

REPORT ON FABRIZIO RUGGERI'S VISIT TO MANCHESTER BUSINESS SCHOOL - SEPTEMBER 2005

The purpose of the visit of Dr. Fabrizio Ruggeri to Prof. Simon French at Manchester Business School was twofold, as stated in the application for the grant: start a joint research on combining expert opinions and compare experiences of cooperation with municipalities on e-democracy issue.

As anticipated, a draft about combination of expert opinions was prepared. In particular, we examined current methodologies used in Decision Analysis to combine opinions in participative processes and we started a study on how these methodologies are affected by an e-participation process. The result of the visit is the enclosed draft of a paper on **e-Participation and Decision Analysis** which will involve also another TED member, David Rios Insua.

Regarding the experiences of cooperation with municipalities on e-democracy issues, two results have been obtained: a visit and a draft proposal. Prof. French, in cooperation with his colleague Peter Kowalek, organised a visit to the city of Salford, which is widely recognised as the top city in the UK in e-administration, namely in providing services to its citizens via Internet. We discussed with many people from the ICT group of the City of Salford, from top management to call centre's operators. We saw how all the administration of the city (education, health, transport, etc.) is made easily accessible using Internet, with relevant benefits to the citizens (as we noted, the information was not directly available to the citizens via Internet but they used a very efficient call centre whose operators had the right to access it). Some issues were raised and discussed by Dr. Ruggeri, stemming from his involvement in a project, recently approved by the Italian government, about Local Agenda 21, i.e. the participation of the citizens to the discussion of environmental issues at local level. Interesting technical solutions were learned and discussed about how to improve citizens' lives via e-administration, along with the principles of how technology can improve citizens' involvement. The visit was very fruitful since it has shown the actual use of ICT tools which can be helpful in informing the citizens, i.e. in an important step of the participatory process which is the core of our TED project on e-democracy. At the same time, the visit showed that a long way is still ahead when trying to involve people in actual e-democracy. Finally, French and Ruggeri discussed with the ICT managers of Salford about the ideas, the methods and the techniques which are promoted by the TED project.

As another result of the visit, French and Ruggeri discussed about the comparison of experiences of cooperation with municipalities and regulatory institutions as the subject of a proposal for a call in the FP6 programme of the European Union. A draft of the proposal was prepared and submitted to some TED and TED-related people who were involved in such cooperation at national level.

During the visit, French and Ruggeri discussed on the programme of the forthcoming TED workshop in Manchester on Human Computer Interface.

Last but not least, the visit has given Dr. Ruggeri the opportunity to work and socialise with a very active, nice and lively group at Manchester Business School.

e-Participation and Decision Analysis

Simon French

David Rios Insua

Fabrizio Ruggeri

Planning sections (to be deleted)

Aim of Paper

Gregory *et al.* (2005) summarise the structure brought to public participation by decision analysis in face-to-face interactions. Our aim is to look to the introduction of *e*-participation and *e*-democracy and ask how things might develop and change ...

Actually Gregory *et al* seem a little out of touch with the literature on decision conferencing which underpins their ideas. Limited or no references to Philips, Feldt, Buede, Watson,

