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Enhancing the Linking of Soft Systems and Information Systems Models Through a Uniform and Formulised Representation

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Abstract

There are numerous works suggesting linking SSM models to information systems (IS) models for information systems development. In these works links between SSM and IS models are established at the conceptual level i.e. they provide ways to utilise SSM models to identify or to derive IS models. However, most of them have not provided a method for representing the links explicitly in the combined model. Consequently, the links become subtle and untraceable, looking at the combined model only at the representation level.

This paper proposes an approach based on meta modelling to achieve a uniform and formalised representation of models that combine SSM and IS models. The approach allows one to represent not only SSM and IS modelling concepts but also relationships between the concepts in a meta model using the conceptual modelling language Telos. Telos supports meta models to be flexibly specified and extended to meet specific modelling requirements of a particular project.

An exemplary application is presented to demonstrate ihe operationalisation of the proposed approach and to illustrate the uniform representation of combined models. The example also shows benefits of the formalised representation in terms of computer support for managing and retrieving a combined model's meta data.

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