging as they introduce a whole new concept in selling, or a tool which they call a selling tool which is really a reporting tool.

The client often confused this initial goal for the constellation with another one, making a sale. When offered to change the goal, he decided to stay with the original one. Like the tip of an iceberg the issue uncovered a complex situation in the client's working environment. With global influences and personal goals of other people involved. The proposed intention for the constellation seemed to be a good start, but I could see that more work on the bigger issue would be beneficial for the client. Finally; the client was able to state the intention for this constellation in one sentence and the words were very similar to the beginning.

**CLIENT:** It is to come up with the best way of managing my management – as simple as that – how best to manage them.

#### *Identification of figures*

Throughout the constellation it became clear that many Resources and Obstacles represented people at the client's workplace. Figure representations in this constellation are:

F = Focus = Client;

G = Goal = How to best manage the management;

B = Hidden Benefit = In line with the other sales people in the company;

T = Future Task = Streamlining the process;

R1 = Resource 1 = Group of solution architects in Sydney;

R2 = Resource 2 = Solution architect in Brisbane;

O1 = Obstacle 1 = Manager's manager's sidekick;

O2 = Obstacle 2 = Manager's manager; and

O3 = Obstacle 3 = Objections of the solution architect in Brisbane.

#### *Constellation process*

After some adjustments, the initial constellation looked as follows.

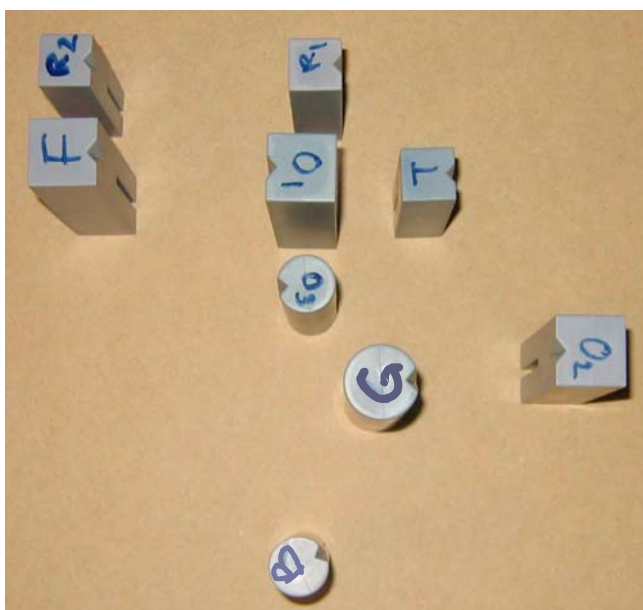


Figure 10, Case 3: Initial constellation

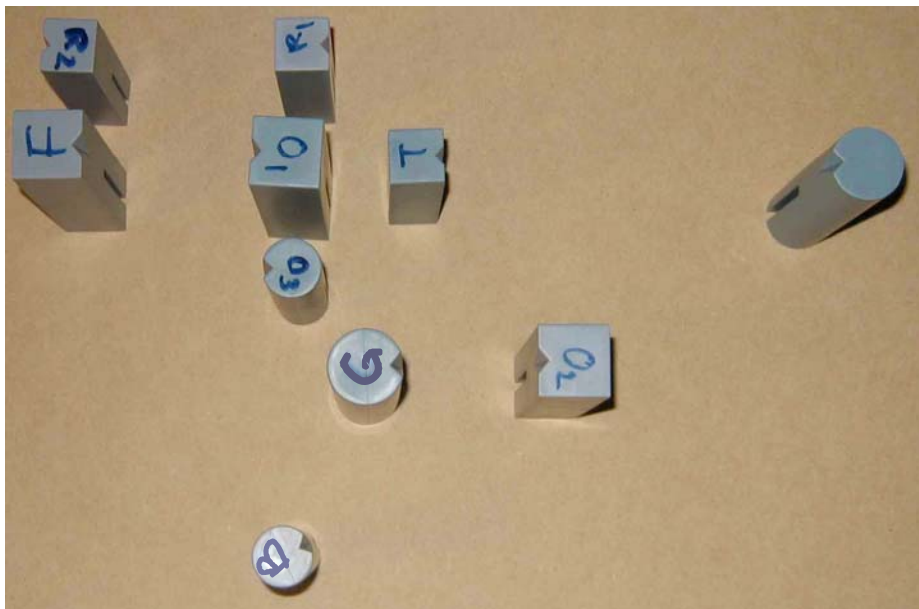


In the initial observation the client noticed that his direct manager was missing in the constellation. The Hidden Benefit was standing off to the side and a bit disconnected from the rest of the group and looking at Obstacle 2.

**CLIENT:** The hidden benefit of the current situation is that there are a number of colleagues of mine in similar positions who have a similar view of this process. So the benefit is that, if you like, I am aligned with my peers, my peers in Canberra and my peers in Sydney, we are going through the motions but we don't find this of any value. The view of my boss is that if we wait long enough this thing will just fade away like all of these initiatives do – given six months it'll be gone. Just like this other process – gone in six months – same thing. The problem I've got, is that I can't wait six months I need this thing fixed because I've got too many balls in play to play this game.

This was a first indication that there was something bigger at stake than the issue stated in the introductory interview.

Apart from the Obstacles all figures were looking in the same direction. The Goal was facing in the same direction as the rest of the figures with only Obstacle 2 directly looking at the goal. When talking about this position, it became clear that again the client mixed up the initially stated goal for constellations with the goal of making sales. When asked to place a new figure for making sales, the client placed the new and bigger goal in the position, the majority of the figures were looking to.



**Figure 11, Case 3: Adding the bigger goal**

The client felt now that Obstacle 2 could be moved. He was first placed to face the Focus and after a few clarifying phrases it could be moved into a more supportive position behind the Focus.

Now Obstacle 1 and Resource 2 were ready to be moved. Obstacle 1 was in direct confrontation with the Focus. After an unsuccessful attempt to clarify the situation with phrases, a missing figure was added to the constellation, the client's direct manager. After the client expressed his need for support in relation to the issue and a more optimistic Resource 2 to his manager, the new figure was placed directly behind the focus and in front of Obstacle 2, reflecting the hierarchy in a supportive line to back the client.

When setting up the constellation, the client had externalised the objections of Resource 2 into a separate figure, Obstacle 3, and described it as follows:

**CLIENT:** That's the combination, person (*Resource 2*) and obstacle (*Obstacle 3*). I kind of made that up.

**FACILITATOR:** Yes, that's good.

**CLIENT:** He is a great resource. If you can turn off his objections, he is very powerful and good.

During the discussion that followed, with his manager behind him, the client came to a point to be able to talk directly to Resource 2.

FACILITATOR: Try and tell him "I can't give you the details".

CLIENT: "I can't give you the details, but I can give you the objectives and I trust you to come up with the details. I trust you, you have the skills, I empower you to determine the detail. And that's what I can do for you".

Now all the solution architects (*Resource 2, Obstacle 3, Resource 1*) were placed next to the Focus as support for reaching the goal and attention was directed to the Hidden Benefit.

CLIENT: The Hidden Benefit of me bucking the system, which is what it was, brings me into line with the other salesmen who are all of the same type. We are all in the touchy, feely game. These people are trying to mechanise a process which is not mechanical. I don't do it consciously though. I am not doing it to become one of the gang that doesn't like this process.

After announcing a new position to the Hidden Benefit;

FACILITATOR: Tell her (*Hidden Benefit*): "I can belong, even if I am not in struggle with the bureaucracy". . . .

CLIENT: "I can belong to the sales group without fighting the bureaucracy".

The client was ready to find a cooperative solution with Obstacle 1. He expressed an offer to help simplifying the process to Obstacle 1.

CLIENT: "How can we together streamline the process, so that we have the time to do the real job?"

The Hidden Benefit was placed next to the Focus as a support and the client remarked the following.

CLIENT: If we do this together, all the other sales people will benefit from it too. So they are in alignment. Now the whole company will be aligned in this process.

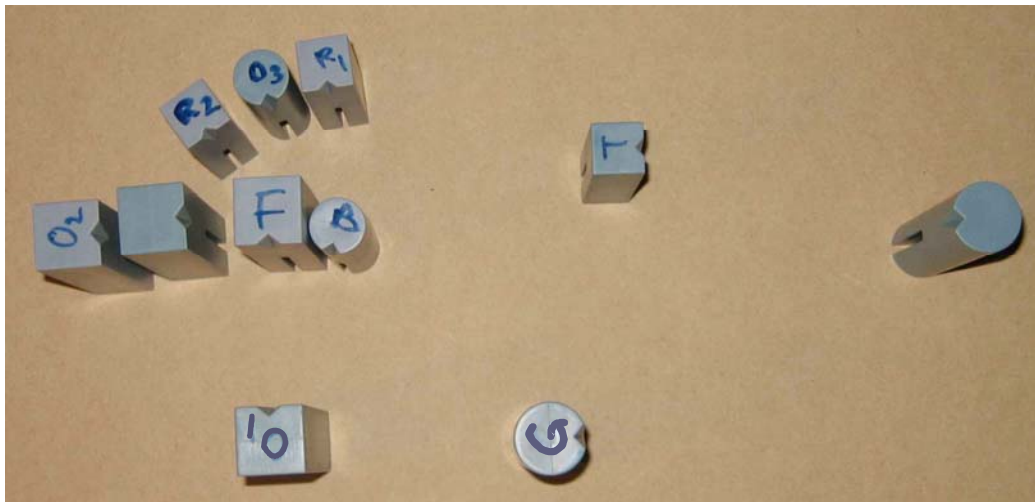


Figure 12, Case 3: Aligning support and facing Obstacle 1

The group, Focus, Hidden Benefit and Obstacle 1, were turned to face the big goal and the original Goal was also placed in vision of the Focus. The Future Task, aligned with the Goal, was identified as "streamlining the process".

FACILITATOR: That's the Future Task, after you created communication. And we put the big goal, which is of making sales –

CLIENT: Flows directly from it.

Managers, higher in the company hierarchy, were added as a line of support for the focus.



Figure 13, Case 3: Final constellation

#### 4.3.2 Evaluation of the constellation

##### ***Was there a movement towards a solution, and how was it found?***

The client expressed the need that certain people in the organisation reduced pressure on him. The process of the introductory interview was used to come away from "I want them to change" to find something like "How can I deal best with this situation?" or "What can I do differently to maybe trigger change?". Using the "miracle question" sidetracked the client into stories and we had to do a lot of work to get back to the depth of the intention we had earlier on. In this context, the client often confused the initial goal for the constellation with another one, making a sale, uncovering a bigger, more grave issue, as the process of the constellation and the follow up interview show. One could argue about the value of the "miracle question" this case.

