

# THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL SIMULATION ASSOCIATION ESSA 2009

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY, GUILDFORD, SEPTEMBER 14-18



## Special Topics

Although papers on any subject relevant to social simulation are acceptable, there will be a number of special sessions during the conference.

- **Special Topic: Social Processes of Science**

If we believe that computational simulation can help the understanding of complex social phenomena and processes and that science is an important complex process with substantial social processes then it is worth trying to further understanding of it using social simulations. This session is to examine how computational simulation can help us understand the social processes or science (or otherwise) -- it is not linked to any prior theoretical stance or commitment.

Although there has not been much direct work in this area (with a few exceptions), some areas of Philosophy of Science, Sociology of Science and Artificial Intelligence have touched on it. Now there are indications that the time for such a project has arrived, including the series of EPOS workshops and the M2M workshops in which members of ESSA have been a substantial driving force as well as the newly funded EU FP7 project, QLECTIVES coordinated by Nigel Gilbert.

- **Special Topic: Social Conflict**

After two highly successful panels at the ESSA 2008 annual conference at the [University of Brescia](#) we invite authors from all backgrounds to submit their papers for a SIG-SCSS panel at the ESSA 2009 annual conference. There are no thematic restrictions, but papers should be relevant to the field of social conflict and social simulation.

For inquiries contact [Armando Geller](#).

- **Special Topic: Market Dynamics**

In recent years, social simulation has developed a position in exploring and explaining various phenomena in market dynamics, such as innovation diffusion, effects of marketing, competition, consumer dynamics, and development of industrial areas, to name just a few issues. The ESSA special interest group on market dynamics has contributed significantly to this field, which a.o. resulted in a special issue in the Journal of Business Development (2007, Vol 60, issue 8). Also a special issue is in progress to be published in the Journal of Product Development and Management. In stimulating the continuous development in this field, we propose a special session on market dynamics for the upcoming ESSA conference. Purpose of this special session is to bring together the recent developments in the field, and to stimulate discussion on further developments. If you consider your submission to be relevant for this special session, and you would like to present it in the special session, we kindly ask you to mention "submission intended for the special session on market dynamics" on your paper. If an insufficient number of papers will be submitted to organise a special session, your submission will be considered as a regular submission.

- **Special Topic: Rich Cognitive Models**

In January 2009, a 5 day workshop was organised on 'rich cognitive models for policy design and simulation' (see <http://www.lorentzcenter.nl/lc/web/2009/325/info.php3?wsid=325>)

The main question of this workshop focussed on to what extent agents should be equipped with (social) cognition as a prerequisite for understanding various social issues and develop policy in managing these issues (if possible). Examples of social issues to be discussed are conflicts such as in Afghanistan and Gaza, conflict management for organisations, the influence of culture and norms on policy adoption and design, transportation management, emergent (organizational) structures (institutions) and values, patterns of interaction between institutions and the public, societal transitions and environmental policy, to name just a few policy issues.

Differing dramatically concerning their impacts on human lives, these examples exhibit remarkable similar social processes: such as the formation of norms, changes in networks

remarkable similar social processes, such as the formation of norms, changes in networks, shifting opinions and polarizations, to name but a few. An important aspect of these processes is that previous interactions will be memorized as a cognitive representation, storing both information on the issue as the position other people or institutions take. These representations affect future interactions and the valuation and processing of additional information originating from or related to these people/institutions. Recently, the combination of cognitive models and social simulation has gained more attention. This proposed special session is suggested to bring together related work, thus addressing the question if and when capturing (social) cognition in social simulation models contributes to a better understanding and possible managements of these social issues. If you consider your submission to be relevant for this special session, and you would like to present it in the special session, we kindly ask you to mention "submission intended for the special session on rich cognitive models for policy making" on your paper. If an insufficient number of papers will be submitted to organise a special session, your submission will be considered as a regular submission.

- **Special Topic: Policy Modelling**

Policy making and the impact of policies is an inherently complex process. Many problems associated with the creation, implementation and assessment of policies result from the great variety of actors and the "not so straight forward" processes leading to a final policy decision. Modelling and simulation, in particular agent-based models, provide some means to address this complexity. The large number of papers presented in dedicated sessions at the last two ESSA conferences shows that there is a demand to deal with policy issues.

The ESSA special interest group on policy invites contributions related to this field. Topics of particular interest identified in the open discussion session at ESSA 2008 included stakeholder engagement, experiences with applications of models in the policy process, which type of models to use, and obstacles encountered. If you consider your submission to be relevant for this special session, and you would like to present it in the special session, we kindly ask you to mention "submission intended for the special session on rich cognitive models for policy making" on your paper.

- **Special Topic: Social Norms**

Despite the importance and ubiquity of social norms in the regulation of human societies, a number of conceptual puzzles remain in understanding norms. The nature of norms, their effects and origins, their dynamics, efficacy and enforcement have long been topics of interest in the social sciences. However, some fundamental questions still remain unanswered. What are social norms? Which relationship do they hold with similar phenomena, such as laws, conventions, and morality? How do social norms emerge? What is the role of agents, their interaction and their internal mechanisms and representations, if any, in the emergence and spread of norms? More generally, what type of agent architecture should be designed and implemented in order to observe normative processes and phenomena on a computer?

Agent-based simulation represents an opportunity for innovation in addressing these questions, because it provides both an observatory for visualization and a laboratory for experimenting on the dynamics of norms. Contributions related to any of the above or other related questions should be submitted to the special session on social norms.

Please mention "submission intended for the special session on social norms" on your paper. If an insufficient number of papers are submitted to organise a special session, your submission will be considered as a regular submission.

- **Special Topic: Societal Transitions**

Societal transitions are system-wide shifts to fundamentally new ways of meeting societal needs. Think for instance of an electricity supply system transforming into a sustainably fed decentralized grid, or a health care system pushing its orthodox ways of dealing with patients and their health beyond a sole focus on diagnosing and treating illnesses. Societal transitions are complex processes since they are so radical that they require changing the very structure of large-scale systems.

These are just the processes that fascinate many a modeller and we invite you to send in a paper on "modelling societal transitions" for a special session on this subject. Preferably treating an actual simulation model, although contributions treating conceptual, or assessment models are welcome too.

In the vein of what we think transition research ought to be, different, innovative, fascinating, we encourage you to surprise us with novel modelling methods, innovative theoretical approaches and untaught insights. We therefore especially invite you to share and apply your modelling experiences on phenomena that appear unrelated but – according to you – share some key features. Think for instance normative agents in transition models or the impact of policies in transition processes. We also strongly encourage experts in established

impact of policies in transition processes. We also strongly encourage experts in established methods or platforms, like swarmers, repasters, system-dynamicians, to take it as a challenge and put their skills to the test on a transition model.

Please indicate in the EasyChair conference system that your paper is to be submitted to the [Societal Transition SIG](#), rather than in the paper itself.

We are looking forward to your contributions and your presence at our sessions at the conference! For any questions on the SIG, transitions or our sessions at ESSA 2009 do not hesitate to contact:

J. de Haan – [j.dehaan@fsw.eur.nl](mailto:j.dehaan@fsw.eur.nl)

J. Timmermans – [timmermans@fsw.eur.nl](mailto:timmermans@fsw.eur.nl)