

WENCHAO JIANG

INVESTIGATING INTERACTIONAL ISSUES OF  
AUTOMATED PLANNING SUPPORT FOR DISASTER  
RESPONSE

**INVESTIGATING INTERACTIONAL ISSUES OF AUTOMATED  
PLANNING SUPPORT FOR DISASTER RESPONSE**

**WENCHAO JIANG**

With a Mixed Reality Game Probe

August 2012 – version 0.9

Wenchao Jiang: *Investigating Interactional Issues of Automated Planning  
Support for Disaster Response , With a Mixed Reality Game Probe , ©  
August 2012*

## ABSTRACT

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This thesis contributes to the understanding of the potential socio-technical issues that can emerge from the interaction between responder teams and automated planning support, which in turn, leads to design implications for dealing with the emerged issues.

Recently, natural and man-made disasters in Haiti, Chile and Japan drew attention of researchers of disaster management systems. A lot of efforts have been made to study the technologies that can assist human responders to improve their performance. In the disaster response domain, a disaster response team, which typically contains several incident commanders and field responders, are faced with the problem of carrying out geographically distributed tasks under spatial and time constraints in a quickly changing task environment.

Effective planning and coordination can be a key factor for the success of disaster operation but it is difficult to achieve. Recent advances in the multi-agent technologies leads to the possibility of building agent software which supports team coordination by automating the task planning process. However , it is unknown how the agent-based software can fit into the team organisation in a way that improves rather than hinders the team performance. The interaction between human operators and planning support systems need to be studied so that we can generate appropriate interaction design for deploying the planning support technologies.

This work presents three field studies which investigates the impact of different interaction patterns between human teams and automated planning support. This PhD work adopts serious mixed reality game approach which is arguably an established vehicle to explore

socio-technical issues in complex real world settings.

We developed AtomicOrchid, an emergency response game to create a task setting which mirrors aspects of real world disaster response operation. In the game trials, participants are recruited to play as field responders and incident commanders to carry out rescue missions. Participants' experiences are observed and recorded as they coordinate with each other to achieve game objectives, with the support from an intelligent planner agent. Interaction analysis is carried out on the data, leading to descriptive results which identifies interactional issues. By iteratively designing and examining different interaction patterns through three iterations of studies, we progressively explore requirements and design implications of planning support system for responder teams.

In the first study, field responders and incident commander coordinate without support of the intelligent planner. The study establishes baseline performance of the game play and derived a number requirements for interaction design of planning support system. In the second study, an intelligent planner was introduced to guide to field responders directly without involvement of incident commanders. In the third study, the system is modified to support incident commanders mediating task planning activities for field responders and the planning agent.

Overall these studies aided in identifying how the division of labour between human and agent played out with different interaction patterns. The field observations revealed that agent guidance have significant hidden social cost, which interrupts natural human work flow. Accountability is also a major issue when the agent get involved in the task planning. Further, confusions and misunderstandings are often observed in human agent interactions. The results of the studies highlight both detailed system requirements and high-level design implications for tackling the observed socio-technical issues.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*To my parents, wife, friends*

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## LISTINGS

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## ACRONYMS

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## INTRODUCTION

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Coordination in Disaster Response (DR) operations such as Urban Search And Rescue (USAR) can be very challenging. In large-scale disaster, DR teams may have limited resource and personnels to deal with multiple incidents across a large impact area. Task planning and execution need to be carried out by geographically distributed DR teams in real time against uncertainties in the environment. The challenges highlight the opportunity space of technology support for real time task planning and execution.

Recently, various Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), ranging from communication infrastructures to social media platforms, have been playing increasingly significant role in the disaster management. Moreover, Multi-agent system researchers have devised various real-time task planning algorithms to automate planning in time critical task domains such as disaster response. The advances in both ICT and Multi-agent optimisation algorithms lead to the opportunity of intelligent planning support in the DR domain. However, before we apply this algorithm to support DR operations, we need to understand how can we design the interaction between responder team and the planning support in a way that improve, rather than hinder team performance. Empirical studies of CSCW systems have shown that it is vital to study technology in use to understand potential tensions between social and technical aspects of a system. In particular, field studies of workflow support systems have revealed that technologies can disrupt rather than smooth workflow if they are not designed in a socially acceptable way. The aim of this work is to explore potential socio-technical issues surrounding a planning support system, which in turn, informs interaction design of such

systems.

This PhD work is a ORCHID sponsored research, which contributes to the understanding needed to build Human Agent Collectives (HACs) in disaster domain. As computational systems becoming increasingly embedded into our life, the researchers from ORDHID project envision a future in which people and computational agents operates at a global scale, forming human agent collectives. The ORCHID project is aimed to realise the vision of HACs by studying the science that is needed to understand, build and apply HACs that symbiotically interleave human and computer systems ([www.orchid.ac.uk](http://www.orchid.ac.uk)).

This chapter will give an overview of the PhD work, which covers research objectives, approach, research questions and contributions, followed by a list of publications related to this thesis and an overview of the thesis structure.

### **1.1 PROBLEM DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES**

In large scale disasters, Disaster Response (DR) team may have limited resource and personnels to deal with large amount of incidents across large geographic area under time pressure. In this situation, task and team allocation become a grand challenge for DR team. The responders and resources need to be assigned to teams and tasks in a way that to minimise loss of life and costs (e.g., time or money) . For instance responders with different capabilities (e.g., fire-fighting or life support) have to form teams in order to perform rescue tasks (e.g., extinguishing a fire or providing first aid). Thus, responders have to plan their paths to the tasks (as these may be distributed in space) and form specific teams to complete them. These teams, in turn, may need to disband and reform in different configurations to complete new tasks, taking into account the status of the current tasks (e.g., health of victims or building fire) and the environment (e.g., if a fire or radioactive cloud is spreading). Furthermore, uncertainty in

the environment (e.g., road connectivity, task status update) or in the responders abilities to complete tasks (e.g., some may be tired or get hurt) means that plans are likely to change continually to reflect the prevailing assessment of the situation.

Recent advances in multi-agent systems research leads to a number of real-time simulation and optimization technologies, some of which has great potential to be adapted to support task planning for DR teams (Section 2.3.3). Although the opportunity space has been recognised, most multi-agent coordination algorithms have only be tested in computational simulations. None of them have been deployed to guide real human in DR situations. However, extreme difficulties might be encountered when introducing new technology support for human teams. New technologies might not support, but may disrupt smooth workflow if they are designed in an organisationally unacceptable way. Many CSCW literatures have pointed out ill-designed work-flow management/automation system can lead to undesirable results, not only fail to improve work efficiency but also hinders human performance. Field studies of CSCW technologies have shown that it is vital to study technology in use to understand potential tensions raised for teamwork.

This PhD work adopts the a socio-technical view on the responder teams and their technological supporting systems. The term socio-technical systems are used to describe systems that involve a complex interaction between humans, machines and the environmental aspects of the work system (Section 3.1). Particularly, the interactional issues of planning support system can emerge from this different ways in which human and system plan and act. Typically, problem solving systems are implemented with logical planning model while human actions are more situated without plans as necessarily prerequisites (Section 3.1). This difference can result in significant issues of human system interaction.

This thesis long-standing tradition to of empirical CSCW study, which investigates complex settings collaborative work setting and identify implications for technology support. In order to build automated systems that support human task planning, sufficient empirical studies may be required to understand how can we bridge the gap between technical support system and social aspects of human team. The objective of this PhD work is to fill this gap by exploring and unpacking interactional issues surrounding the intelligent planning support system.