The client could feel the difference when changes were made to the system on the board and responded very quickly when figures were moved to a new position. It helped him to find new ways on how to deal with the situation while we went through the process. When, for example, the Hidden Benefit was placed next to the client as a support by the other sales people, he immediately commented that if he and Obstacle 1 cooperate in improving the tool, the other sales people will benefit from it as well. Other examples were that once he had the support from his superiors behind him, the need for his manager to talk to Resource 2 and Obstacle 1 was not there anymore. He was able to talk directly to either one of them and found cooperative and constructive solutions for both situations. As reported in the follow up interview, this is what happened after the session at work.

Right from the start of this session, a bigger issue was latent in the background and the client was sidetracked into this issue many times during the introductory interview and also later on. This complex environment created unrest and made the constellation more difficult. By bringing in a representative for the bigger goal, the whole system and the client settled a bit. This issue was bigger than the context of the proposed session for the research and could not be directly address. I made an offer for another constellation session at a later stage.

##### ***How did the final picture of the constellation look, compared to the initial one?***

It was interesting to see, that in the initial constellation, apart from the obstacles, all figures were looking in the same direction. When so many figures look in the same direction, this is usually a sign that somebody or something is missing. In this constellation it was the bigger goal of making sales. All obstacles were looking exactly in the opposite direction. One could interpret this situation, that they were not really in the way of the Goal initially stated, but the bigger goal of making sales. The Hidden Benefit was standing off to the side, away from the rest of the group and looking at Obstacle 2. This made sense when later in the session the Hidden Benefit was identified as the "other sales people" and Obstacle 2 as the boss of all sales people.

In the final constellation, the Future Task, out of sight at the start, was identified as "streamlining the process" with the bigger goal of making sales flowed directly from it. This step could only happen

with improved communication with the management; "manage the management", as the client had phrased his intention for the constellation. Making sales was the real goal for the client and therefore placed directly opposite the Focus, with the initial Goal and Future Task slightly off to the side to indicate the levels of importance. The Focus was supported with a line of superiors behind; as well as with an arch of the rest of the figures, still in vision, to the left and right.

#### 4.3.3 Client feedback to research questions

##### ***What was the experience of the client after completing a systemic constellation?***

The client reported on feeling exposed after the session and about having more clarity.

**CLIENT:** Right after the session I felt as if I had been peeled back a bit. I had opened on a few things I really hadn't been comfortable with or willing to face. But I also felt, kind of "now I am clearer, now I know what I have got to go and do". In some respect, whilst I was concerned by what was actually going on to me at the time, I am now less concerned, because I actually have a plan to fix it. A couple of things that seem to make sense – and they were either going to make it or break it – but there would be clarity either way. And if I went with the confrontational approach, that was one option, and the other option was just tell them what you want. Tell them that you need the support, tell them – or ask them "what have I got to do to get your support?" And so, once you got that as a clear list of things to do. Yes – it was good. I felt at the same time – peeled back a bit, but at the same time I felt reinforced, ready to go. (Interview 2)

And he expressed a willingness to change.

**CLIENT:** The recommended actions that came out of it were to speak directly with my manager and his sidekick – my source of pain – and I ultimately did – I didn't confront them. I decided confrontation was probably not the right way to go. . . . I realised that I have the power to change me – I can't necessarily change them. But as a salesman, obviously my job is to change people, so that's why I was trying to change them. I think I've changed me a bit, which is helping me change them, so ultimately they will slightly shift their position. They already have slightly changed their position. The process itself has been changed in the last two weeks. . . . I engage proactively with the very person I dislike the most. That way then, if I am getting on to him, then he feels that he is being engaged correctly. . . I will take the lead on the new tool, because I have actually seen it. I had a look at the new tool and actually it is quite good. It fixes two of the biggest problems that I had. Whether I have the time to reprogram all my strategies into the new tool, I don't know, but if I can do it, I will do it. (Interview 2)

Another, more serious issue, that was latent during the constellation session and linked to the original issue, had emerged, and work had been hard for him.

**CLIENT:** There have been other issues and developments where they are trying to squeeze me on another deal, but on the overall problem that we addressed in the constellation work, I can now work the constellations effectively with them, keep them off my back, and buy me the time I need to do my job properly. . . . [The constellation] really helped me realise that I was fighting too many people. And that they surrounded me. And that I didn't have the backing of my boss. . . . And he has subsequently proven not to be directly behind me still. So I now need a management technique for him. . . . It has been very, very harsh. . . . They are trying to steal this client off me. And they used the strategy process, or my lack of clarity in the process, as the reason. But strangely enough, those on my team who read it, reckon I am absolutely on the money and have everything right. So I think there is another motive and the cynic in me says it's because my boss's numbers don't look good for next year and he wants to steal this account off me. (Interview 2)

##### ***How useful was the information received in the constellation process to the client?***

The client reflected on the importance of having the right alignment in a company hierarchy.

**CLIENT:** Very useful – I think the sequencing is also quite useful – I need to get my boss behind me to get his boss behind him. To align my boss's boss's sidekick I'll deal with my boss. It directs me to a sequence of conversations I have to do, to bring alignment among the various people. It has been very good. I may want to do another one soon, on a particular client. (Interview 1)

He acknowledged the benefit of changing his approach according to the information received in the constellation, although he found it challenging at first.

**CLIENT:** It's good and still challenging, as I have to change some positions. And those are always challenging. Pulling the organisation in behind me is a good idea. We are always told to do that. We always think we are doing it, but invariably we don't do it, because it is like defocusing on the sale and you're not looking back that deeply and you see the organisation is getting in your way, asking you to report on things. (Interview 1)

He also talked about the difference between his job and presales, and that the process has helped him to understand his solution architect better.

**CLIENT:** And I am going to talk about that at length now. Because I think that has helped me to crystallise a lecture I need to give to our presales people – yes it has been very, very useful. (Interview 1)

When asked about insights he received, the client reported on how he is managing his work colleagues better.

**CLIENT:** I guess the best insight it gave me, was that I didn't understand or haven't really thought through the role of my boss's boss's sidekick as the process monkey. . . . I think I manage him [solutions architect] better as well – by involving him in the "lets work out how big this team should be" and "I want you to control that" and that sort of thing, and taking his counsel on that, that has helped him as well. (Interview 2)

And how the constellation is influencing his way of thinking about his career.

**CLIENT:** I kind of mentally now try and map out what it would look like at every major next step. How is... *who* is actually on the table for the next step in the decision or the next step in my career process. . . . That's about it, I try to use the constellation thinking now in my own head. . . . the line behind me and who's at the other side. Ok, who have I got to get behind me and how do I do that and what's coming up at the other side of the table, what are the challenges, what is behind them? So eventually you will be lining up two lines, it is like warfare, like war games. Start moving the soldiers, roll the dice, is very similar. It is very much a strategic game. (Interview 2)

He elaborated on how he is using systemic constellations as a strategic tool.

**CLIENT:** I have already started to work the principle. When I start drawing my organisation charts of the customers. . . . But I also look for the lines of influence and how they connect. . . . That the messages we put in still make consistent sense all the way up. And that the message I deliver to somebody – if they deliver that to their boss, won't put them in conflict. We need them to start aligning – I have to align the organisation at the other side of the sale. So that is what I do. So it is a sales tool. (Interview 2)

### ***How did the client value systemic constellations as an addition to existing methods in career development?***

For this client the difference to other career development methods was the relevance to a particular challenge he had at work, although the result still included a generic learning.

**CLIENT:** Most other processes are not in the context of a particular challenge, they tend to be generic. . . . They teach you something, but it is not something in a particular context that is relevant to me. This was directly relevant to me. . . . So this wasn't like a generic training, this was a specific fix of a problem. In the process of the fixing of this specific problem, a bunch of learnings come out that can be reused a thousand times over. (Interview 1)

He then elaborated on the changes he would like to have in his career.

**CLIENT:** I wouldn't mind being a business development manager and not carrying a specific account responsibility and just having an idea responsibility, so I can drive ideas rather than deals. . . . So my planned career changes might be more around leaving this industry and getting into a different line of business, where I can control my own destiny and don't have to put up with idiots who push process at me without thinking. So I want to control my own destiny in the future. (Interview 2)

#### 4.3.4 Further comments

The constellation session with this client tapped into a much bigger issue, which could have been the reason why the client regularly mixed up the initial goal for the constellation with the goal of making sales. In the follow up interview he reported on more serious developments at his workplace and expressed his concerns about them. A month after the follow up interview the client was made redundant. He is now looking at leaving sales behind him and pursuing more what he really wants to do in his career.

### 4.4 Case 4

Female; Age group: 40-50; Occupation: Physical Therapist.

Experience with systemic constellations: Individual session and workshops.

#### 4.4.1 Summary of the constellation session

##### *Definition of a good outcome*

A few weeks before the session, the client had started a new business as a physical therapist and rented a practitioner space in a local health centre. She showed a great deal of doubt in her actions in relation to starting this business.

**CLIENT:** I've been thinking about the effectiveness of my actions that I take in my business. . . I got a bit frustrated in between in those four weeks.

She reported about the ups and downs, how great it was when she had clients, and the challenges when she didn't have clients. Other practitioners seemed to react on her initiative by suddenly placing more ads in the local paper themselves. Also, instead of coming for consultations, people were inspired to do the same thing and inquired where she had done her training. She felt disillusioned.

**CLIENT:** And I actually want to drop it all and not do anything. And start something completely new again. But I have done that a few times in my life, that I threw things away and I don't feel that's appropriate this time.

A request for the constellation was formulated.

**CLIENT:** To see where I am in the community here and maybe why I have trouble to take my stand. . . . If I am doing the right thing in the right place, basically. . . . For now I want it here [in this town]. That's the first thing to find out if it is possible here. . . . But I guess competition is everywhere, and maybe it is not competition, because everyone is unique anyway. I don't know how that goes. This is where I am very insecure.

And a vision for the future.

**CLIENT:** That I don't feel so insecure about it anymore, that I am sure that this is the right thing what I am doing. And even when there are lows, that I know, this is just a low that I have to stick to it.

