Objective of the talk: To share an approach (Multi Modeling) used for consulting in business contexts in India using systems thinking and cybernetics platform.

Background: The consulting scenario in India has a unique flavor to deal with. The existence of business in a society which is complex and having different shades to deal with is a good case for the approach which will be shared in this talk. These problems can be classified predominantly as those relating to business, government and society, but influencing each other.

Overview of the talk: In order to deal with this context a methodology based on the systems and cybernetics was developed and practiced by our management consulting group in India. It was named as Multi-Modeling methodology and the types of problems for which it is suitable are: all aspects of human activity systems (business/government or any other enterprises) either part or whole (Information Systems design, Information Systems and Technology Plan (ISTP), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), Perspective or Strategic Planning, Mission and Role Statements, Organizational Restructuring, etc.).

The methodology provides conceptual support to consultants using the Multi-Modeling approach to consulting. It covers all the phases of a consulting assignment, namely discovery, diagnosis, design and implementation. The method consists of a checklist of various dimensions to be probed and patterns to be unearthed to get a holistic understanding of the client’s problem situation or enterprise behavior. The Multi-Modeling methodology is largely independent of the scale of the problem.

The approach recognizes that different stages of problem solving, i.e., discovery, diagnosis, design and implementation require different ways of thinking. For instance, during discovery one has to be open and actively listen to, during diagnosis one has to explore deep into the situation to seek rigorous explanation. And design requires creativity. In other words, the focus shifts from seeking information through seeking interpretation to seeking ideas. However, every stage requires divergence and convergence of views.

This methodology was practiced in around 50 assignments across different domains like Government, Public Sector, Business, and Society. In the course of this the methodology was made more rigorous and robust, through addition of more systemic models. The journey also led to development of models based on cybernetic principles for unearthing the cybernetic nature of problems.