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Advances in Social Simulation 2015

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Introduction

Social simulation is a rapidly evolving field. Social scientists are increasingly interested in social simulation as a tool to tackle the complex nonlinear dynamics of society. As such, it comes as no surprise that scientists employing social simulation techniques are targeting a wide variety of topics and disciplinary fields. The management of natural resources, financial-economical systems, traffic, biological systems, social conflict, and war—they are all examples of phenomena where nonlinear developments play an important role. Social simulation, often using the methodology of agent-based modeling, has proven to be a new and powerful methodology to address these processes, thus offering new insights in both the emergence and the management of nonlinear processes. Moreover, offering a formal and dynamical description of behavioral systems, social simulation also facilitates the interaction between behavioral sciences and other domain-related scientific disciplines such as ecology, history, agriculture, and traffic management, to just name a few examples. The increased capacity for simulating social systems in a valid manner contributes to the collaboration of different disciplines in understanding and managing various societal issues.

The European Social Simulation Association, founded in 2003, is a scientific society aimed at promoting the development of social simulation research, education of young scientists in the field, and application of social simulation. One of its activities is the organization of an annual conference. From September 14th to 18th in 2015, the 11th Social Simulation Conference was organized in Groningen, the Netherlands. The hosting organization was the Groningen Center for Social Complexity Studies.

This book highlights recent developments in the field of social simulation as presented at the conference. It covers advances in both applications and methods of social simulation. Because the field of social simulation is evolving rapidly, developments from a variety of perspectives have been brought together in this book, which has a multidisciplinary scope. Yet all the contributions in this book share a common interest: the understanding of how interactions between a multitude of individuals give rise to complex social phenomena, and how these phenomena in turn affect individual behavior. This multidisciplinarity is of vital importance,

because it facilitates the communication between different disciplinary areas. The value of disciplinary collaboration and cross-fertilization in social simulation research is demonstrated by many contributions in this volume. To mention just one of the many areas for which this holds: insights from studying the socio-ecological dynamics of fisheries may prove to be relevant in understanding conflicts in human organizations as well.

Concerning the topics addressed in this book, the reader will find a wide variety of issues that are addressed using social simulation models. The topic of complexities of economic systems is addressed in a number of chapters, providing a perspective on our understanding of the nonlinear characteristics of economic systems on various levels. Opinion dynamics is another topic on which numerous contributions focus. Studying opinion dynamics is highly relevant to develop a deeper understanding of societal polarization, the emergence and resolution of conflict, and civil violence. A range of contributions addresses the interaction of humans with their environment, most notably the social dynamics of natural resource use and ecosystem management. Applied topics deal with fish stocks and land use. Closely related to this are contributions dealing with food production and consumption, a theme that in turn has important consequences for land use. Another field with important societal impact addressed by papers in this volume is transportation, where technology development and human behavior interact likewise. This is related to the rapid developments that we currently witness in systems for the production and consumption of energy. The energy transition can be seen as a typical example of a nonlinear process where social simulation contributes to a deeper understanding that may help to develop more effective managerial and societal strategies in the future. Besides looking at current societal and socio-ecological issues, social simulation is increasingly used to understand developments that happened in the past. In this book, the reader will find chapters demonstrating how social simulation, as a methodology, may be valuable in understanding historical developments.

Besides applications of social simulation models on topical domains, this book also covers relevant developments in the methodology of social simulation. An area that receives increasing attention in the literature is the empirical validation of simulation models. Various contributions address the question how empirical data can be used in further improving the reliability of social simulation models. Also attention is devoted to the use of behavioral theory in social simulation models, which requires a translation from more descriptive and correlational models to a formal dynamic model of behavior. Related to this is the topic of construction of artificial populations to be used in experimenting with models of societal processes. Finally, in making models more accessible for the general public, attention is given to running social simulation models in browsers, which would make them much more accessible.

This book is an important source for readers interested in cutting-edge developments exemplifying how simulation of social interaction contributes to understanding and managing complex social phenomena. The editors wish to thank all authors, the members of the scientific committee and the auxiliary reviewers who were responsible for reviewing all the papers submitted for the conference, as well

as the organizers of the special sessions. For a list of all people involved in shaping the contents of the conference and reviewing the submissions, see the next pages. The papers published in this volume are a representative selection from a broader set of research papers presented at Social Simulation 2015.

Groningen, The Netherlands

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- Social Conflict and Social Simulation: Armando Geller and Martin Neumann
- Applications in Policy Modelling: Petra Ahrweiler, Nigel Gilbert, Bruce Edmonds, and Ruth Meyer
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- Social Simulations of Land, Water and Energy: Tatiana Filatova
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- Modelling Routines and Practices: Bruce Edmonds
- Qual2Rule—Using Qualitative Data to Inform Behavioural Rules: Melania Borit
- Modelling Social Science Aspects of Fisheries: Melania Borit
- Simulation of Economic Processes: Alexander Tarvid
- Affiliation, Status and Power in Society: Gert Jan Hofstede, Sjoukje Osinga, and Floor Ambrosius

Contents

From Field Data to Attitude Formation 1
Kei-Léo Brousmiche, Jean-Daniel Kant, Nicolas Sabouret, and François Prenot-Guinard

A Simple-to-Use BDI Architecture for Agent-Based Modeling and Simulation 15
Philippe Caillou, Benoit Gaudou, Arnaud Grignard, Chi Quang Truong, and Patrick Taillandier

Food Incident Interactive Training Tool: A Serious Game for Food Incident Management 29
Paolo Campo, Elizabeth York, Amy Woodward, Paul Krause, and Angela Druckman