##### *Identification of figures*

Figure representations in this constellation are:

F = Focus = Client;

G = Goal = Knowledge of doing the right thing in the right place;

B = Hidden Benefit = Part that did not enjoy leaving home and making appointments;

T = Future Task = Not defined;

R1 = Resource 1 = Relationship and home;

R2 = Resource 2 = Cleverness;

R3 = Resource 3 = Friends;

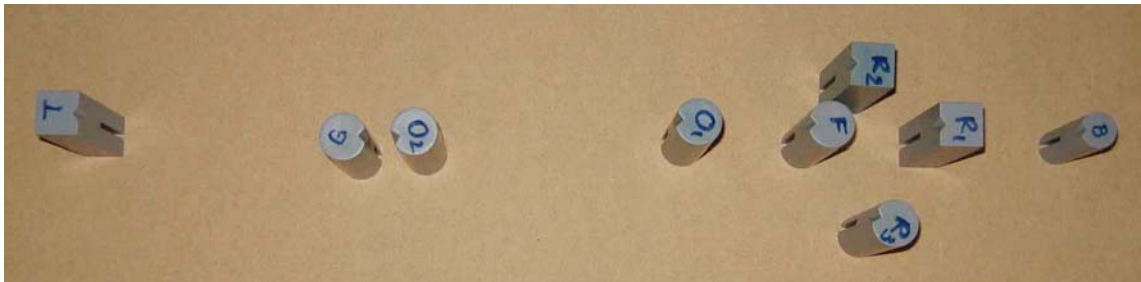
O1 = Obstacle 1 = Experienced practitioners; and

O2 = Obstacle 2 = New practitioners.

### **Movement towards a solution**

While placing the last figure for the constellation, the client commented:

**CLIENT:** The hidden benefit, I don't like that one. The Hidden Benefit is hidden.



**Figure 14, Case 4: Initial constellation**

After looking at the initial constellation for a while, the client observed the following dynamics:

**CLIENT:** Well I notice that I have resources but there are some obstacles between me and the goal. . . . there are some who have been doing a similar thing than me already for a long time. They have actually reached the goal. They are very close to it (*Obstacle 2*), and these are others, other obstacles. It is usually other people.

Generally, the client had difficulties understanding the Hidden Benefit. She could not see any benefit in staying in her current situation. Nevertheless, she indicated a personal learning in the struggle she was going through.

**CLIENT:** I see that sometimes to rush things is not always the best, and I also see when things don't go exactly my way, or the way I thought they would go, then, I mean there is momentarily this frustration and some bitterness about this. But often, if I let this sit for a while, then some other creative door starts to open and I actually start to see.

After explaining the relationship between the Goal and the Hidden Benefit in more detail, and relocating the Hidden Benefit to be faced by the Focus, the client claimed:

**CLIENT:** I am confused about the Hidden Benefit. . . . It is not really me who is not going for the goal, it is that others get in my way on the way to my goal. If there was only me in town offering this service, people would probably call me.

I suggested a benefit of not reaching her goal could be the comfortable life she had when she was not working and offered to leave the figure unnamed. She partly agreed.

**CLIENT:** Sure, one part of me feels comfortable here, that is true, but no longer also.

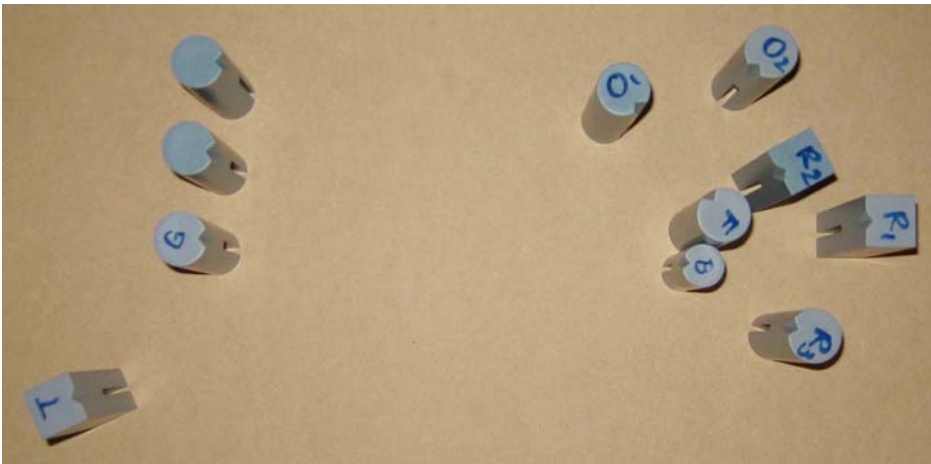
The Focus was returned to its original position, looking at the Obstacles blocking the view to the Goal. Helplessness resurfaced. We worked with the Future Task first, also invisible for the Focus, and isolated from the rest of the figures. Very quickly the client was ready to bring it closer and acknowledge that her project will evolve into something new before too long. Attention was again drawn to the Obstacles, the biggest challenge in the constellation.

**CLIENT:** I don't know what to do with these other people. I really don't know – I mean one of my resources is that I am clever. I have a belief that I am clever and that I will find a niche to kind of sneak through in a way. But I haven't found that yet.

When two additional figures, representing separate goals for the other practitioners, were placed next to the client's Goal, a discussion about similar goals, small market and creating a niche started.

**CLIENT:** It certainly feels more relaxed. I feel I have a place in this and I am not just squashed out to the side. It is like "ok, these are the people doing similar work and these are our clients more or less". . . . It certainly helps to have all these ones on the same level and not higher or one lower or one further up or one behind. In a way I have to also claim my right to do what I feel like doing and say "yes, I acknowledge what you have been doing this, but I am here now too. And I have a passion for this too".

The Focus and Obstacle 1 were placed facing each other to express it directly.



**Figure 15, Case 4: Claiming the right to have a business**

One of the new figures was removed, leaving one general goal for all practitioners next to the original Goal as the client's specific goal to find a niche. The Focus was rotated to ask Resource 2, cleverness, for help.

**CLIENT:** "I really need your help right now to find my niche".

When the client commented that "cleverness" didn't have a voice yet, phrases were added such as:

**CLIENT:** "I acknowledge that you need a lot of space right now". And that is true.

And

**CLIENT:** "No creativity can come under pressure". It's true. It's true – I think it would help a bit to have these others away.

The client started to set boundaries, although still feeling vulnerable with it.

**CLIENT:** They are still there focussing on the same goal that I might have. . . . So I am creating a space between me and them. . . . That's actually good. . . . That's not my usual behaviour. I really have to learn that.

The Focus and Obstacle 1 were placed facing each other with a new statement.

**CLIENT:** "I am setting my boundaries and business is business" – that feels so good. That feels so good.

"Business is business" was the keyword for this constellation, repeated many times by the client and Resource 1 was acknowledged for the idea.

**CLIENT:** "Thank you for giving me the idea to set my boundaries" – that feels good, that feels really good. That makes it so clear how important that is at the moment, to give myself that creative space.

After also thanking the other Resources for their support, the client was ready to give the Hidden Benefit more attention.

**CLIENT:** I was very freaked out in the first two weeks, when I was every day all day long in town and suddenly I missed my home. . . . and suddenly having appointments and having to carry my diary around all the time, it was hard! To stick to timing and everything. . . . Just really be professional also.

With the Resources moved closer as support, the Focus now faced the Goal, while the Obstacles were looking at their own goal.

**CLIENT:** I feel really strong with all my resources. I can't really fall in this much, unless I collapse in myself. I can't fall backwards or to the side, that is really great. And these ones (*Obstacles*) then don't bother me so much. The way to the Goal is free, the way to the future goal (*Future Task*) is free. And they have also their space. They are doing their own thing in an almost different kind of world, that is their thing and that doesn't really have to bother me – unless they focus on – well, they still have the same goal. But I guess that is how it is in business.

**FACILITATOR:** And you are creating your niche.



**CLIENT:** Yes, and then only I target this and nobody else has what I have. That's what it's about. So my service has to become really unique.

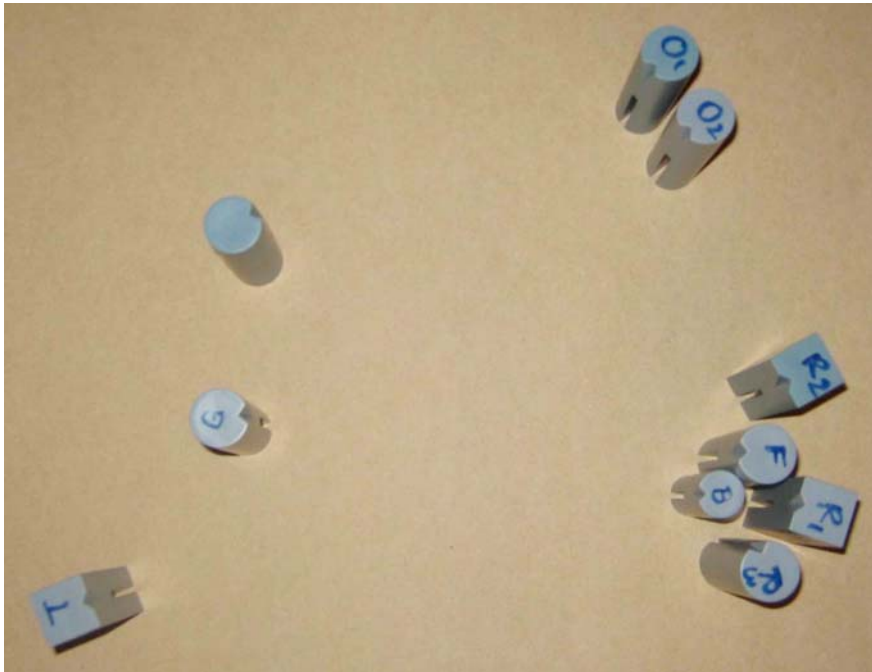


Figure 16, Case 4: Final constellation

#### 4.4.2 Evaluation of the constellation

##### ***Was there a movement towards a solution, and how was it found?***

The client responded with a clear vision to the "miracle question", which was reflected in her view on how other people would notice the change.

**CLIENT:** They would just see a certain strength in me. But just talking about it now, I realise it is already there!

The client was strongly focused on her goal. Through this focus, it was initially harder for her to understand the more unconscious elements in the constellation and accept their presence. Once this step had occurred, the constellation flowed more smoothly.

A breakthrough occurred when additional figures, such as the other practitioners' goals, were added to the constellation. The client felt more at ease and could look at possibilities rather than blockages. The next important step happened when the keyword "business is business" was coined to help the client set boundaries. She used it many times in the following weeks. Through acknowledging her cleverness as the source, a link to external influences became clearer. By giving her cleverness the space to be creative, she was able to create a space between herself and the other practitioners.

When reading the transcript of the session, I observed, that the client often moved through the process by herself and that I was not really required as a facilitator. Occasionally it looks like we were in different concurrent stories, nevertheless, a movement towards a solution took place. This emphasizes the difficulty in explaining how change occurs in constellation work.

