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Defining complex interdisciplinary societal problems
A theoretical study for constructing a co-operative problem analyzing method:
The method COMPRAM
By: Dorien J. DeTombe, 1994

A foundation of the theory of complex societal problems

Complex interdisciplinary societal problems include problems such as the fast growth of metropolitan cities in the developing countries, global environment problems, the Aids problem, but also problems of the transport of goods and persons, and the communication of data. In all the cases knowledge and data are often missing, there are many people and organizations involved, and there is uncertainty how the problem will develop. Many of these problems are ill- or undefined. Before interventions can be suggested the problem needs to be defined.

This study is a fundamental theoretical approach towards a method for handling complex societal problems: the COMPRAM method. COMPRAM stands for COMplex PROblem hAndling Method. The method is based on the theory of complex interdisciplinary societal problems, systems theory and chaos theory. The method supports co-operative multi-disciplinary teams of experts and actors that analyzes, and guides the problem, and tries to find interventions in a six step approach. The teams are assisted by a facilitator. The communication in the teams is supported by a seven layer model in which the main phenomena and concepts involved in the problem are expressed in different models, from a verbal description to a system dynamic computer model.

Dorien J. DeTombe studied social sciences and computer science. She works as a researcher in the fields of social computer science and methodology at Delft University of Technology. She created a new field of scientific attention: Methodology for Handling Complex Societal Problems. She organizes yearly several international meetings (conferences) on this topic. She published many articles and several books on this subject.

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