## 1.2 APPROACH

To meet our research objective, we adopt a serious mixed reality games approach (Chapter 4) to create a game probe (i.e. AtomicOrchid) that enables studying team interaction with planning support system in a disaster scenario whilst providing confidence in the efficacy of behavioural observations. Mixed-reality games bridge the physical and the digital divide. Arguably, they serve as a vehicle to study distributed interactions across multiple devices and ubiquitous computing environments in the wild.

The AtomicOrchid (Chapter 4) is a serious mixed-reality game designed to mirror aspects of real-world disaster operations. In this game, field responders use smartphones to coordinate, via text messaging, GPS, and maps, with headquarters players and each other. The players in the game faces a distributed task planning problem with both time and spatial constraints. To achieve game objectives, the players need to dynamically change their team configurations. The task planning process in the game is supported by a planning support agent software. The planning support agent is based on a state-of-art coalition formation optimisation technology. Design and implementation of AtomicOrchid will be introduced in more details in chapter 4.

In order to explore the interactional issues in automated planning support systems, three studies were conducted with different research focuses. In the first study, field responders and incident commander coordinate without support of the intelligent planner. The study establish baseline performance of the game play and derived several requirements for planning support system. In the second and third studies, an automated planner was introduced to support task planning with two different interaction designs. The second study adopts the human “On-the-loop” design pattern in which the planning agent automatically generate plans and instruct field players to execute plans. In the third study, we adopts the human “In-the-loop” design in which every plan generated by the planning agent will need to be approved and edited before it is sent to field players before execution. More details of these two interaction patterns will be introduced in chapter 4.

The work also adopted an ethnographically-inspired approach for data analysis. We recorded both system logs and video of interaction in the field trials for analysis. To capture the distributed, concurrent nature of the interaction, four researchers with camcorders shadowed the field player teams. Qualitative interaction analysis were carried out on the collected data to provide thick descriptions of human system interaction and unpack issues related to the interaction.

### 1.3 SCOPING

This thesis is relevant to several research areas.

- Human Computer Interaction (HCI). HCI is the overarching research area of the PhD work. This thesis follows a long-standing tradition to of empirical CSCW study, which investigates complex settings collaborative work setting and identify implications for technology support. Two other sub domains of HCI,

namely automation design and human agent interaction, provide framework models and terminologies to design interaction for field trials.

- Information and Communication Technologies in DR. With the vision of HACs system, the current ICT for DR may eventually evolve into HACs in the future. The thesis is aimed to help realise the vision by providing design implications for ICT systems with intelligent task planning agents.
- Multi-agent systems (MAS). The multi-agent simulation technologies underpin the technical possibility of intelligent planning support, providing the opportunity space of human agent collective planning.
- Ethnography. The observational method employed in the field studies (chapters 6,7,8) is inspired by ethnography.

There are various ICT and MAS technologies designed to support disaster management activities in the different stages of the crisis circle including preparedness, response and recovery. This thesis is going to limit the scope on operations of rescue and evacuation in the immediate aftermath of a disaster impact, which typically requires high level of team coordination and real-time task planning and execution.

The thesis also focuses on the issues related to human team interacting with the automated planning support from a HCI/CSCW perspective. Although this work involves planning support agents based on multi-agent coordination algorithms, the effectiveness, performance and other technical issues of particular coordination algorithms are not concern of this work.

As part of ORCHID project, the AtomicOrhid (Chapter 4) serious game platform was developed as a research "Probe" to trial human agent collective planning in the domain of disaster response. The AtomicOrhid platform consists of two major components (see 4 for

details): a game engine, and a embedded task planning agent. The core game engine was developed , deployed and maintained by the author, whereas the task planning agent was developed by ORCHID research partners - Feng Wu and Savapali Ramchun. Both Feng and Ramchun have expertise and research interest in the performance of task planning algorithm, while the author's research interest is the interaction between human and the intelligent task planning agent.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The recent advances in ICT and multi-agent optimisation technologies have created the opportunity space for automated planning support system in disaster response domain. Before we deploy such a planning support system, a deep understanding of interactional issues are required for appropriate interaction design between human teams and computational agents. This work adopted serious game approach to explore the interaction design space. Integrated with automated planning support, the AtomicOrchid game platform is used as a testbed for human agent interaction designs. The AtomicOrchid is further configured with two different interaction patterns to produce game "probes" for field trials. Through field observation, this work is aimed answer the following two research questions:

- A What interactional issues will emerge if we try to automate planning process in a disaster response team? particularly the issues originated from socio-technical gap often found in the CSCW systems (Section 4.1), which can range from social, organisational to other interface design issues. This work is aimed at conducting an exploration of the these issues in the interaction design space of agent planning support.
- B How can we design interaction to support human agent collaboration in task planning? Following the first question, the emerging issues will need to be handled with appropriate interaction design. This work seeks to produce interaction design

implications through field observation and interaction analysis, both of which are grounded in literatures(Chapter 5)

Both questions will be answered with respect to the 2 different interaction patterns, namely human “On the loop” and human “In the loop”, both of which will be detailed in section 4.4.

### 1.5 CONTRIBUTIONS

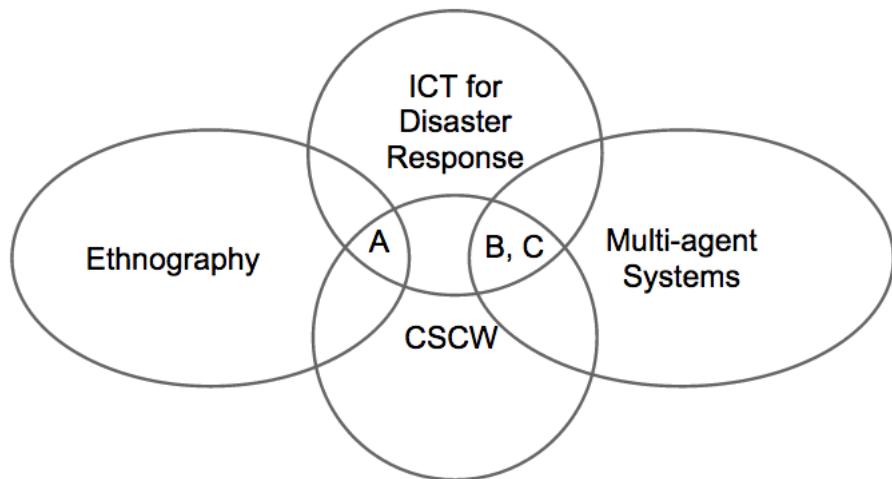


Figure 1: contributions

This thesis contributes to the knowledge in the following areas (Figure 1):

- A A real-world interactive prototype (i.e. AtomicOrchid) and trials to investigate team coordination in a disaster response settings.
- B The field observation of serious game trials leads to enriched understanding of interactional issues surrounding automated planning support in the complex collaborative work setting of DR domain.
- C For each study, field observations are further analysed to generate design implication which contribute to future deployment of automated planning support system.