##### ***How did the final picture of the constellation look, compared to the initial one?***

In the initial picture, the Focus and the Goal were facing each other, although the vision was blocked by Obstacles. This was the main blockage in this constellation. With the exception of the Hidden Benefit, the other figures were mostly standing in supportive positions for the client. Interestingly, both the Hidden Benefit and the Future Task were placed out of vision for the Focus, at opposite ends of the constellation. The figure for the Hidden Benefit was the only small figure in the constellation and female, like the client.

The final constellation had the Obstacles, identified as practitioners doing similar work, moved away from the client, looking at a separate, more general goal. The Goal and the Future Task were in clear vision for the Focus, who was supported by closely arranged Resources. The Hidden Benefit,

possibly the vulnerable part of the client, the "little girl" that enjoyed staying at home, was standing closely to the Focus and also looking at the Goal and the Future Task.

#### 4.4.3 Client feedback to research questions

##### ***What was the experience of the client after completing a systemic constellation?***

In the follow up interview the client first had difficulties remembering her feelings after the session.

**CLIENT:** It felt good, this I remember. And I felt open, I remember, because the picture was so significant. The constellation itself on the table, that was very good. (Interview 2)

She felt more confident when working with a client.

**CLIENT:** And the one thing that has also absolutely changed, is I am not anymore insecure about myself giving treatments. . . . I am still not so clear if I am going to offer general consultations, or if I should stay specialised. Because I have all the tools to work with that now. (Interview 2)

And she also felt more confident with her business in general.

**CLIENT:** I felt more confident. . . . It is not that I had more work or anything like that, but I had more confidence in my work. . . . And it made me clear up things with other people that were kind of hanging around there. . . . And actually about this woman who always called, and she did, she must have felt it actually, she did call me then many, many times and always about some little reason only. She could have sent me an email also. And then she said "oh and actually, how is your business going?" And I actually said "well I don't talk about that now".

**FACILITATOR:** So you set some boundaries?

**CLIENT:** Yes, I did. I was proud of myself then. (Interview 2)

When asked directly whether there was a change in the relationship with the other practitioners, the client reported the following story.

**CLIENT:** There was one practitioner, who always wanted to know everything that I do and what I experience and so on. But then she was always just laughing. I felt belittled by her. That was her and somebody else. And I told her basically everything. And she then had a huge reaction towards it, and sent me a long, long email. But I was not very interested actually in all her stuff and what that brought up for her. For me it was just important to give her feedback on how her reactions are for me. And then, I think, I answered her email just with a poem. (Interview 2)

The follow up meeting was held via internet phones, the client had given up her room in the health centre and was overseas for further training in her field.

**CLIENT:** I am a step further in the meantime. Before I left, I got clear that this centre is not the way I want to work. . . . And I also got clear that I want to work in different places. . . . In the meantime I did that course and that put also a new perspective into my work. That brought my original skills really close back to me in a completely new way and I decided to go on another training. (Interview 2)

##### ***How useful was the information received in the constellation process to the client?***

The client reported the following directly after the session.

**CLIENT:** It is a lot clearer now. There were some insecurities, like putting this woman off in that phone call, and that I am not answering her questions and behaving in a way that probably she didn't like. But I can live with that. . . . I am just learning this. Because before everybody could have everything from me. I was kind of defenceless. . . . And in business, this is not appropriate. . . . I am in business now. And I really like it. . . . It makes me select with whom I can share, with whom I can talk openly. . . . Just to see also that it might look tight and there are other people having the same goals as me, if I give myself space and use my cleverness, I can create myself a space in all this as well. . . . and also create space between myself and the others that I felt were crowding me. (Interview 1)

When asked about the insights the constellation had given her in the follow up interview, she said:

**CLIENT:** It put all the different aspects of my case on the table and it made it clear what actually there is. . . . It made it very clear how I am and what my issues are. And how I deal with things and my insecurities and my expectations. . . . This is the picture how it looks like in this moment, and everything is constantly moving and changing and that it is not going to stay that way. . . . In a way it kept things open for me. . . . I am looking for other ways of working, and I am just open to other things. (Interview 2)

I then posed the question "Does the constellation influence your way of thinking about your career?"

**CLIENT:** I often have the picture in my mind when we had these figures on the table there. When first these other people were in the way, but then I just shifted the angle and suddenly there was nobody in the way anymore. And that's really a good picture for me to have in mind and I also become aware that nobody is alone in something that he does in this world. There is always many people offering the same thing, but everybody does it with his own flavour. And that's why more than one person can be successful in doing similar things. So in a way it was opening that. . . . That last constellation where really the view was clear, that was such a nice picture. (Interview 2)

### ***How did the client value systemic constellations as an addition to existing methods in career development?***

In response the client stated the following:

**CLIENT:** I think this is a great work because it gives all the aspects involved, it gives names to it and it gives a place to it, and you can clearly see how it all relates to each other. And feel it also in myself, or "how does that feel, how does that feel". And then you simply know when it feels right. And right is good.

#### **4.4.4 Further Comments**

Since returning from overseas the client is practicing from home and developing further her unique idea to define a niche market for her business. She also realised, she needs more specialised training and is looking for a business partner.

The client still refers to the statement "business is business" that was coined in the session.

## **4.5 Case 5**

Female; Age group 30-40; Occupation: Quality manager.

Experience with systemic constellations: Individual sessions and workshops.

### **4.5.1 Summary of the constellation session**

#### ***Definition of a good outcome***

When formulating the request for the session the client described the currently unsatisfactory situation in her career.

**CLIENT:** I seem to have been getting myself into roles where I have a lot of responsibility and I have a lot of really difficult tasks, sorting out problems that have been going on for years and years and years, and I am expected to sort it out and improve upon things. And I would like to know what that's about, and I want my career to be a lot easier, a bit more on my intelligence rather than getting so stressed out, taking on so much responsibility.

This meant she had to find a new job; more a specialist role than a manager. I could hear two things in her request: being able to find a job that is more suited; and, once she was in a job, to only take on responsibilities that were within her capabilities. She described how her ideal job looks like.

**CLIENT:** The job would really pull together all my skills and provide me with an interesting environment and suitable pay.

Stating she would feel "fantastic and enthusiastic", she defined the goal for the session as:

**CLIENT:** It is really to have a job that is healthy for me in a successful organisation and that really suits me and my capabilities. . . . Healthy and successful work.

### **Identification of figures**

Figure representations in this constellation are:

F = Focus = Client;

G = Goal = Healthy and successful work;

B = Hidden Benefit = Saviour, looking at the "dark side";

T = Future Task = Not defined;

R1 = Resource 1 = Known, but doesn't know what it is;

R2 = Resource 2 = Friendship and loyalty, trying to do the right thing;

R3 = Resource 3 = Unknown;

O1 = Obstacle 1 = Failure;

O2 = Obstacle 2 = What people think of her; and

O3 = Obstacle 3 = Menstrual problems and health; grandmother.

### **Constellation process**

When choosing the Hidden Benefit, the client remarked:

**CLIENT:** It is kind of this feeling of being the saviour. It is saving the organisation.

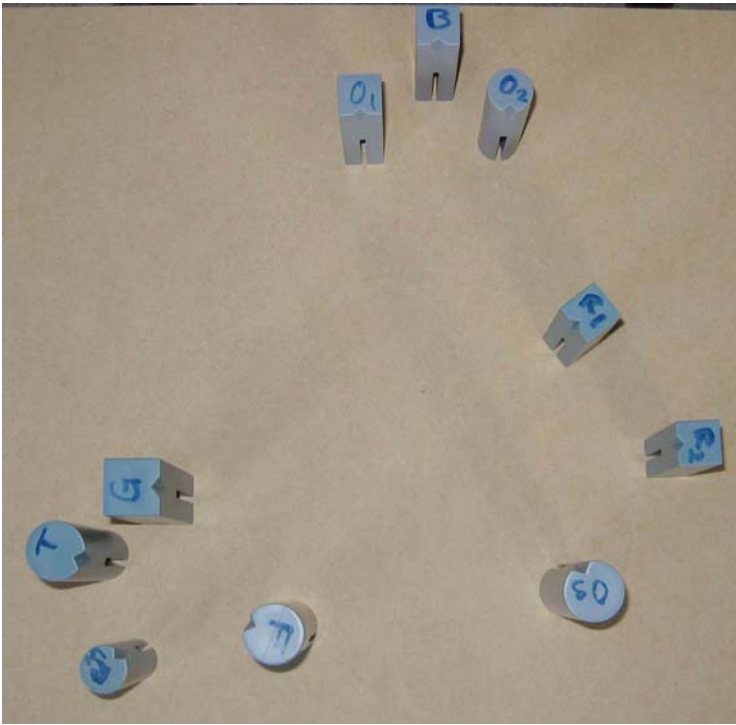
She changed its position a few times and in the end the constellation looked as follows.



**Figure 17, Case 5: Initial constellation**

The client contemplated the initial constellation, talked about each figure and named most of them. She experienced Obstacle 3 as very big and felt a lot of tension between the Goal and the Focus. Resource 3 felt unknown. She described the Hidden Benefit as having a lot of energy and as moving a lot. Generally she felt "a lot of fear" in the constellation.

When I mentioned that even though she was looking at the Goal, the Future Task was invisible to the Focus, she realised it was the only figure she hadn't talked about. This figure was standing so close to the Goal that they were touching. After some rearrangements, the Focus and the Future task were facing each other from a relatively close distance.



**Figure 18, Case 5: The Focus is facing the Future Task**

When the client's attention was drawn to the fact, that even though the Focus was now closer to the Goal, it was not looking at it, she remarked:

**CLIENT:** It is like I have just had so many goals and so many things to achieve. . . . I would like just to see any future without having to worry about any goals.

Goals implied achievement and stress for her. It was clear that we needed to resolve other issues first, before the client was ready to face her goal. I drew her attention to the group Hidden Benefit, Obstacle 1 and Obstacle 2, who were standing separated from the rest of the figures.

**FACILITATOR:** Another thing I am really intrigued by, is this group here, the Hidden Benefit. It is kind of funny, because I felt like, ah yes, they are just watching there from far, and initially I thought it is not that dominant any more, but now with just what you have done here and what you say, it feels more like they are watching there and say, yes, yes, she'll come back again.

**CLIENT:** It feels like they are in some kind of military formation.

**FACILITATOR:** Watching what is happening.

**CLIENT:** Yes, getting ready to move in like chess pieces.

**FACILITATOR:** And that is in their advantage because you are not looking at your goal anymore.

**CLIENT:** Yes, right. Ok, I just can't go straight there.

Through this story, hidden dynamics were externalised. This was left for the moment, to allow it to work while we continued to focus on the Future Task. The client realised that all she had been looking at in her life to date were "obstacles and hidden agendas". After I placed Resource 3 next to the Focus as a support, she felt she was starting to create balance in her life, she now felt empowered to see beyond.