A Cybernetic Model of Macroeconomic Disequilibrium 37
Ernesto Carrella

How Should Agent-Based Modelling Engage With Historical Processes? 53
Edmund Chattoe-Brown and Simone Gabbriellini

Evolutionary Cooperation in a Multi-agent Society 67
Marjolein de Vries and Pieter Spronck

Design of an Empirical Agent-Based Model to Explore Rural Household Food Security Within a Developing Country Context 81
Samantha Dobbie and Stefano Balbi

Comparing Income Replacement Rate by Prefecture in Japanese Pension System 95
Nisuo Du and Tadahiko Murata

Hybrid Simulation Approach for Technological Innovation Policy Making in Developing Countries 109
Maryam Ebrahimi

Modelling Contextual Decision-Making in Dilemma Games 121
Harko Verhagen, Corinna Elsenbroich, and Kurt Fällström

Preliminary Results from an Agent-Based Model of the Daily Commute in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, UK 129
Jiaqi Ge and Gary Polhill

Agent-Based Modelling of Military Communications on the Roman Frontier 143
Nicholas M. Gotts

The Leviathan Model Without Gossips and Vanity: The Richness of Influence Based on Perceived Hierarchy 149
Sylvie Huet and Guillaume Deffuant

A Calibration to Properly Design a Model Integrating Residential Mobility and Migration in a Rural Area 163
Sylvie Huet, Nicolas Dumoulin, and Guillaume Deffuant

Modeling Contagion of Behavior in Friendship Networks as Coordination Games 181
Tobias Jordan, Philippe de Wilde, and Fernando Buarque de Lima-Neto

A Model of Social and Economic Capital in Social Networks 195
Bogumił Kamiński, Jakub Growiec, and Katarzyna Growiec

The Impact of Macro-scale Determinants on Individual Residential Mobility Behaviour 201
Andreas Koch

Modelling the Energy Transition: Towards an Application of Agent Based Modelling to Integrated Assessment Modelling 207
Oscar Kraan, Gert Jan Kramer, Telli van der Lei, and Gjalt Huppes

A Spatially Explicit Agent-Based Model of the Diffusion of Green Electricity: Model Setup and Retrodictive Validation 217
Friedrich Krebs and Andreas Ernst

A Network Analytic Approach to Investigating a Land-Use Change Agent-Based Model 231
Ju-Sung Lee and Tatiana Filatova

Network Influence Effects in Agent-Based Modelling of Civil Violence ... 241
Carlos Lemos, Helder Coelho, and Rui J. Lopes

Modeling the Evolution of Ideological Landscapes Through Opinion Dynamics 255
Jan Lorenz

Changing Habits Using Contextualized Decision Making 267
Rijk Mercuur, Frank Dignum, and Yoshihisa Kashima

SocialSIM: Real-Life Social Simulation as a Field for Students' Research Projects and Context of Learning 273
Larissa Mogk

Simulating Thomas Kuhn's Scientific Revolutions: The Example of the Paradigm Change from Systems Dynamics to Agent Based Modelling 277
Georg P. Mueller

Urban Dynamics Simulation Considering the Allocation of a Facility for Stopped Off 293
Hideyuki Nagai and Setsuya Kurahashi

Using ABM to Clarify and Refine Social Practice Theory 307
Kavin Narasimhan, Thomas Roberts, Maria Xenitidou, and Nigel Gilbert

Transition to Low-Carbon Economy: Simulating Nonlinearities in the Electricity Market, Navarre Region, Spain 321
Leila Niamir and Tatiana Filatova

Statistical Verification of the Multiagent Model of Volatility Clustering on Financial Markets 329
Tomasz Olczak, Bogumił Kamiński, and Przemysław Szufel

Social Amplification of Risk Framework: An Agent-Based Approach 335
Bhakti Stephan Onggo

How Precise Are the Specifications of a Psychological Theory? Comparing Implementations of Lindenberg and Steg's Goal-Framing Theory of Everyday Pro-environmental Behaviour 341
Gary Polhill and Nick Gotts

Lessons Learned Replicating the Analysis of Outputs from a Social Simulation of Biodiversity Incentivisation 355
Gary Polhill, Lorenzo Milazzo, Terry Dawson, Alessandro Gimona, and Dawn Parker

The Pursuit of Happiness: A Model of Group Formation 367
Andrea Scalco, Andrea Ceschi, and Riccardo Sartori

The Social Learning Community-Modeling Social Change from the Bottom-Up 373
Geeske Scholz

Understanding and Predicting Compliance with Safety Regulations at an Airline Ground Service Organization 379
Alexei Sharpanskykh and Rob Haest

Opinions on Contested Infrastructures Over Time: A Longitudinal, Empirically Based Simulation 393
Annalisa Stefanelli

Road Repair Sequencing for Disaster Victim Evacuation 401
Kumiko Tadano, Yoshiharu Maeno, and Laura Carnevali

Using Empirical Data for Designing, Calibrating and Validating Simulation Models 413
Klaus G. Troitzsch

A Methodology for Simulating Synthetic Populations for the Analysis of Socio-technical Infrastructures 429
Koen H. van Dam, Gonzalo Bustos-Turu, and Nilay Shah

Modeling the Individual Process of Career Choice 435
Mandy A.E. van der Gaag and Pieter van den Berg

Modelling the Role of Social Media at Street Protests 445
Annie Waldherr and Nanda Wijermans

AgentBase: Agent Based Modeling in the Browser 451
Wybo Wiersma

Index 457