## 1.6 PUBLICATIONS OF THIS THESIS

Parts of the contents of this thesis have been accepted by peer-review for publication in journal and conference proceedings in the field of HCI and multi-agent system or are in submission. The core contributions include:

1. The chapters [4](#), [5](#) present approach and methodology employed to study interactional issues of planning support system. Some of the ideas of these chapters expands on the contents in: Fischer, Joel E., **Wenchao Jiang**, and Stuart Moran. *AtomicOrchid: a mixed reality game to investigate coordination in disaster response.*" In *Entertainment Computing-ICEC 2012*, pp. 572-577. Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2012.
2. The exploration of requirements for building coordination support system in chapter [6](#) has been published in: Fischer, J.E., **Jiang, W.**, Kerne, A., Greenhalgh, C., Ramchurn, S.D., Reece, S., Pantidi, N. and Rodden, T. (2014). Supporting Team Coordination on the Ground: Requirements from a Mixed Reality Game. To appear in: Proc. 11th Int. Conference on the Design of Cooperative Systems (COOP 14). Springer.
3. The exploration of interactional issues related to human "On the loop" pattern reported in chapter [7](#) have been published in: **Jiang, W.**, Fischer, J.E., Greenhalgh, C., Ramchurn, S.D., Wu, F., Jennings, N.R. and Rodden, T. (2014). Social Implications of Agent-based Planning Support for Human Teams. In: Proc. of the 2014 Int. Conference on Collaboration Technologies and Systems (CTS 14). IEEE.
4. The exploration of interactional issues related to human "In the loop" pattern reported chapter [8](#) have been submitted as:

Other contributions include:

1. Some results from studies in chapter 6 and 7 also appeals in the journal article: Ramchurn, S. D., Wu, F., Fischer, J. E., Reece, S., **Jiang, W.**, and Roberts, S. J., et al. (2015). Human-agent collaboration for disaster response. *Journal of Autonomous Agents and Multi-Agent Systems*.
2. The game probe ‘AtomicOrchid’ built in this PhD work is a central component of HAC-ER (Human Agent Collectives for Emergency Response) system developed as main demonstrator of ORCHID project (orchid.ac.uk). The demonstrator is presented in the paper: Ramchurn, S. D., Simpson, E., Fischer, J. E., Huynh, D. T., Ikuno, Y., Reece, S., and **Jiang, W.** et al. (2015). HAC-ER: A disaster response system based on human-agent collectives. In AAMAS-15 : 14th Int. Conf. on Autonomous Agents and Multi-Agent Systems.
3. The planner agent integrated in ‘AtomicOrchid’ is based on a novel multi-agent coordination algorithm. Details of the planner agent is presented in a technical paper: Wu, F., Ramchurn, S. D., **Jiang, W.**, Fischer, J. E., Rodden, T., and Jennings, N. R. (2015). Agile Planning for Real-World Disaster Response. In International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence.

## 1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis is structured as four parts. Part I surveys the relevant background literatures. The chapter of literature review (2) will firstly give an overview of task planning activities together with command and control structure of DR teams, followed by a review of empirical studies related to command and control work setting. This chapter 2 then examines the state-of-art technology practices from 3 perspectives including planning support systems, ICT support, and application of Artificial Intelligence in DR. The relationship between technological

support and human operators will also be examined by reviewing relevant literatures of CSCW systems, Automation design and Human agent interactions. The rest of the chapter give an overview of serious mixed reality games which underpins the foundation of research approach of this PhD work.

Part II develops the approach and methodology employed to study interactional issues of planning support system in two chapters. The first chapter develops framework of interaction patterns under which interactional issues can be explored. The rest of this chapter will introduce serious mixed reality game as approach to study interactions ,followed by detailed description of a game used as testbed for this study - AtomicOrchid. Chapter 5 describes the methodology used to study the interactional issues. In particular, this chapter will describe ethnographic observation and interaction analysis, which is supplemented by interviews and questionnaires.

Part III covers observational studies in this thesis. Chapter 6 reports the first observational study with AtomicOrchid. This version of AtomicOrchid do not have planning support agent included. The study establishes baseline human performance of task planning and derives general requirements of communication support. The chapter 7 give an account of second observational study of AtomicOrchid. In this study, an planning agent was built into the game with human-on-the-loop interactional arrangement. Chaper 8 reports the third field study of AtomicOrchid with human-in-the-loop arrangement.

The Part IV concludes this thesis with a summary of discoveries, contributions, limitations and future work.

## Part I

### BACKGROUND

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## TASK PLANNING IN DISASTER RESPONSE

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The overarching background of this thesis is disaster management, of which the Disaster Response (DR) is one particular period immediately aftermath the disaster impact. This chapter will review the research areas that are related to design and development of task planning support system for DR. First, the section 2.1 reviews the relevant literatures to develop an understanding of planning practices in DR operations. In particular, the task planning activities in DR operations are mostly embedded in a command and control(C2) environment. The section 2.2 reviews the relevant empirical studies to gain insight into characteristics of C2 work setting. Second, practitioners have developed various technology support systems for disaster response. The section 2.3 gives an overview of technical practices in DR in the context of three detailed application areas, which includes GIS-based planning support, ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) systems and AI-based technologies. Third, empirical studies of technologies in use have showed that the ill-designed technology support may have negative impact on human workflow.

### 2.1 TASK PLANNING IN DISASTER RESPONSE

To scope the task planning activities in disaster response(DR), this section begins with a definition of disaster response, followed by a brief overview of command and control structures of DR organisations. The last section (2.1.3) will examine the main characteristics of task planning in large scale disaster response.

### 2.1.1 Define disaster response

Different countries and agencies may apply different rules and standards for defining phases of disaster management, but most of them agreed the disaster management is carried out in a circle. Figure 5 illustrates the a model of disaster management cycle described in the literature [Wattegama \[2012\]](#) :



Figure 2: Disaster Management Circle. Credit [Wattegama \[2012\]](#)

1. Mitigation: any activity that reduces either the chance of a hazard taking place or a hazard turning into disaster.
2. Risk reduction: anticipatory measures and actions that seek to avoid future risks as a result of a disaster.
3. Prevention: avoiding a disaster even at the eleventh hour.
4. Preparedness: plans or preparations made to save lives or property, and help the response and rescue service operations. This

phase covers implementation/operation, early warning systems and capacity building so the population will react appropriately when an early warning is issued.

5. Response: includes actions taken to save lives and prevent property damage, and to preserve the environment during emergencies or disasters. The response phase is the implementation of action plans.
6. Recovery: includes actions that assist a community to return to a sense of normalcy after a disaster.

The Disaster Response (DR) operations refer to the actions taken during or immediate aftermath of the disaster strike. In this period, a significant number of individuals may be trapped and injured. Great number of structural damages need be dealt with. Medicine, food and shelters are in great demand. This period calls for prompt action within an exceptionally short period of time [Wattegama \[2012\]](#). Responder team may find themselves with limited resources and need to make plans to utilities the resources in a timely and satisfactory manner [Chen et al. \[2005, 2008\]](#).

### 2.1.2 DR command structure

The emergency response agencies typically employs a hierarchical command structure [Ramchurn et al. \[2015a\]](#). One widely used command and control structure the Gold, Silver, Bronze model. In this model, decision making is divided into strategic, tactical, and operational levels. The teams responsible for each are referred to as “Gold, Silver, and Bronze” respectively. The decisions on main objectives of the response effort are made at the strategic (Gold) level. At the tactical level, the Silver command team decides on the allocation of resources and tasks to be carried out based on the specified objectives. At the operational level, Bronze first responders (FRs), on the ground, determine the logistics required to carry out those tasks. Information gathered from the ground is also passed back up from

Bronze, through Silver, to Gold [Ramchurn et al. \[2015a\]](#). Some literatures [Chen et al. \[2005, 2008\]](#) also generalized the command and control structures as a generic two level model. The key characteristic of the two-level model is division between remote coordination center and on site teams. On-site responders react to immediate scene without global picture, while the coordination center deals with strategic issues and works with a global picture, leveraging external resources to help on-site response.