**CLIENT:** That makes a huge difference with this (*Resource 3*) beside me. Like I don't feel I could have looked at that (*Hidden Benefit*). That would have been just too much tension there. There just wasn't enough support. I know it is not these things (*Resource 1, Resource 2*), it is like a new support that has come in.

She realised she had more resources available now, and the Hidden Benefit could be honoured for his skills. The client repeated after me:

**CLIENT:** "I acknowledge your skills of looking at the 'dark side'. . . . And they are important. . . . But now. . . . I need some balance".

We explored what would help her create balance and a new figure was placed next the Hidden Benefit.



**Figure 19, Case 5: Balancing the Hidden Benefit**

When asked what this new skill could be, the client explored:

**CLIENT:** Something like positive thinking or goal setting, or creating, creation. Some new people and something that is very grounded. It feels like it is a whole new orientation. . . . It is like an orientation for success.

The Focus was returned to its original position, facing the Goal, but this time supported by Resource 3 and the balance of her skills near the Goal.



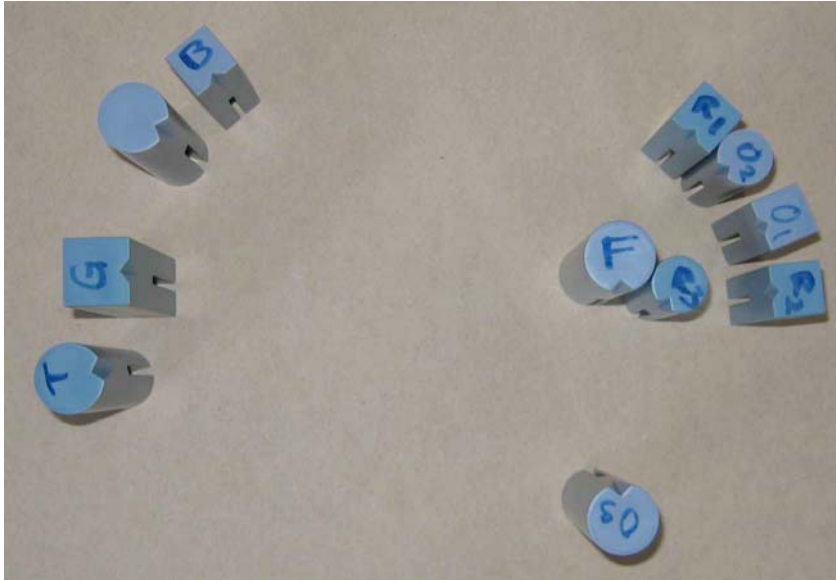
**Figure 20, Case 5: Facing the Goal again, this time with support**

Contemplating this new picture, the client had an important realisation.

**CLIENT:** I actually can see that this (*Resource 3*) is really the future. The birth of something. And no wonder I can't see the future, because I can't see this. . . . And some part of me has

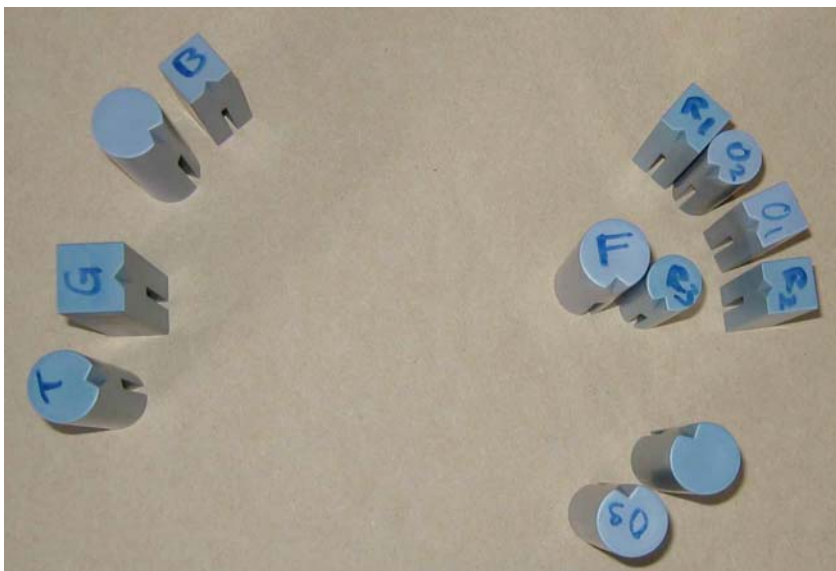
sort of seen like "ah yes, this is all birthed out of all these obstacles (*Obstacle 1, Obstacle 2*)".

Obstacles often show something, like a hidden support. Resource 1, Obstacle 1, Obstacle 2 and Resource 2 were arranged behind the focus in a semicircle as a support from the past. Attention was now directed to Obstacle 3, which had previously been named as the biggest obstacle in the constellation.



**Figure 21, Case 5: Facing the biggest obstacle**

While gazing at the constellation, the client touched Obstacle 3 with her finger. Family past was suggested, something genetic. I added a new figure for her mother and Obstacle 3 was identified as her grandmother.



**Figure 22, Case 5: Facing mother and grandmother**

It emerged that the client's sickness could be related to the fate of her grandmother, and we tested this with statements. Repeating after me, she said to her grandmother:

**CLIENT:** "I am feeling sick out of loyalty to you" – yes it's really right. . . . "Now I give it all back to you. . . . You are just my grandma. . . . And I am your granddaughter. . . . Please look kindly on me. . . . If I now live my own life" – that's good. . . . "By feeling like you. . . . I kept my roots alive. . . . Now I am open to. . . . That I can still be Scottish without having to struggle. And fight" – yes, right. Yes, that's good. . . . "There is more to being Scottish than just struggling and fighting".

Looking at her mother, the client repeated after me:

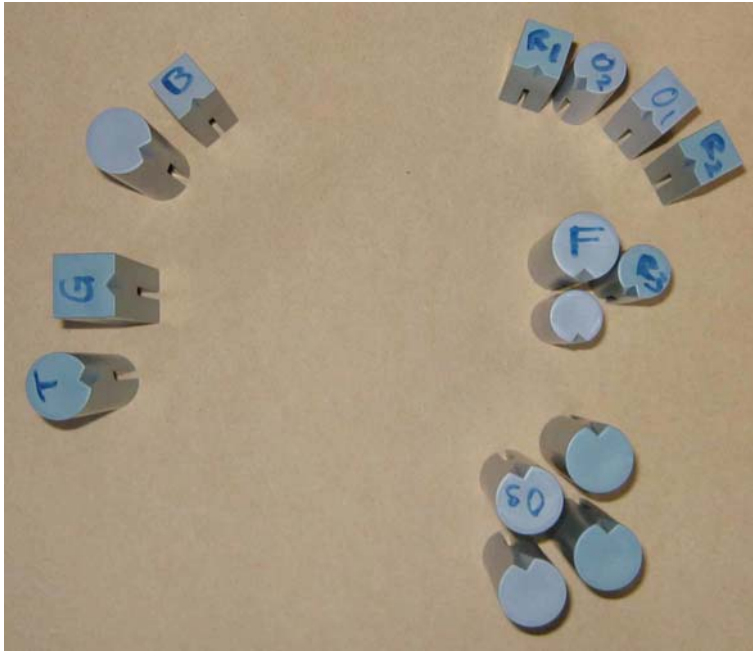
**CLIENT:** "Thank you for taking me to Australia. . . . I will now accept your gift fully". Ah, yes – that's good. . . . "I can still have the lineage of women behind me".

I added two more female figures for the lineage. They had to be rearranged a few times before it felt right to the client. While looking at this lineage, she expressed her wish to carry on this lineage by having a child, and said:

**CLIENT:** It is almost like I am asking them for their permission.

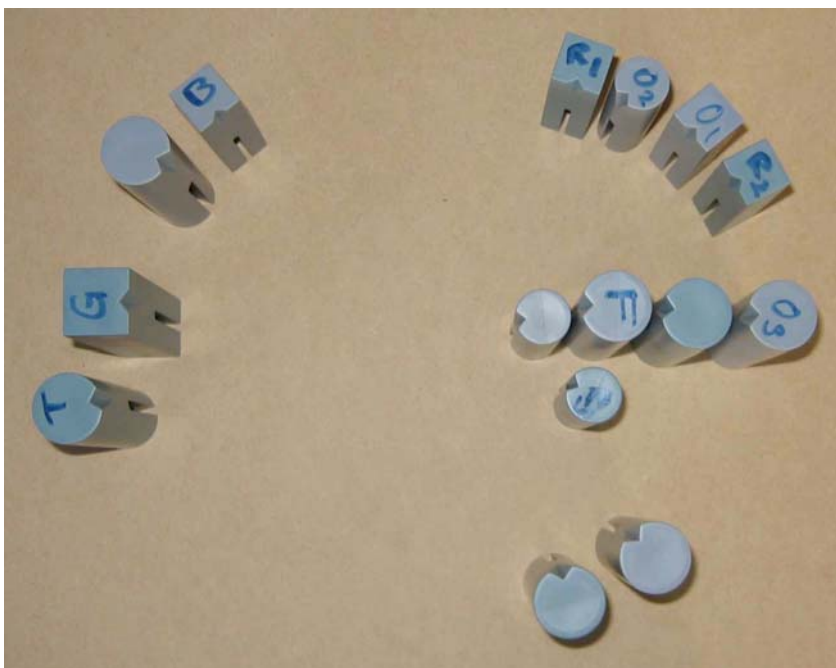
And, once a new figure was placed in front of her as the child.

**CLIENT:** I just feel like everybody is nodding approval.



**Figure 23, Case 5: Asking permission to have a child**

The Focus was turned to face the Goal, taking the child and her female lineage, up to her grandmother, with her. The client felt the other two women needed to stay at the side at this stage.



**Figure 24, Case 5: Final constellation**

**CLIENT:** Yes. Right. Wow. That certainly changes the picture.



## 4.5.2 Evaluation of the constellation

### ***Was there a movement towards a solution, and how was it found?***

The client felt a tension when looking at her goal. She seemed to think that having success meant she had to do something other than what she enjoyed, and that what she enjoyed was not seen as success. She placed goals equivalent with achieving and stress. She wanted to see the future without having to worry about goals, not realising that goals do not necessarily imply achievements.

The key issue for this client was about creating balance in her life. This emerged when she was acknowledged for her courage to look at obstacles and hidden agendas. By adding a figure next to the Hidden Benefit, the shift happened. The new figure represented the client's skill to balance the client's ability to deal with "the dark side". Interestingly, she described these skill as "orientation for success".

Obstacles often show something, they are almost like a hidden support. In the process of this constellation, this was shown when the client realised that a new resource had developed out of Obstacle 1 and Obstacle 2.