Points to make

- Web participation is spatially and temporally dispersed
- Think of regulator/ public agency as DM not Athenian ideal
- Different players: Experts, stakeholders decision makers and analysts/facilitators. Different relative proportions. In face-to-face workshops, proportion of experts higher and tend to be chosen by establishment. On the internet more stakeholder involvement and there is more possibility of introducing non-establishment experts.
- One can argue that in terms of value all citizens/stakeholders are equal, but in terms of skills and knowledge experts differ. Therefore may want to weight values equally but expertise differentially. In face-to-face workshops this is possible and facilitator can challenge and explore any cases where this does not happen. When stakeholders drive their own interactions over the web, this may not be so.
- Many more actors
- Along with the greater proportion of stakeholder involvement, there may be a powershift from the 'science' to the 'values side of the equation (no bad thing?)
- Who fixes the rules?
- Technology on website may not be transparent: trivially a show of hands in a room can be counted by all participants, not so on the web. DA tools can be explained by facilitator analyst not so easy on the web.
- Counterbalance the digital divide with old barriers to entry into the participation process: e.g. skills at present views, speed of assimilating ideas, cost of getting to meetings including time off.
- With the web can read back over discussion several times and can move and learn at my own pace.
- Face-to-face interaction favours behavioural aggregation guided by DA and sensitivity analysis. Web interactions favour algorithmic aggregation (problems from Arrow: (French 2004))
- Loss of body language and other aspects of face-to-face interactions may mean that the balance of trust building and ability to misrepresent changes.
- Who has the power to ignore/throw away 'wrong' information?
- How does one construct a 'balanced' representation? In a workshop one can invite a 'fair' representation of views: open access web-deliberation could be hijacked.

- More difficult to learn about each other over the web.
- If a workshop has 20-50 participants and 1 or 2 facilitators/analysts, how many should support *e-participation*? Budget constraints may mean relatively poorer support, especially as ICT support will also be needed.
- Workshops are continuous and largely the process is designed ‘on the fly’ within broad limits. On the web it needs to be planned more in advance and more tightly structured. Little work on the design of participatory processes.
- Calibration may be a problem on the web – manipulability and ‘dishonesty’
- What happens if a participant denies the acceptability of the DA/SEU model? In a workshop the facilitator may have enough credibility to carry the dissenter along with the group and in any case the selection of the participants may have identified stakeholders with a variety of values and views on the context but an acceptance of the style of analysis. With more participants via the web, this is less likely.
- What do we need from a technical view point to build *e-participation*?
 - Web-site!
 - Training materials
 - Elicitation materials
 - Explanation of analysis
 - Ability to lock parts of the model... e.g. lock probabilities and allow user to change personal values.
 - Better understanding of *e-facilitation*. (Macauley and Alabdulkarim 2005)
 - Having discussion lists and linking these directly to aspects of the model
 - Server to run the model (what happens if the model takes 1 hour to run and we need to run it for 20000 citizens?)
 - Need no new theory ... but may need problem formulation tools.
- Possibility of offence and misunderstandings without moderating influence of a facilitator ‘in the room’
- Language and culture ... more difficult to handle on the web. E.G. ‘score’ an unacceptable word in elicitation to some people. Facilitators negotiate language on the fly. Not so easy on the web.
- Will the relative ‘distance’ and ‘formality’ of web-interactions mean that negotiation and arbitration are more important than consensus forming as imperatives to drive the process?

Three modes of group decision analysis

1. form group probability (consensus of opinion literature) & group utility, turn the SEU handle and get a decision
2. each individual forms a personal SEU DA and this creates a vote which leads to the group decision
3. construct and discuss a general decision analysis and explore disagreements via Sensitivity Analysis. Decision taken by discussion without a formal DA bound model

e-participation favours 1 and 2 since it is algorithmic and risk all the problems of Arrow and manipulation (French 2004). Gregory *et al* (2005) argue strongly for 3 in the case of face-to-face participation – similar in principle to Phillips, Petersen, Feldt and others on decision conferencing.

Abstract

Introduction

In a recent paper, Gregory *et al* (2005) ... description of their papers

Description of TED

Objectives

Plan of paper

e-participation and e-democracy

Review of e-democracy and e-participation in general.

Focus on regulator/agency and e-participation not Athenian ideal of e-democracy

Review of Group Decision Theory

Bayesian model (what happens for non-Bayesian citizens!?!?) 5 ages of Bayesianism

Three models from above \Rightarrow Arrow. Social process/behavioural aggregation

Led to decision conferencing which has grown into the approach taken by (Gregory *et al.* 2005).

What is needed to develop e-Participation

List above

Conclusions and Discussions

Acknowledgments

TED/ESF

References

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