### 2.1.3 Task planning in large scale disaster

One important characteristic of large-scale disaster is the presence of multiple spatially distributed incidents [Chen et al. \[2005\]](#). To gain insight into the problem of task and resource allocation in large scale disaster, we will firstly examine how a single incident is dealt with. The procedures of dealing with single emergency incident have documented by a number of field studies [Comfort \[2004\]](#); [Dawes et al. \[2004\]](#); [Petrescu-Prahova and Butts \[2005\]](#). In Toups's [Toups et al. \[2011\]](#) study, fire emergency response to small-scale structural fires is depicted as follow:

Fire emergency response is undertaken by small teams distributed throughout the incident, coordinated by an incident commander (IC) . Multiple response teams, or companies, are dispatched to any incident and cooperate around the fireground. A company officer leads each team, which consists of firefighters and/or engineers.<sup>2</sup> Normally, each company is associated with a firefighting vehicle; an apparatus, such as an ambulance, engine, or ladder truck.

From the depiction of single incident emergency response, we can see that a combination of different resources (e.g. ambulance, fire engine, ladder truck ) and skills (e.g. structural engineers, firefighters

and medics) are deployed to the location of the incident. To deal with multiple incidents, the disaster response team has to coordinate spatially distributed resources and personnel to carry out operations (e.g. search, rescue and evacuation) Chen et al. [2005]. That is , resources and responders needed to be divided and combined in to teams and deployed to handle distributed incidents. Depending on the number of incidents, response personnel may need to dispatch, deploy and redeploy limited resources. One major concern for task planning in disaster response is how to efficiently allocate limited resources to multiple incidents with temporal and spatial constraints Bradshaw et al. [2011].

Also, the task environment of DR is characterised by various uncertainties including, but not limited to hazard uncertainties, task-flow uncertainties, environmental and informational uncertainties Chen et al. [2008]. Sudden and unexpected events may occur as the disaster situation unfolds. Therefore, fixed plans of actions for responders is unlikely to work. The uncertainties may need to be handled by improvisation, prioritisation, and dynamic sourcing of capabilities Faraj and Xiao [2006], which means dynamic change of plans is necessary to deal with uncertainties in dynamic task environment.

In summary, responders in DR need to carry out a set of interdependent activities under time pressure and spatial constraint. Both their resource (personnel and physical assets) and capacity of problem solving required for planning may be stretched in a large-scale, multi-incident disaster. To alleviate the problem, technological support in DR has long be studied by computer scientists. We will review some of the related research areas in next section.

## 2.2 COMMAND AND CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

The Command-and-Control(C<sub>2</sub>) environment have been a long standing research topic in the field of HCI. The research of C<sub>2</sub> setting fo-

cuses on how operators manage and control safety-critical systems Fischer et al. [2015]. The studies of C2 work setting is particularly relevant to this thesis, because most emergency response operation is carried out in a C2 environment (section 2.1.2).

In the field of CSCW, ethnographic studies are carried out to explicate work practice and organisational conduct in the C2 environment, with the aim to inform the design of technological support systems. The studies are conducted in a range of application areas such as air traffic control [-], emergency response Fischer et al. [2015] , and military operations Tolcher [2005], with the aim to provide design implications for technological support. For example, the The work of Heath and Luff [1992] conducted a detailed examination of social organisation of collaborative work within a line control room in London underground. The analysis of Heath and Luff [1992] particularly focus on interaction between different personnel as they coordinate a range of tasks and utilise various tools. The study revealed the methodological ways in which the participants surreptitiously monitor each other's conducts, and at the same time, render their actions visible and accountable to the other team members. Therefore, it is critical for computational systems to facilitate individuals mutually to monitor their co-participants Heath and Luff [1992].

Similar C2 setting can also be found in the orchestration of Mixed Reality Game(MRG) experiences in which online players in the control room and field players 'on the ground' interacts through pervasive technologies such as smart phones, GPS and other mobile sensors (for details of MRG, see section x). The ethnographic studies of MRGs Benford et al. [2006], Crabtree et al. [2004], Koleva et al. [2001] focus the distributed natural of C2 environment. The observations in the studies reveal methodological ways in which players collectively battle the uncertainties and interruptions of technologies through distributed orchestration process. The results of the studies leads to a set of design implications for handling uncertainties and interruptions in

the distributed C<sub>2</sub> environments.

Apart from ethnographic studies, the impact of technology support in the control room is also assessed by human factor researchers through quantitative evaluation of operators' performance Grootjen et al. [2007], Sharples et al. [2011]. For example, the study by Sharples et al. [2011] is conducted to assess impact of recent automation in rail way signalling operations. The studies evaluated changes of operators' performance through statistical test and quantitative comparison of observational data. The results indicate that automation is effective at reducing high level of interaction and workload. However, operators do seem to struggle to maintain awareness of system state and that they are also unable to monitor the way in which automated support makes decisions in real time.

While both qualitative and quantitative studies contribute to understanding of human-system interactions in complex C<sub>2</sub> settings, this PhD work is primarily interested in understanding of social organisations of work, and follow the tradition of empirical CSCW studies to unpack the social interactions in C<sub>2</sub> setting.

### 2.3 TECHNOLOGICAL PRACTICES IN DISASTER RESPONSE

So far, we have framed the problem of task planning in DR in section 2.1 and reviewed three research domains related to development of DR planning system in this section. To give an overview of current technological practices related to planning support, This section will reviews three related research domains in the context of computational DR support, that is - GIS-based task planning systems for plan formulation and evaluation ; the Information and communication technologies (ICT) for information acquisition and management; and the AI(Artificial intelligence) based technologies for disaster simulation, and plan optimisation.

This PhD work is primarily interested in a real-time task planning system that utilise ICT technologies as its underlying infrastructures and apply intelligent coordination algorithms for plan generation. This kind of system can be located in the overlapping area of the three research domains that is reviewed in this section (see figure 3).

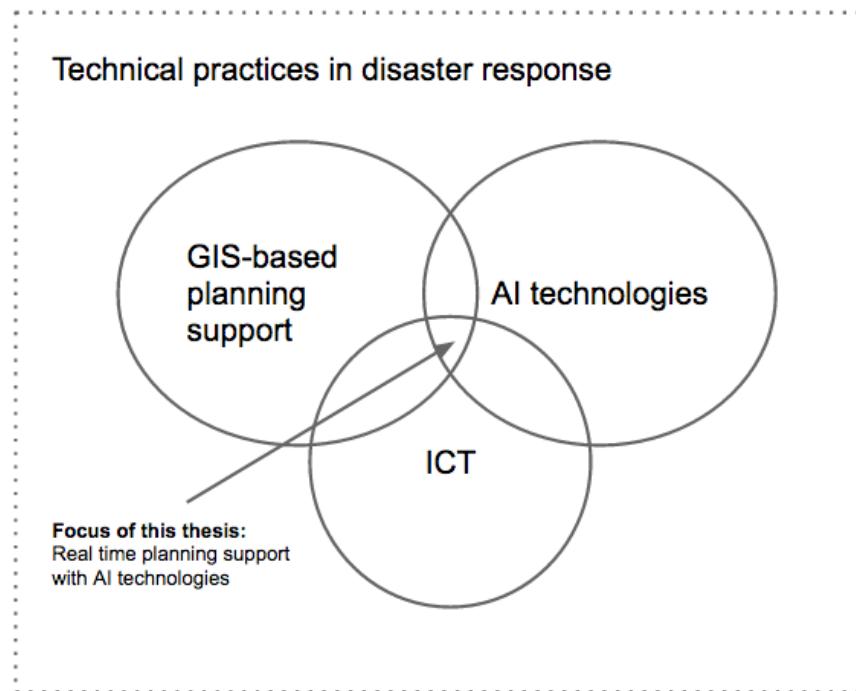


Figure 3: technological support for disaster response

### 2.3.1 *GIS-based planning support systems*

The Planning Support System (PSS) can be defined as a suite of computational components that help planners to explore and manage planning activities [Geertman and Stillwell \[2004\]](#). Literatures have documented a variety of planning support systems with a range of purposes such as land development [Pettit et al. \[2003\]](#) and logistic scheduling [Miller \[1999\]](#). In the context of disaster response, planning activities typically concern dispatch, routing and deployment of rescue resources (see section 2.1.3), which means the geo-information tools/systems (GIS) for spatial analysis may be a central component of a planning support suite. Therefore, this section will focus on re-

viewing the GIS-based PPS.