Another major shift happened when the client expressed her wish to have a child. This placed the Goal into a larger context. This brought more peace and meaning to her career issue.

### ***How did the final picture of the constellation look, compared to the initial one?***

In the initial constellation I noticed a couple of things. Even though the Focus was looking directly at the Goal with nothing blocking the vision, the Future Task was hidden by the Goal. It was standing directly behind the Goal and out of vision for the Focus. This indicated that the client was not actually seeing what was coming after the goal has been reached. I was also intrigued by a group of the figures Hidden Benefit, Obstacle 1 and Obstacle 2 standing separate from the rest of the constellation.

In the final constellation the Focus was once again facing the Goal, this time with a child in front of her and a female lineage, up to her grandmother, behind her. The other two women and the resources and obstacles from the past were watching from the side. The Hidden Benefit was standing near the Goal, balanced by a new figure for "orientation on success". The Goal, the Future Task, the Hidden Benefit and the new skills were in full vision. This constellation included a lot more female figures compared to the initial picture, reflecting the client's transition from a more male goal oriented focus on achievement to a more feminine approach which still was looking at the a goal, but also included motherhood. The client had her female lineage with her and the male Hidden Benefit of being able to face obstacles was balanced with female figure of new possibilities, which interestingly enough, the client also described as positive thinking, goal setting and creation.

## 4.5.3 Client feedback to research questions

### ***What was the experience of the client after completing a systemic constellation?***

The client recounted that the constellation had given her reasons to change her career.

**CLIENT:** I have been more clearer and had more direction, I know more what I want. . . . I got a job with less responsibility. . . . For the same money and that's pretty good.  
(Interview 2)

She had given up her job and then had the choice between two new jobs in a different company. She chose a senior technical writing role with less stress in preference to a project management role.

**CLIENT:** I am glad I am not doing that, that would have been pretty much, more or less, the same. (Interview 2)

And about the new company she said:

**CLIENT:** They are very successful and they are organised. I am working for a good company. (Interview 2)

The client reported having a mixture of feelings after the session, including feeling a bit disorientated with such a big change in her approach to her career.

**CLIENT:** Seeing what I am on about around my career, I felt a loss. And then seeing what I wanted in terms of having a family, I felt like this is a big dream that just has never happened. So that is quite scary. (Interview 2)

In relationship to her wish for a child and her female lineage, she reported that she had moved back to Brisbane, is spending a lot of time with her mother and enjoying being at home.

**CLIENT:** This is where I want to bring up the child . . . and there is more chance of meeting somebody here. . . . And the other thing is splitting up with my boy friend, I am seeing that a relationship was never going to happen. (Interview 2)

Generally, she was taking things easier.

**CLIENT:** My attitude in terms of taking things a lot easier and feeling like I am not prepared to stay in a situation that's just going to be really unhealthy, and I am not really busting my back for a company. I really don't want that any more. (Interview 2)

#### ***How useful was the information received in the constellation process to the client?***

The client reported on feeling more at peace with her career and found the information received very useful.

**CLIENT:** I guess the biggest thing that I had was a lot of pointlessness, because I felt like I am just plugging away, and it is hard work and it is not really for any reason. Whereas having the potential and possibility of a child feels like it is all worth it. So I feel there are possibilities and opportunities and relevance and meaning. (Interview 1)

The constellation had influenced the way she was thinking about her career.

**CLIENT:** It did. Quite dramatically in terms of that I have achieved a lot in my career and that's not my primary focus any more. It is about family. . . . I think previously I wanted everything to be nice and neatly finished off before I moved on to something else, to have achieved everything that I wanted to achieve in my career before I can have a family. . . . I really got to see that the time is now and it's not about any ideas that I have about what sort of goals that I wanted to achieve in my career. (Interview 2)

#### ***How did the client value systemic constellations as an addition to existing methods in career development?***

**CLIENT:** I just feel that if I had been in a standard career thing, it would all have been about goals and what suits me. . . . I don't know if motherhood would have emerged. . . . I think it allows a lot more of the subconscious and the unknown to come through. . . . If you look at how career paths evolve, they have an element of the unknown in it. Yes, interesting. (Interview 1)

#### **4.5.4 Further Comments**

It was fascinating to hear how the client's request for a new and healthy job in a successful company became reality. Meanwhile she had started working there, although it is still too early to see how the actual work will be.

This constellation went into personal issues of the client in the context of career counselling. I knew from a previous sessions with her, that she was comfortable with including these issues. In fact, she referred to this in the interviews as one of the strengths of using constellations in career development. If I would have had any doubts, I would have asked for her permission more directly before I included her mother in the constellation. If it wouldn't have been ok, we could have continued the session by working directly with her health issue. Alternatively, the session could have stopped at this point. It is not required to find a solution for everything in a constellation, it is enough, if a movement has started, which we had in this case.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

A requirement for this project was a goal related to career challenges. If there was another, more important, issue in the background, it made it difficult for client to stay focussed; the system relaxed, once this issue was included in the constellation.

### 5.1 Discussion of results

#### 5.1.1 My experience of the constellation

##### ***Was there a movement towards a solution found and how was it found?***

Cases 2 and 5 presented stress-related issues for the constellation. In both cases, enjoyment and career did not seem to go together, creating an imbalanced situation. While client 5 changed her job successfully, client 2 did not think this was possible at this stage, although his work was made easier by external influences. Cases 3 and 4 had a conflict hindering their work and case 1 wanted more responsibility and acknowledgement.

Client 2 defined his goal in the first sentence of the introductory interview. It would be interesting to see how the constellation would have evolved if we would have started at this point, and if the bigger issue would have presented itself as well. Further research could experiment with different lengths of introductory interviews and the amount of details received.

Even though the issues varied widely from case to case, a movement towards some easing could be seen in every situation. Although the process was individual for every client, I observed several general trends. The constellation process was used to create a support system for the client and to bring the Goal and also the Future Task into focus; hidden issues were brought to light; and after a period of exploration, Obstacles were either removed or developed into a support.

In every case, a story was developed; family stories in cases 1 and 5, conflict resolution in cases 3 and 4, and "thinking about life" in case 2. This case shows that the facilitator does not need to know facts in a constellation session.

Previous experience with constellations seemed to help deepen the process. Cases 1, 4 and 5 were familiar with the model, and the more experience they had, the more they were able to perceive valuable information from the figures by themselves. Case 3, not familiar with the process but used to working with feelings, had an immediate sense of what was happening with the figures. Case 2, with no experience, stayed the most removed.

For most clients it was hard to understand the concept of the Hidden Benefit. Case 4 expressed the most difficulties, possibly caused by a strong focus on her goal.

In cases 3 and 4, external influences contributed to the problem, either "other people had to change" or "others were getting in the way of reaching the goal"; still, they needed to find out what they could do to change the situation.

In four out of the five cases, other goals emerged during the constellation process and only when an additional figure for this was introduced, did the system *and* the client relax. In cases 2, 3 and 5 a bigger goal presented itself, going beyond the initially stated goal. In case 4, a separate goal was introduced for obstacles who were blocking the client's view of her own goal.

##### ***How did the final picture of the constellation look, compared to the initial one?***

In the initial constellations the Goal was mostly not in view for the Focus (cases 1, 2, 3 and 4) with the Focus either facing in another direction (cases 1,2 and 3), or the vision being blocked by other figures (case 4). Mostly, the Goal was also looking away (cases 1, 2 and 3). Only in case 5 did the Focus have direct vision to the Goal.

In cases 2 and 3, the figures were all facing in the same direction and the missing element was a bigger goal. In case 2, the Obstacles were facing directly opposite, indicating that something or somebody was opposing the focus on this goal.

In all cases the final constellation included additional figures. The Focus, surrounded by support, was facing either the original Goal, or a new one with the remaining figures in peripheral vision. In cases 1, 3 and 5, an Obstacle had changed into a support.

### 5.1.2 Client Feedback on research questions

#### ***What was the experience of the clients after completing a systemic constellation?***

In the follow up interview the clients talked about a variety of, mostly subtle, feelings they had after the constellation, ranging from: feeling exposed, disoriented and loss; to feeling lighter, relieved, open, calm and having more clarity. Case 2 did not see anything come from it, apart from his reflection on the process.

All clients reported a change at work that was related to the originally stated goal for the constellation.

Case 1: more responsibility and recognition;

Case 2: more refreshed after break and 2 new staff to reduce workload;

Case 3: better communication and less pressure;

Case 4: more confident, better boundaries and looking for other ways of working; and

Case 5: left job and found a new one, more suited and with the same wage.

Case 1, 3 and 5 had additional incidents linked to the process.

#### ***How useful was the information, received in the constellation process, to the clients?***

The following comments were made on the final picture of the constellation and most clients wanted the picture:

Case 1: "what will grow is this picture" (Interview 2);

Case 2: "tells a story" (Interview 1);

Case 3: "genius" (End of session);

Case 4: "so significant" (Interview 2); and

Case 5: "Wow. That certainly changes the picture" (end of session).

With the exception of case 5, nobody saw a reason for changes in their career, although cases 1, 2 and 3 expressed another preference.

All clients found the information received from the constellation useful. Four clients elaborated on a series of positive outcomes, ranging from:

Case 1: a positive feeling around mother's death;

Case 3: use of the constellation concept as a strategy tool;

Case 4: ability to deal with change and to leave things open; to

Case 5: change of focus from career to family.

All clients found they gained a better understanding resulting from the constellation, such as:

Case 1: self awareness and relationships;

Case 2: acceptance of current situation;

Case 3: specific work relationships and processes;

Case 4: clarity on professional relationships; and

Case 5: change of focus from career to family.

And reported on a variety of insights:

Case 1: impact of family experience on work;

Case 2: confirmation that his focus is on something other than career;

Case 3: importance of right alignment in an organisation;

Case 4: change of perspective and can now see that more than one person can be successful doing a similar thing; and

Case 5: can have family before everything is achieved in career.

### ***How did the clients value systemic constellations as an addition to existing methods in career development?***

All agreed that this work adds value because it has another dimension to it.

Case 1: more comfortable intuitive feeling process;

Case 2: powerful visual aids and three dimensional;

Case 3: has personal relevance and includes a generic learning;

Case 4: includes all aspects involved in an issue; and

Case 5: allows more of the subconscious to come through.

## **5.2 Implications for counselling, psychology and organisational consulting**

### **5.2.1 Working in a career context**

These days, professional psychological help is offered more and more in organisations. Especially, large corporations and government agencies are realising that "happier" people work better. By helping staff to create more balance in their lives, the companies also help themselves. Working with career issues seems to be a good start; career and earning a livelihood is often a person's main focus covering up other issues, as some of the cases in this study showed. In addition, with the stigma counselling has in Australian society, people are usually more willing to talk about career issues than personal or family issues. The systemic constellation model used in this project, with its focus on goal possibilities to work without facts, could be more acceptable for many as a tool to help improve their quality of life.

