

Workshop in
**Systems Thinking/Group
Model Building**

20 and 21 April 2015
Systemisches Zentrum,
Wiesbaden



Radboud University



WORKSHOP ON SYSTEMS THINKING / SYSTEM DYNAMICS

The Department of Methodology at the Nijmegen School of Management and the DGSD Deutsche Gesellschaft für System Dynamics e. V. will be jointly offering a course in Systems Thinking/Group Model Building on **20 and 21 April 2015** in Wiesbaden, Germany.

ABOUT THIS COURSE

Learning organisations have earned much attention in recent years. However, learning is not as straightforward as it might seem, and there are many obstacles on the way to becoming a learning organisation. One major obstacle to learning is that people can only absorb and process a limited amount of information at a time. Feedback on decisions taken is frequently ambiguous. This is especially true when organisations have to deal with complex and strategically critical situations, known in the business world as 'messy problems'. Issues become entangled, a team's decisiveness splinters; disagreement can arise as to the nature or even the very existence of a problem. When this happens, people tend to resort to ad hoc decisions, seeking a quick fix with little thought for the long term. The reasons why these decisions are unsuccessful are often misunderstood, or simply ignored: it seemed like a good idea at the time, so why didn't it work? It is precisely this type of thinking that prevents organisations from learning from experience.

The unexpected consequences of decisions that have been made are visible at various micro and macro levels. For instance, the ever-increasing demand for cheaply produced food has led to a myriad of problems in food safety; consumer action groups monitor and respond vocally to organisations' policies on human rights and the environment; years of skimping on employee relations or machine maintenance causes irreparable damage within organisations; questionable accounting decisions give rise to unease or even distrust among shareholders. Still, decision makers all too often fail to consider the complexity of the matter at hand.

Closed loop thinking, on the other hand, centers upon the idea that decisions made by managers and policymakers should be based on feedback and other signals coming from within a complex system. In other words, people identify undesirable situations – problems – and then make the appropriate decisions to ameliorate these situations. These decisions bring about reparative action, after which follow-up decisions can be made. In this way a feedback cycle develops, which forms a continuous process consisting of information about a problem, corrective action to be taken, newly emerging facts and so on. This, in turn, creates a forward dynamic thrust within an organisation.

SYSTEM DYNAMICS, SYSTEMS THINKING AND GROUP MODEL BUILDING

Learning about messy problems implies bringing existing ideas and expertise into the open and organising them into useful structures. Model building is an invaluable tool during this process. Systems thinking can help us to visualise the underlying relationships and interactions at work in a problem situation; a systems thinking model illuminates the situation and identifies starting points for intervention. System dynamics adds the possibility of developing a computer simulation of a problem. This method exposes not only the nature, but also the strength of relationships. The consequences of various solutions can be simulated over time: Often the behaviour shown on these time graphs reveals that what first seems to be effective for the short term, has detrimental effects in the long run. Group model building can help a team to stop making ad hoc decisions and increase its learning potential. In this process, the fundamentals of a problem are approached by building a model, which subsequently leads to improved communication between group members. The results achieved by teams that have used group model building have been remarkable. For example, one management team that had spent more than a year fruitlessly discussing which strategy to pursue, found that, by applying the method, only three two-and-a-half hour sessions were necessary for them to reach a consensus and to produce a policy plan which all those involved could endorse. A standoff that had dragged on for months was brought to a close, quickly and effectively.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

Skills

Upon completing this workshop, you will be able to

- Identify and map out complex, amorphous problems using a combination of systems thinking and system dynamics; you will possess the tools attributing problems to systems, rather than to individuals;
- Analyse situations more thoroughly by recognising the difference between the symptoms of problems and the causes of problems. This will enable you to develop more effective problem-solving strategies;
- Kick-start organisational learning processes, implementing systems thinking and system dynamics as effective tools in a learning paradigm.

Knowledge

Upon completing this workshop, you will

- Be familiar with a range of systems thinking approaches and the possibility each offers for implementing system dynamics;
- Understand the core principles of systems thinking and system dynamics (employing feedback and non-linear thinking as opposed to open loop and linear thinking);
- Have a better understanding of the relationship between the dynamics of a social system and its structure and the feedback process (dynamic thinking versus static thinking).

TARGET GROUP

This workshop has been developed for external and internal advisors, policy staff and managers who are involved in strategic decision making.

LANGUAGE

This workshop on Systems Thinking and Group Model Building will be offered in English.

METHODS

In addition to knowledge transfer, the emphasis in this programme will be on developing skills through practical exercises. Sessions will employ model building individually and in groups and management flight simulators as a means of training in system dynamics. Today's management flight simulators include models that have been based on situations in existing organisations, which means that you can transpose the insight you have acquired directly to a similar situation at your own organisation. You can also model your own problem situations during the hands-on sessions.

DATES, LOCATION AND FEE

This workshop covers two days. It will take place in the rooms of the Systemisches Zentrum der wispo AG, Dotzheimer Straße 61, 65197 Wiesbaden.

The session has been planned for the following dates:

Systems thinking and group model building:

20 April 2015 from 9 a.m. until 7:30 p.m.

21 April 2015 from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Fee: Student, early-bird fee: € 850
Member of the DGSD, early-bird fee: € 1250
Non-member of the DGSD, early-bird fee: € 1450
Early-bird fee is registration until 6 March 2015

Student, after 6 March 2015: € 1050
Member of the DGSD, after 6 March 2015: € 1450
Non-member of the DGSD, 6 March 2015: € 1650
Please pay before 31 March 2015.

Fees include coffee and tea breaks and lunches, and dinner on 20 April.

REGISTRATION

Please send your completed registration form to:

Ms. N. Cornelissens at n.cornelissens@fm.ru.nl or +31 24 361 1608 Radboud University Nijmegen, Postbus 9108, 6500 HK Nijmegen, The Netherlands. You can also fax the form to +31 24 361 1933.

You can find the registration form on the last page of this folder.

REGISTRATION FORM

Systems Thinking/System Dynamics

the undersigned,	
surname / initials / title:	
first name:	M / F
date of birth + place of birth:	
dietary requirements:	
private	address:
	postal code + city:
	phone number: mobile number:
	e-mail:
business	organization:
	address:
	postal code + city:
	p.o. box:
	postal code + city:
	phone number: mobile number:
	fax: e-mail:
	job title:
	department:
invoice address	business/private
	organization [if applicable]:
	attn:
	address:
	postal code + city:

I would like to register for Systems Thinking/System Dynamics programme (please mark the applicable):

- Student early bird rate of 850 euro (before 6 March)
- DGSD early bird rate of 1.250 euro (before 6 March)
- Non-DGSD early bird rate of 1.450 euro (before 6 March)
- Student rate of 1.050 euro (before 31 March)
- DGSD rate of 1.450 euro (before 31 March)
- Non-DGSD rate of 1.650 euro (before 31 March)

The undersigned confirms to submit the programme fee after receiving the invoice.

city	date
------	------

signature [the participant]	signature [if applicable: the organization]
--------------------------------	--

PLEASE SEND THIS FORM TO:

Business Administration RU Nijmegen,
Postbus 9108, 6500 HK Nijmegen or fax it to +31 24 361 19 33

INFORMATION:

tel. +31 24 361 16 08,
e-mail: n.cornelissens@fm.ru.nl

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like more information on content, please contact Prof. Dr. Florian Kapmeier, Deutsche Gesellschaft für System Dynamics at kapmeier@systemdynamics.de.

For specific details about the programme itself, please contact workshop coordinator Dr. E. Rouwette at +31 24 3611468 or e.rouwette@fm.ru.nl.