While the general-purpose GIS are only designed to handle geo-spatial data [Geertman and Stillwell \[2004\]](#), the PPS may have a wide variety of functionalities to support multiple aspects of planning process, which may include, but not limited to problem diagnosis, data collection, mining and extraction, data modelling, visualisation and display, scenario-building and projection, plan formulation and evaluation, and collaborative decision-making support [Geertman and Stillwell \[2004\]](#); [Zerger and Smith \[2003\]](#). A range of the GIS-enabled planning systems have been developed for various purposes such as vulnerability assessment, risk management and hazard mitigation [?Schooley et al. \[2010\]](#). One example is the “Intergraph” developed by Victorian Emergency Services (Australia) [Intergraph Corporation \[2000\]](#)to support emergency dispatch services (e.g. ambulance, police and fire services). The system support daily response activities by providing automated geo-referencing, routing, mapping, planning and analysis [Zerger and Smith \[2003\]](#). Another example of GIS-based planning support is an evacuation planning tool for radiological disasters developed by [Eglese and Pidd \[1994\]](#). The system combines simulation models and GIS software to model evacuation routes for evacuation in radiological incidents. It uses the spatial data structure and programmed simulation models to predict traffic flow through the road network under scenarios such as vehicle breakdowns and road closures. The system is designed for evaluation of evacuation strategies prior to disaster. Real-time decision support is not possible because the simulation is computationally intensive.

The ‘real time’ task planning in DR is different from other long-term planning scenarios due to time pressure and uncertainties involved. Responders in DR have to plan dynamically according to the disaster environment that are always quickly changing. The study of [Zerger and Smith \[2003\]](#) have pointed some technical and social impediments for applying GIS tools to support ‘real-time’ planning activities in DR. First, some spatial modelling and simulation tech-

nologies can be very (such as Eglese and Pidd [1994]) computational intensive which makes it unable to provide results in real-time. Second, some of the planning systems are adapted from GIS software, which require high level of training to operate. Third, there are lack of social and organisational considerations in the most of existing GIS tools. For example, some PPS are based on a single computer terminal, which is unable to facilitate information sharing with multiple users in control room and 'on the ground'.

The third point is aligned with the studies of command and control (C<sub>2</sub>) task environment (in section 2.2). The C<sub>2</sub> environment is collaborative setting which involves complicated social interaction and organisational conducts. Therefore, the PPS designed for C<sub>2</sub> environment should consider supporting the social conducts of responder teams. Further, the computational support in modern C<sub>2</sub> environment (e.g. air traffic control Mercer and Homola [2014] and underground control Sharples et al. [2011]) supports a range of activities such as information acquisition, analysis, decision selection and action implementation. Similar to other C<sub>2</sub> environments, plan generation and action implementation in DR are typically fast pace and happens in parallel. The existing PPS such as Intergraph Corporation [2000], Eglese and Pidd [1994] only provide isolated functionalities for supporting plan generation. To realize 'real-time' planning support, the author believes the PPS should be further extended or integrated with other system functionalities for action implementation, such as progress monitoring, conflict detection, and communication support.

### 2.3.2 *ICT support for disaster response*

The information and communication technology support (ICT) includes communication infrastructures and software system on top of the infrastructures. The communication infrastructures refer to communication channels such as radio, television, satellite, internet, text

and voice communication over mobile phone. The basic communication infrastructures have long been utilised by responders to capture both soft data (generated by human) and hard data (from sensors) for their decision making Fischer et al. [2012]. Apart from the infrastructures, the ICT software systems are playing increasingly important role. Now days, most DR practice may consist of both the manual processes which directly relies on ICT infrastructures and the automated (or partially) process of data analysis and information management that are supported by ICT softwares. For example, the figure 4 illustrate a tsunami response system operated by Asian Disaster Preparedness Center(ADPC)[]. In this system, the technical components are comprised of a network of seismographic stations, sea-level gauges and deep-sea pressure sensors. A tsunami forecasting centre is equipped with seismic processing and modelling software. Tsunami warnings are disseminated through the communication links between national centres and the people at risk, the links include, email, television, radio, cellphones and satellites. Another scenario for ICT support can be found in most modern emergency response rooms (ERR). For instance, the ERRs in Amsterdam uses a ICT software called GMS (integrated emergency response room system) Boersma [2009]. GMS is used to connect the different information sources (e.g. a national digital radio network for public safety). However, the ERRs in Amsterdam is not co-located, but divided by regions and functions (Fire, Police and Medical). GMS used by ERRs are not connected and they are tailored differently to the various needs and requests of operators. As the ERR systems are disconnected, information exchange between ERRs is conducted manually through telephones Boersma [2009].

With proliferation of smart phones and ubiquitous computing technologies, internet have become increasingly important in the disaster response. Web-based applications have been used in the Indian ocean tsunami for tracking missing people, coordinating donors, and recording locations of shelters Wattegama [2012]. The internet also expanded the possibilities for public participation. For example, the use

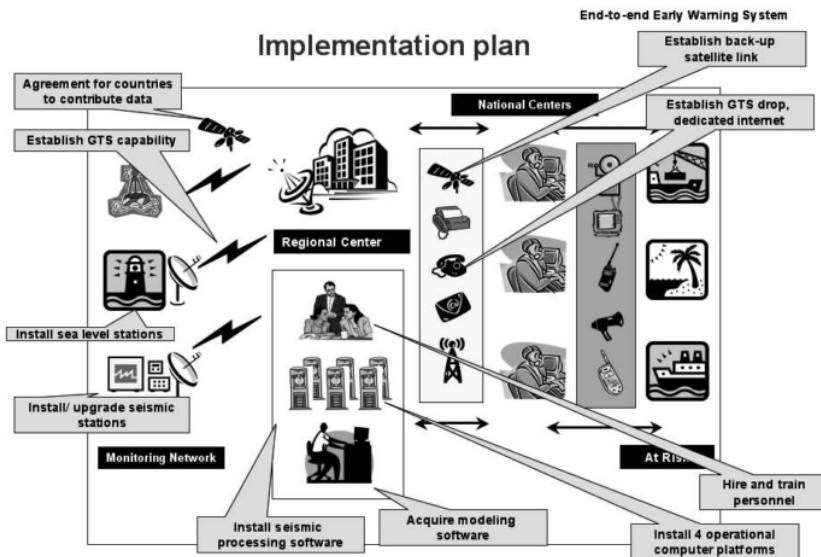


Figure 4: Tsunami response system

of microblogging tools such as ‘tweeter’ in DR have been a popular research topic in the field of crisis informatics Kogan et al. [2015]; Sarcevic et al. [2012]; Starbird and Palen [2010]. The microblogging tools enabled the public to take not only a more active part in seeking information, but also in providing information to each other, as well as to formal response efforts. Crowdsourcing platform such as Ushadiidid[] is another example of ICT support for public participation in DR. The Ushadiididi platform have been used in the Haiti earthquake as a volunteer effort to produce a crisis mashup. Information about the humanitarian crisis and the response that followed was aggregated in near real time by volunteers from a variety of sources including: SMS, Web, Email, Radio, Phone, Twitter, Facebook, Television, List-serves, Live streams, Situation Reports Morrow and Mock [2011]. Similarly, crowdsourced map systems such as OpenStreetMap Palen and Soden [2015] have been applied in disasters (Haiti earthquake, Typhoon Yolanda) for volunteers to create updated crisis map. Although public participation has played an important role in DR, its integration with formal response efforts is still a challenge for ICT researcherPalen and Liu [2007], and a lot of research efforts have been made to address social, organisational and technical challenges of the integration Dashti et al. [2014], Sutton et al. [2008].