In two cases, the constellation went into private family issues. If this happens in the context of career counselling or organisational consulting, it is very important to continuously check with the client whether he or she is alright to work with possibly sensitive personal issues. If it is not ok, the constellation process can be continued without naming the issue further. For example, figures can represent a female or male principle instead of mother or father. No facts have to be revealed by the client; a constellation can work just as well. In cases 1 and 5 of this study, the clients were open to include family issues, and a very rich constellation process helped create more understanding, acceptance and balance in their lives, as can be seen from their interviews. In case 2, the client did not take up the offer to include family issues and the constellation showed beautifully how it can work without facts.

Career issues, more often than not, are embedded in a larger context; whether it is the company, family, or life at large. Three cases showed this clearly, where a second goal emerged in the process: in case 2, the magnitude of the life goal made the career goal almost irrelevant; in case 3, a bigger and more serious issue in the company emerged; and in case 5, the career issue was linked to the desire of having a child. One could say that using the systemic constellation model to work with career issues may be a doorway to larger issues, which otherwise might not be addressed.

### **5.2.2 Phenomenological approach**

Working with a constellation is a very delicate process and it is important to approach it phenomenologically for both the facilitator and the client. The facilitator needs to help create a space for the client, that he or she can set up the initial constellation from a non-thinking space. The facilitator also needs to be highly skilled and not inject their own perceptions into those of the client. During the constellation process itself, it is very important that solutions are not forced onto the client, as for every client solutions are different and the facilitator does not know where these solutions are, or how a client gets there. This was expressed beautifully by client 1:

**CLIENT:** I'd like to acknowledge the way you led me through it, and gave me options and possibilities to look at without actually trying to nail one or push one forward. That was really helpful, to get another [view]. Especially, the way you moved the figures around to give a different possibility, allowed me to see that. Because I can only see what I can see. It allowed me to go further into it with whatever way you felt guided to move the pieces. It was really very helpful to then go "oh, there is this over here, there is this over there". I just couldn't see it. When I started I felt pretty much stuck in here, I was – there was the wall. I really felt like that. So your movements, guides and words, and a suggestion here and there,

really helped me to open up the space for myself to see where I could go. (Case 1, Interview 1)

### 5.2.3 Unconscious, often overlooked, elements

When used with a responsible and phenomenological attitude as described above, systemic constellations is a tool that can help a client visualise what might be unconscious. The goal or problem constellation used in this project, offers the client the opportunity to look at unconscious patterns by including figures such as the Future Task, Hidden Benefit, Obstacles and Resources. At the beginning of the session and even during the constellation process, the client does not need to give these figures a particular context. It is even ok if it is still unknown at the end of the session. In the weeks following the session, the client might suddenly have an insight or realisation, usually probably not even remembering the process of the constellation sessions or any particular figures.

When working with goals, achievement, positive thinking, or to simply find a better outcome, what comes after this is reached is often overlooked. The client could be left with not knowing what to do with him or herself and fall into a gap. Or, what happens probably more often, out of fear of falling into a gap, the client unconsciously does not even want to reach the goal, or solve the problem. Bringing in a figure for the Future Task creates a channel to bring these dynamics to light and the client starts thinking about what comes after the goal has been reached. In the constellation session, this is done visually, that the client feels comfortable with having the Future Task in vision for the Focus, standing a bit further back than the Goal.

When working with goals, whether they are professional or personal, whether they are focused on achievement or improving a life style, personal hidden agendas can sabotage success. This is usually the most difficult to understand for the client as it is unconscious. On the surface, it is often not obvious why a person stays in an unsatisfactory situation, even though there is help available from family, friends, work colleagues or professionals. The Hidden Benefit is another important and unconscious element included in the goal or problem constellation. The figure stands for the benefit a client has from the current situation and could include a range of feelings, from worthiness, comfort, or safety in belonging to a group. These dynamics need to be brought to light before success can be invited in and are part of a movement towards a solution.

Often, obstacles standing in the way of reaching a goal turn out not really to be obstacles when looked at more closely. It could be that something needs more attention, or that they are covering up for a resource or a new direction the client was not willing to look at up til now. By including a flexible number of Obstacle figures into this model, the client can work with them visually, even if he or she does not know initially what they specifically represent. It is not uncommon during the process that the meaning of a figure evolves or changes. Sometimes, certain obstacles just need to be placed in their appropriate context and the client feels less overwhelmed as a result, as was shown in case 4.

This process can also help to bring to light support a client has but might not be aware of, or is not using in a beneficial way. By including a flexible number of Resource figures into the constellation, these dynamics can be transformed into a support system.

Depending on how unconscious any of these elements initially are for the client, a lot of processing is required around this issue by including other figures, speaking ritualistic phrases and creating a support system for the Focus. Working with small steps, in multiple sessions, might be of benefit to give the client time to process the new visualisations into realisations.

### 5.2.4 Comparison to brief therapy and solution focused therapy

The constellation process is complete in itself, as all the case studies in this project showed. However, systemic constellations in general can be looked at as an addition to brief therapy (de Shazer, 1985); the goal constellation in particular could be used in the context of the solution focussed therapy (SFT) developed by the Brief Family Therapy Center (BFTC) in Milwaukee (Bertolino & O'Hanlon, 2002; Sparrer, 2004). The goal constellation includes the essence of solution focused brief therapy as described by George, Iveson and Ratner (n.d.):

- to work with the person rather than the problem;
- to look for resources rather than deficits;
- to explore possible and preferred futures;
- to explore what is already contributing to those possible futures;

- and to treat clients as the experts in all aspects of their lives. (p. 2)

### 5.2.5 A new use for the miracle question

Central to an outcome-oriented attitude is the ability to articulate hopes and imagine the future; SFT includes many questions that can be used to support this process, including the miracle question as summarised by Bertolino and O'Hanlon (2002).

Steve de Shazer (1988) and his colleagues at the Brief Family Therapy Center (BFTC) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, developed the miracle question as a way of helping clients envision their lives after their problem has been solved. Prior to being asked the miracle question, clients usually are informed by therapists that such a question will require them to use their imagination. They are then asked: "Suppose you were to go home tonight, and while you were asleep, a miracle happened and this problem was solved. How will you know the miracle happened? What will be different?". (p. 95)

Similarly, the miracle question can be used with systemic constellations in the introductory interview, to orient the client toward a good outcome for the session and positive changes in the future. The example below, from the session with the client in case 3, shows how the miracle question was introduced in the context of this project:

**FACILITATOR:** Let's assume this constellation is a success – and a little miracle happens – and when we are finished with it, you know exactly what to do. How would you recognise that?

### 5.2.6 Extension of narrative therapy

This specific constellation tool could also be used in the context of another collaborative or competency-based therapy model, narrative therapy, a technique to help the client externalise a problem, where a story is developed (Bertolino & O'Hanlon, 2002; Morgan, 2000).

The comparison between systemic constellations, and in particular the goal and problem constellation, and narrative therapy can be found in the creation of a story. Through the transfer of abstract elements into physical figures on a board, thought processes are externalised and stories are developed with the figures repositioned by both client and facilitator and a new inner image for the client so created. Identification with certain elements can then be released.

Although it can be a challenge for clients to familiarise themselves with abstract elements and figures in a constellation session, they can also be of help in externalising inner images and thought processes that otherwise in SFT or narrative therapy would have been done with conversation alone. There, the outcome for a session or intended positive change in a client's life, is named as a goal, more explicitly than in SFT; nevertheless the focus on finding a solution is present in all modalities. Whereas in constellations, clients are talking freely about the figures, externalising a thought.

Sometimes these abstract elements or figures represent real persons in the client's life. Again, by developing a story and rearranging the figures on the board, entanglements with these persons can be released.

One could argue that this comparison is more specific to constellations with abstract elements. Family or organisational constellations have already a story to start with. Although after the original unconscious image is presented, a new, more beneficial inner image of the situation and, in a way, a new story is developed. An example is shown in the summary for case 5, when a group of hidden agendas and obstacles were externalised.

### 5.2.7 Addition to systemic constellations

This study can also be used as an addition to the field of systemic constellations. Although the individual tools and concepts used in this project, as far as I am aware, haven't previously been used in this particular combination. I have only seen and read about the goal or problem constellation being used in a group situation, with people as representatives giving feedback on the position of the abstract elements.

On the other hand, I have only seen or read of figures, being used in family or organisational constellations, as representing people.

The inspiration for this innovation came from Eva Madelung (see Madelung & Innecken, 2004) who demonstrated how to use constellations in an individual setting using sketches on A4 paper as representatives, using abstract elements from NLP.



## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The aim was to test the applicability of figure-based systemic constellations to career guidance. The results show promise for both the counselling profession and organisational consulting. In all cases the clients reported a benefit and an appreciation for the process.

### 6.1 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

As the process can take a long time to manifest, six weeks for the follow-up interview was a bit short and was a constraint created by the time frame of the overall project. Ideally, a second follow-up interview 3 months after the constellation would have been of greater benefit. Further interviews 6 months, and one year after the session would also, I believe, reveal additional results.

Further research is required on the effects of constellations over the longer term, perhaps 6 months to one year, maybe even out to two years.

In the recent *Training in Organisational & Family Constellations* in Melbourne, the facilitator advised to wait at least three months before following up on a constellation with a client. As this model works mainly on the unconscious mind, analysing what happened too early would diminish the strength of the constellation (personal communication, Gunthard Weber, August 14, 2005).

This comment was made in reference to constellations conducted in a group setting. I still feel however that the follow up interview after six weeks had its value, as there was no focus on analysing the session. Rather, the informant recollected events, feelings and ideas since the session. In addition, these were individual constellations and hence were less complex than a typical family or organisational constellation in a group setting. Also, generally, constellations in an individual setting go less deep, although they can be just as profound. They are used more frequently to find stimulation and insight.

As stated earlier in this report, it is unlikely that five case studies, in the very limited timeframe available, would be able to provide any definitive statements about the effectiveness of systemic constellations. Research into more cases, increasing the sample size, is recommended.

While reviewing two cases in this study, the question came up, "whether the information received influences the process of the constellation?" In case 2, it would have been interesting to see how the constellation would have developed if the client would have revealed more about his family history. It would have been interesting to see whether the larger goal would also have been revealed. In case 3, it would have been interesting to see how the constellation would have been developed if it started right after the first sentence of the introductory interview, without the facilitator knowing the background information in the organisation. It would have been interesting to see whether the larger, more serious issue in the company would have been revealed. Further research, in a larger context, involving two groups of clients, with and without providing facts to the facilitator, could be a very interesting project.