In summary, ICT infrastruce and software are commonly used in disaster response. Two case studies (tsunami response system and emergency response room support) are used to illustrate the ICT supported DR processes. Public participation is another trend of ICT system support raise from increased global access to internet. However, studies showed integration of public participation and formal response efforts is still problematic and require further research. From the author's point of view, a task planning support may heavily rely on ICT infrastructure for data acquisition and plan implementation. Functionalities of ICT software also have many overlaps with that of task planning systems, in the sense that they all support responders to acquire, process and manage information for the use of decision making in DR.

### 2.3.3 Application of AI technologies

In the field of AI, machine learning, optimisation and agent-based simulation algorithms have increased in availability for disaster response.

Disaster simulation technologies Okaya et al. [2014]; Scerri et al. [2005a] have long been applied in various types of disasters such as fire Tang and Ren [2012], hurricane Vickery et al. [2009] and earthquakeSobhaninejad et al. [2011] to understand the process and impact of disasters. The state of art simulation technologies are able to provide real time simulations with high data resolution. For example, the simulation platform devised by Sobhaninejad et al. [2011] is able to provide real-time simulation of ground motion and structural damage after earthquake, in an urban area with 10 4 6 structures.

Evacuation simulation is also extensively studied in the literatures. For example, Pillac et al. [2015] developed a simulation algorithm for large scale flood evacuation. The algorithm consider the dynamics of the flood and the state of the transportation network over time. The

experiment showed this algorithm is able to provide plans to evacuate about 70,000 people in a impact region in real time. Another example can be simulation of indoor fire evacuation devised by Tang and Ren [2012]. The algorithm combines modelling of building geometry, human behaviour, fire field to provide intelligent decision support. While results of evacuation simulations are promising in lab experiments, some studies pointed out the simulation technologies over simplified the human behaviours Deconinck [2013]. For instance, in some countries, most people disregard evacuation orders. The complexity of human behaviour raise from cultural, political, psychological factors, which makes behaviour modelling a challenging topic for AI community ? .

Agent-based optimisation algorithm for multi-agent teams coordination is also an active research area in AI community. The coordination challenges in the time critical task environment inspired the multi-agent researchers to investigate real-time algorithms that provide optimal or near optimal task plans that can be used to guide distributed human or robotic teams Kitano and Committee [2000]. Various algorithms have been designed to meet different requirements of team coordination. For example, the Lagoudakis and Markakis [2005] provide a number of auction-based algorithm that allocate agents to tasks considering the best routes for each agents in the team. On the other hand, Scerri et al. [2005b] devised algorithms to allocate tasks based on token passing. Their algorithms focus on matchings of task and team capabilities, which ensures that the right agents are routed to the right tasks based on capability thresholds. Other algorithms Ramchurn et al. [2010b]; Koes et al. [2005] also consider multiple criteria including task workload, deadline and team coalition effects. From HCI perspective, these capabilities of these algorithms are also limited by a number of factors. First, the concerns about oversimplified human behaviour modelling is applied Drury et al. [2009]. Second, because the algorithms are designed to deal with specified requirements (e.g. routing, task/skill matching) with simplified model of environments, they may be insufficient to deal with contingencies

raised from messy real disaster environment [Armenakis \[2012\]](#).

It is observed that most intelligent algorithms are only studied and evaluated in the research lab. Integration of the algorithms and actual DR practices is still a multi-disciplinary research challenge. Nowdays, with the increase in the networked computers, sensors and amount of data generated from different sources in real time [Ramchurn et al. \[2015a\]](#), there are increasing demand for intelligent computational support of data processing and task planning. As a case study, researchers from ORCHID project have developed a prototype system - HAC-ER (Human Agent Collectives for Emergence Response) [Jennings and Moreau \[2014\]](#); [Ramchurn et al. \[2015a,b\]](#), which demonstrates how the AI algorithms may transform the landscape of real time task planning in DR.

The HAC-ER system consists of a set of connected components for real-time task planning support, each of which are powered by multiple machine learning and agent-based algorithms. First, a component called Crowdscanner is used to deal with vast quantities of unstructured data produced very rapidly on the internet as disaster unfolds, such as text messages or photographs from web-based platforms such as Twitter and Ushahidi[[\].](#) The approach is to use a machine learning algorithms (for details, see IBCC [Simpson et al. \[2011\]](#)) to fuses heterogeneous reports from both unreliable and trusted sources into a common picture of the disaster, or a heatmap of incidents. Second, multiple UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) is deployed as mobile sensors to search or further inspect incidents reported by crowdscanner. The control of multiple UAVs is assisted by multi-agent coordination algorithm (Max-sum [Ramchurn et al. \[2010b\]](#)). The algorithm is capable of quickly optimise the task allocation for UAVs to visit points of interest or conduct search in an area. Finally, responders and assets on the ground will need to be dispatched and deployed to deal with distributed incidents. Another HAC-ER component is designed to assist human operators in the control room to conduct real-time planning. The component is powered by a coordination algorithm

based on MMDP modelling techniques Wu et al. [2015], which takes into account the priorities of incidents, and locations of responders teams and incidents. The algorithm can produce computationally optimised task allocations for responder teams to attend as many incidents as possible with a time constraint. Further, algorithms and interfaces of all components in HAC-ER are designed in a way that accept input from human operators. The HAC-ER depicted a picture in which human operators and intelligent components collaboratively conduct task planning, and the picture demonstrates the potential for applying AI in DR task planning.

#### 2.3.4 *Summary*

This section have reviewed technological practices related to planning support in disaster response. First, there are great many GIS-enabled planning support systems (PSS). However impediments for applying the GIS-based are also identified in literatures. For example, GIS planning system with real-time capabilities are rare and there is also lack of social and organisational consideration in the design of GIS planning systems. Second, the ICT infrastructures and softwares have long been utilised by responders for managing communication and information. The author believe ICT provides the basis for real-time task in the sense that it provide functionalities to support information acquisition and management. Finally, AI researcher have devised some machine learning and agent-based algorithms to support task planning. Prototype systems have been built to demonstrate the potential for planning support based on AI technologies.

In the overlapping area of the three application domains, there is an opportunity space for real time task planning support in DR domain. The planning support system can utilise ICT technologies as its underlying infrastructures and apply intelligent coordination algorithms for plan generation. However, the literatures for building such a system are still rare, leaving a gap in literatures. This thesis is

aimed to bridge the gap by studying the design and development of such DR planning support system.

#### 2.4 SUMMARY

Relevant literatures have been reviewed in this chapter. The studies of disaster response operations showed that the task planning activities is challenging due to time, spatial constraints and uncertainties in dynamically changing disaster environment. Further, the DR planning process is typically embedded in a command and control (C<sub>2</sub>) task environment. The literatures have revealed that the C<sub>2</sub> setting is characterised by complex social interaction and organisational conducts. Therefore, technology support do not only need to provide the solution of complex coordination problems, but also need to support social aspects of planning generation in complex C<sub>2</sub> setting.

There are various existing technology support designed for DR. First, the GIS-based planning support GIS functionalities with environmental modelling techniques to provide decision support for various purposes such as floor and indoor fire evacuation. However impediments for applying the GIS-based are also identified in literatures. For example, most GIS planning system can not support real time decision making and there is also lack of social and organisational consideration in the system design. Second, the ICT support system historically played an important role in DR. Now days, the ICT infrastructures and software are becoming increasingly connected at global scale, which changes the landscape of DR by expanding the possibilities of public participation. Further, the AI community have also devised various machine learning and optimization technologies for DR operations. Particularly, a number the multi-agent coordination algorithm have been devised to provide solutions on task allocations in DR. In the overlapping area of the three application domains, there is opportunity space for real time task planning support in DR domain. While the The planning support system can utilise ICT technologies

as its underlying infrastructures and apply multi-agent coordination algorithms for plan generation. However, the researches for building such a system are still rare, leaving a gap in literatures.

## INTERACTION BETWEEN HUMAN AND PLANNING SUPPORT SYSTEM

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Applying task planning to support complex disaster response operations may not be a straightforward process. Some HCI literatures Ackerman [2000]; Bowers et al. [1994]; Niazhkhan et al. [2009] have shown that introducing technology system to support organisational work may be extremely difficult. Use of technologies may have unexpected negative impact on human team performance. This thesis adopted a socio-technical view towards the undesirable impact of planning support technologies on human team performance. Particularly in planning support system, the socio-technical perspective concerns with issues the emerge form the gap between the human , system problem solving, namely the divide between a situated actions of human and cognitive planning model held by system [suchman]. Meanwhile, other two HCI researcher areas are particularly concerned with human system interaction. First, the research of automation design concerns what and how to automate a working process by using computational systems. Second, the research of human agent interaction focuses on building software agent that is capable of teamworking with human operators. This section will review the three perspectives to give an conceptual background of design challenges that we may encounter when developing DR task planning support.

Further, studying human system interactions in real world disaster could be very challenging because disasters conditions can not be reproduced easily. Therefore, researchers have long been using gaming as an approach for studying the impact of technology support. The section 3.3 reviews the strengths and weakness of using game as an approach for studying disaster work setting.

### 3.1 A SOCIO-TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE TO TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

A so-called socio-technical gaps that are often found in design and development of CSCW (Computer Supported Cooperative Work). The research field of CSCW addresses how collaborative activities can be supported by means of computer systems [Carstensen and Schmidt \[1999\]](#). CSCW goes beyond building technology itself and investigates how people work within groups and organizations and the impacts of technology on those processes. The term socio-technical systems was originally coined by Emery and Trist [Ropohl \[1999\]](#) to describe systems that involves complex interactions between humans, machines and the environmental aspects of the work system. The implication of this definition is that both social and technical factors e.g. people, machines and context need to be considered when developing such systems. Introducing a technology support system into an organization requires the technical and social aspects to be integrated, which can be a major challenge of building CSCW systems [Ackerman \[2000\]](#).

Researchers have recognised a so called socio technical gap in many CSCW systems. It is argued that [Ackerman \[2000\]](#) human activities is highly flexible, nuanced, and contextualized and that computational processes and entities such as information transfer, roles, and policies need to be similarly flexible. The social-technical gap is the divide between what we know we should support socially and what we can support technically [Ackerman \[2000\]](#), and the gap may result in serious negative impact on human activities. [Bowers et al. \[1994\]](#); [Abbott and Sarin \[1994\]](#). Therefore, it is vital to study technology in use to understand potential tensions between technical mechanism and social life [Bowers et al. \[1994\]](#). In the context of disaster response, we believe the same is true for the application of agent-based planning support. Empirical works [?Kopena et al. \[2008\]](#); [Fischer et al. \[2015\]](#); [Zerger and Smith \[2003\]](#) have revealed the complexity of social and technological processes in disaster response operations. Responders with different roles have to engage in the various interdependent activities that are distributed in both time and space (see section [2.1](#)).

To build agent-based systems that support human team coordination, exploration of such social-technical gap and its impact can be vital.

### *3.1.1 The socio-technical gap for planning support system*

In the context of planning support, the socio-technical gap can be specifically originated from the different ways in which human and system plan and act. The view of purposeful action is adopted by many researchers and designers of intelligent systems, serving as the model of plan and action that is embedded in lots of problem solving systems [Allen \[1984\]](#). On this view, plan is a prerequisite of and prescribe to action. The view of purposeful action is also embraced by behavioural science as the basis for traditional view of rational human actions. However, the view of purposeful action is challenged by recent trends in sociology, arguing that prescriptive significance of plans and intentions for action is quite vague. Rather than determining the actions, the plans only serve as resource for human's practical deliberation about action [Suchman \[1987\]](#).

#### *3.1.1.1 Planning model embedded in problem solving systems*

The view of purposeful action underpins the planning model form cognitive science. The planning model is embedded many of problem solving systems [Suchman \[1987\]](#). The model treats a plan as a sequence of actions to achieve an end goal. In problem solving systems, actions are described by prerequisites(The condition triggers action), effects (The condition after action) , and decomposition(Executing subactions) [Allen \[1984\]](#). The situation of action is the conditions that hinders the actors' movement to the end goal status. Some problem solving systems is only designed for plan generation. When a plan is constructed, the problem solves finished their work, assuming nothing will go wrong. However, contingent situations (or unanticipated conditions) will emerge, requiring [Suchman \[1987\]](#) replanning. Therefore, modern antonymous systems is typically designed to conduct

planning and execution monitoring, which enable them to respond to contingent situations.

The recent development in artificial intelligence (e.g. multi-agent systems) requires the planning model to be extended from individual agent to multi-agent situation. To achieve concerted actions in the social situation with multiple agents, the planning model seeks to attach the knowledge of other agent's plans and actions as a type of environmental condition for planning. In this way, the basic view of single, goal directed agent (e.g. BDI model of agents Georgeff et al. [1999]) is remain intact. To obtain the knowledge of other agent's plans, agents are required to conduct plan recognition in addition to planning and execution monitoring. The basic assumption of plan recognition that agents as observers take actions of each other as evidence to form hypothesis of plans that explain intentions and actions of each other.

The planning model is problematic when it is applied as model of human's "psychological process" of action. Studies have pointed out in many occasions human actions do not appear to follow logical steps or rational plans Suchman [1987]. Researchers of cognitive science argued that the issue is due to actions under vague intents and incomplete plans. As a result, the human planning activity is often inferior version of scientific planning that need to be supported. However, many sociologists challenge the view by refuting the significance of plans in determining actions Suchman [1987]. The key argument arguing that the human action is essentially situated, not planned. This argument will be detailed in next section.

#### *3.1.1.2 Situated actions of humans*

In contrast to problem solving systems, recent efforts in sociology argue that human perform in . The argument adopts the view of situated action as oppose to the view of purposeful action held by AI researchers Suchman [1987]. The starting point of argument is that

the plan does not prescribe the actions. The plans are part of a large context of circumstance of ongoing actions, serving as a resource for deliberation on actions [ibid].

In the view of situated action, the plans are only representations of our actions in the form of imagined projection and recollected reconstructions, which does not have causal relation to the actions we take. Psychologists Mead and Mind [1934] suggested, although a great deal of deliberation, discussion can be taken into the plan, our plans can stop short of our actual actions. And our post hoc analysis of situated actions often make it appear to have followed rational plans.

In contrast to plan recognition, mutual intelligibility in a social situation is not achieved by using logical formulae and formal algorithms based on behavioural observation. Instead, situated actions are highly dependent on specific occasions circumstances and social situations. Mutual intelligibility is sustained through every instance of interaction, rather than fixed social rules and constraints Suchman [1987].