### 6.2 Concluding statement

This research project does not suggest to value systemic constellations over other methods of career coaching. Rather, it is anticipated that this study will bring an addition to the field of personal coaching and organisational consulting. This is done with the hope to make this fascinating new way of perceiving social systems more accessible to consultants, coaches and psychotherapists. Now that emotional intelligence has been broadly accepted by the professional world, collective consciousness might be ready for a new concept, systemic intelligence.

This concept will hopefully bring a better understanding of this world and help resolve conflicts in a more constructive way.

As presently publication, on both the technique itself and the research of the effectiveness of this promising new systems methodology, is unavailable in English, the study will also provide a detailed description of the technique and a review of German literature on the subject.

Constellations, in both individual settings and a group situation, are relatively new in this country. More scientific research could help make this fascinating model more acceptable and bring more understanding to the field. Instead of just knowing that it works, practitioners would also know *how* it works.

## References

- Baitinger, H. (2000). *Organisationsaufstellungen in der Einzelberatung – Notlösung oder gute Lösung in der Not?* (Organisational constellations in individual consulting sessions – emergency solutions or a good solution in emergency?). In G. Weber (Ed.). (2002). *Praxis der Organisationsaufstellungen*, (Practice of organisational constellations: Foundations, principles and application) (2nd ed., pp. 279-304). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme (English translation in prep.). English translation of article by Jane Peterson & Ute Luppertz, retrieved June 26, 2005 from <http://www.human-systems-institute.com/ELSCIE/article6.html>
- Bert Hellinger Institute (2004). *International organization constellations training intensive*. Brochure retrieved June 24, 2005, from <http://www.hellingerinstituut.nl/>
- Berth, F. (2005, May 2). Seelenheilung im Minutentakt (Soul healing in minutes). *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Retrieved July 14, 2005, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wissen/artikel/425/52373/>
- Bertolino, B. & O'Hanlon, B. (2002). *Collaborative, competency-based counselling and therapy*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bolger, A. J. (1997). *Women's satisfaction with group work experience for those subjected to domestic violence*. Project completed as part of Master of Social Science (Counselling), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. (1987). *Foundations of contextual family therapy: Collected papers of Boszormenyi-Nagy*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Buchholz, M. (2003, August 21). Da sitzt das kalte Herz! (There sits the cold heart!). *Die Zeit*, 35, Dossier. Retrieved July 14, 2005, from <http://www.zeit.de/2003/35/Hellinger-Haupttext?page=all>
- Cohen, D. B. (2004). *Bert Hellinger's family constellation method and its place in the psychotherapeutic tradition*. Unpublished manuscript, Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center, San Francisco.
- de Shazer, S. (1985). *Keys to solution in brief therapy*. New York: Norton
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2000). *The handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Erb, K. (2001). *Die Ordnungen des Erfolgs: Einführung in die Organisationsaufstellung* (Orders of success: Introduction to organisational constellations). München, Germany: Kösel.
- Franke, U. (2003a). *In my mind's eye: Family constellations in individual therapy and counselling*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Franke, U. (2003b). *The river never looks back: Historical and practical foundations of Bert Hellinger's family constellations*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- George, E., Iveson, C. & Ratner H. (n.d.). *Solution focused brief therapy: Course notes*. London: Brief Therapy Practice.
- Hellinger, B. (2001). *Love's own truths: Bonding and balancing in close relationships*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Hellinger, B. (2003). *The heart of the matter: Brief therapies*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Hellinger, B. (2004). *Das Familienstellen als angewandte Philosophie* (Family Constellations as applied philosophy). Lecture at the Conference "Helfen und Lassen" 9 -11 February 2004 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. (Translation by Preeti Helena). Retrieved November 15, 2004, from [http://www.hellinger.com/deutsch/virtuelles\\_institut/bewegungen\\_des\\_geistes/familienstellen\\_als\\_angewandte\\_philosophie.shtml](http://www.hellinger.com/deutsch/virtuelles_institut/bewegungen_des_geistes/familienstellen_als_angewandte_philosophie.shtml)
- Hellinger, B., Neuhauser, J. & Beaumont, H. (Producers) & Fischer, H. (Director). (2000). *Holding love: A teaching seminar on love's hidden symmetry, Vol. 1-3*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Hellinger, B. & ten Hövel, G. (1999). *Acknowledging what is: Conversations with Bert Hellinger*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.

- Horn, K. P., & Brick, R. (2005). *Invisible dynamics: Systemic constellations in organisations and in business*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Jurg, W. (2003). *SEBA – Systemic exploration of branding issues: The brander on the couch*. Annen: Open University of the Netherlands. Retrieved November 15, 2004, from <http://www.open.ou.nl/ebb-colloq/pdf/WJU-SEBI%20-%20Systemic%20Exploration%20of%20Branding%20Issues.pdf>
- Kaden, M. (2004). *Vom Wesentlichen braucht man sich nicht zu distanzieren* (No need to distance oneself from the essentials). Retrieved July 7, 2005, from [http://www.hellinger.com/deutsch/oeffentlich/medienecho/kaden\\_michaela.shtml](http://www.hellinger.com/deutsch/oeffentlich/medienecho/kaden_michaela.shtml)
- Krause, K. (2002, April 19). Ich stelle meine Familie – in mein Herz (I set my family – into my heart). *Venus – Das Frauenmagazin für Lebenslust und mehr*, May 2002. Retrieved July 11, 2005 from [http://www.hellinger.com/deutsch/oeffentlich/medienecho/ad\\_venus.shtml](http://www.hellinger.com/deutsch/oeffentlich/medienecho/ad_venus.shtml)
- Lakotta, B. (2002, February 9). "Danke lieber Papi" ("Thank you, dear daddy"). *Der Spiegel*, 7, p. 200. Retrieved July 4, 2005, from <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/0,1518,182683,00.html>
- Le Goff, J. F. (2001). Boszormenyi-Nagy and contextual therapy: An overview. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 22, 147-157.
- Madelung, E. & Innecken, B. (2004). *Entering inner images: A creative use of constellations in individual therapy, counselling, groups and self-help*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Mason Boring, F. (2003). *The presence & essence of indigenous field in family & human systems constellation*. Paper presented at the International Congress for Family & Human Systems Constellation, Würzburg, Germany. Retrieved June 20, 2005, from <http://www.human-systems-institute.com/ELSCIE/article15.html>
- Mindell, A., & Mindell, A. (2002). *Deep democracy in large group conflict work*. Retrieved July 14, 2005, <http://www.aamindell.net/deepdemocracy.rtf>
- Morgan, A. (2000). *What is narrative therapy?* Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Center Publications.
- Morrisette, P. (1999). Phenomenological research data analysis: A proposed model for counsellors. *Guidance and Counselling*, 15, 2-7.
- Nowherefoundation. (2004). *Enhancing children's learning: A pilot study of the application of systemic approaches in primary schools*. A report for the DfES by the nowherefoundation 29 November 2004. Retrieved May 30, 2005, from <http://www.nowheregroup.com/downloads/store/NoFo.ECL-report.pdf>
- Peterson, J. & Lee, V. (2004). *A fourth type of systemic constellation*. Retrieved June 20, 2005, from <http://www.human-systems-institute.com/ELSCIE/article7.html>
- Sawamura, H. & Mares, E. (2004). *Logic of argumentation based on tetralemma with an eastern mind*. Retrieved November, 3 2005, from <http://csdl2.computer.org/comp/proceedings/aamas/2004/2092/03/20921422.pdf>
- Schlötter, P. (2004). *Studie zur Verifizierbarkeit von Systemischen Organisationsaufstellungen* (Study on the verification of systemic organizational constellations). Universität Witten/Herdecke: Deutsche Bank Institut für Familientunternehmen. Retrieved November 15, 2004, from <http://www.p-schloetter.de/>
- Schneider, J. (2000). *Using figures for family constellations with individual clients*. In G. Weber (Ed.), *Praxis des Familien Stellens* (Practice of family constellations) (3rd ed.). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme. English translation retrieved November 13, 2004, from <http://www.constellationflow.com/events.php>
- Sparrer, I. (2004). *Wunder, Lösung und System: Lösungsfokussierte Systemische Strukturaufstellungen für Therapie und Organisationsberatung* (Miracle, solution and system: Solution focused systemic structural constellations for therapy and organisational consulting). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Stam, J. J. (1998). *Bringing the roots of organizations to light*. Retrieved April 5, 2004, from [http://www.hellingerinstituut.nl/artikelen/bringing\\_to\\_light.htm](http://www.hellingerinstituut.nl/artikelen/bringing_to_light.htm)
- Stiefel, I., Harris, P., & Zollmann, A. W. F. (2002). Family constellation: A therapy beyond words. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 23, 38-44.

- Ulsamer, B. (1999). *One Wurzeln keine Flügel: Die systemische Therapie von Bert Hellinger* (Without roots, no wings: The Systemic Therapy of Bert Hellinger). München, Germany: Goldmann.
- Ulsamer, B. (2003). *The art and practice of family constellations: Leading family constellations as developed by Bert Hellinger*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Ulsamer, B. (2005). *Food for thought: Anything goes?* Retrieved July 4, 2005, from <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ConstellationTalk/message/1371>
- van Kampenhout, D., (2001). *Images of the soul: The workings of the soul in shamanic rituals and family constellations*. Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Varga von Kibéd, M., & Sparrer, I. (2003). *Ganz im Gegenteil: Tetralemmaarbeit und andere Grundformen Systemischer Strukturaufstellungen* (Just the opposite: Tetralemma work and other basic systemic structure constellations). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Weber, G. (Ed.). (2000). *Praxis des Familien Stellens* (Practice of family constellations) (3rd ed.). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Weber, G. (Ed.). (2002). *Praxis der Organisationsaufstellungen: Grundlagen, Prinzipien, Anwendungsbereiche* (Practice of organisational constellations: Foundations, principles and application) (2nd ed). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme (English translation in prep.)
- Weber, G. (Producer) & Ehrig, T. (Director). (2004). *Familien aufstellen mit Figuren im Einzelsetting* (Family constellation in single settings). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme.
- Weber, G., & Gross, B. (2000). Organisationsaufstellungen (Organisational constellations). In G. Weber (Ed.) (2000). *Praxis des Familien Stellens* (Practice of family constellations) (3rd ed.). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme. Retrieved August 15, 2002, from [http://www.hellinger.com/deutsch/virtuelles\\_institut/organisationen-stellen/gweber\\_bgross.shtml](http://www.hellinger.com/deutsch/virtuelles_institut/organisationen-stellen/gweber_bgross.shtml)