### 3.1.2 *Summary*

The great divide between planning model embedded in many problem solving systems, and situated actions performed by humans signifies the issues of human system interaction in complex socio-technical systems such as disaster response management (Table 1). In contrast to fully autonomous system, computational support system have to interact with human to achieve mutual intelligibility and concerted actions. It is important to recognise the common sense planning activities of human is not an inadequate version of scientific planning model that need to be improved or supported by systems. Instead, human plans and acts in a way that is fundamentally different from machine problem solving. Therefore, a big challenge in designing technology support is how to bridge the socio-technical gap between situated ac-

tion and scientific planning model.

	Plan	Interaction
Planning model	Prerequisite of to and prescribe to actions.	Shared understanding is achieved through plan recognition. Plan recognition is achieved by logical formulae based on observations of other's behaviour
Situated actions	Do not prescribe actions. Resource of deliberation and Representation of actions.	Mutual intelligently is achieved through interactions embedded in the social situations.

Table 1: Planning model and situated action

## 3.2 OTHER PERSPECTIVES OF HUMAN SYSTEM INTERACTION

Two HCI research areas, namely Automation design and Human agent interaction, are relevant to development of autonomous systems that collaborate with human. This section reviews literatures in these two areas, with the aim to further develop understanding of issues and challenges of human system interaction.

### 3.2.1 *Automation and its impact on human performance*

The aim of an automated support system is to replace the tasks originally performed by human with a machine. Bradshaw et al. [2011]. It can be defined as the execution by machine, usually computer, of a function previously performed by human Parasuraman and Riley [1997]. The tasks that can be automated is used to be limited by technical capabilities, but this is no longer the case. With quick growth of machine's speed and intelligence, the tasks that can be automated is rapidly increasing, including complex cognitive activities such as information analysis, planning and decision making Parasur-

aman et al. [2000]. The boundary between human machine capabilities has blurred. The automation designers have to make hard choice about what to automate and to what extent.

One traditional approach for automation design is to simply automate all system functions that can be automated easily in a cost-effective way, leaving the all remaining tasks to human operators. The main considerations in this approach are technical capability and cost. The assumption of this approach is that the automation of sub systems functions can lead to optimisation of whole system with no detrimental impact results from the automation. However this is not always the case, Large body of empirical work in automation design Manzey and Onnasch [2012]; Parasuraman et al. [2000] have shown that the benefits of automation may not always be realized but can be offset by some unwanted performance consequences resulting from an inappropriate use of the systems. These performance consequences include overreliance on automation, loss of situation awareness, and possible loss of skills needed to perform the automated functions manually in case of automation failure Kaber and Endsley [1995].

The recognition of negative automation impact leads to the challenge of interaction design for automated support. Some researchers suggested to achieve division of labour between human and automation according to their strength and weakness. As in Fitts list Fitts [1951], a set of strengths and weaknesses of humans and machines is identified. On the other hand, the un-Fitts list Hoffman et al. [2002] is also proposed as alternative approach to view human-automation relationship. The approach suggest automation should be aimed to leverage and extent , rhuman capability, rather then replacing. Some study pointed out the division of labour would not be as simple as a labour division according to strength and weakness Bradshaw et al. [2011]. By delegating the same task to machine, the nature of human tasks can be changed as well. Large body of work has shown clearly that automation does not simply supplant human activity but rather

changes it, often in a way that is unanticipated by the system designer Bradshaw et al. [2011]. While both Fitts and un-fitts list are useful as high-level guidelines for interaction design, the author believe it is important for system designers to study the current work settings and technologies in use, in order to gain insight into how the division of labour is naturally achieved Crabtree et al. [2012], so that the detailed design implications could be drawn from the insights of naturally occurring labour of labour.

### 3.2.1.1 *The Level of Automation*

Various framework models has be proposed to guide the research on automation-induced performance consequences. The framework models allow for a standardized characterization of automated systems with regards to how functions are distributed between humans and machine. One commonly recognised model is known as the Level model of Automation (LoA). Most tasks can be fully or partially automated, which implies that automation is not all or none, but can vary across a continuum of level Wickens et al. [2010]. At the lowest level, all system functions are performed manually by human operators. At highest level, system are fully automated, taking over all system functions. In between this two extremes, there are 10 different levels of automation proposed by Wickens et al. [2010].

The LoA model can be combined with more detailed classification of automation types Parasuraman et al. [2000], Manzey and Onnasch [2012]. In this classification, the human information processing work is divided into four stages, which can be supported by automation individually. The four successive stages are referred to as information acquisition, information analysis, decision selection, and action execution. Each of these identified stages can be automated with a certain degree of automation. With respect to human performance consequences, it is generally assumed that higher level of automation will benefit the system by reducing workload of human operators. In contrast, it is also assumed that medium LoA can keep human

in-the-loop, which in turn, prevent what has been referred to as out-of-the-loop unfamiliarity, that is, a loss of situation awareness and a loss of manual skills [Kaber and Endsley \[1995\]](#),[Parasuraman and Manzey \[2010\]](#).

While the model has been commonly adopted in to study the one-to-one operator-system interaction (e.g. autopilots[], tele-operation [Schwarz et al. \[2014\]](#)), the author believe that the model may be insufficient to capture complexity of the interactions in the context of technology support for organisational work. For example, automation of a single function may have implications on roles and responsibility of many participants in the system and fundamentally change social conducts within an organisation. However, despite its drawbacks, some concepts and vocabularies in the LoA model are adopted by this research to characterise the possible types and levels of the automated planning support and their implications on interaction designs (detailed in section x).

### *3.2.2 Human Agent Interactions*

?? Human agent interactions (HAI) is a research area that has strong overlapping with automation design, in that they both concerned with the impact of automation (i.e. computational systems) on human performance. While automation design is trying to answer the question of what and to what extent the automation should be, the study of human agent interaction concerns the issues of interaction design related to development of human agent system, with the aim to develop agents which is good at teamworking with human operators [Bradshaw et al. \[2011\]](#),[Sukthankar \[2012\]](#).

The term “software agent” is commonly defined as the software that can operate independently without constant human supervision [Vlassis \[2007\]](#). The agent researchers investigate infrastructure, language and communication to realize coordinated agent software system [Nwana](#)

[1996]. More recently, the use of the word software agent become much more diversified, as agent researchers has made attempts to investigate broader wide range of classes and types of agents such as interface agent, collaborative agent and information agent Nwana [1996].

Some HAI researchers adopted a view that human and agents are equally important team players in a human agent system Sukthankar [2012]. It highlights the importance of mutual interaction between human and agents that can enhance the competencies of both human and systems. From this perspective, the aim of automation is no longer "replace" human but achieve an human-machine symbiosis through effective human agent coordination. As researchers realize the effective human-machine symbiosis requires sophisticated interactions design between human and agent, the "social" issues of automation is thought to be as important as technical issues Bradshaw et al. [2011]. To build socially acceptable agent systems, research communities have formed around the topics of interface agents and assistants, adjustable autonomy and mixed-initiative interactions. The following sections review the literatures of the three HAI research topics, to overview the state of art techniques of building teamwork agent.

### 3.2.2.1 *Interface Agents and Assistants*

An interface agent is the software that actively assists a user in operating an interactive interface Lieberman and Selker [2003]. The metaphor of personal assistant is used to design the interaction between human and the agent. The software behave like a personal assistant who is collaborating with the user in the same work environment Lieberman [1997]. Opposed to a direction manipulation interface, the assistant learns the user's goal, interests, habits and preferences (as well as those of his or her community) by observing user's actions and behaviours, so that it can effectively provide suggestions or directly take interface actions to support human performing tasks Maes [1994].

User modelling is a typical approach for implementing interface agents. The user model is the program's expectation of what a user will do, what they need to be told and how they will respond Lieberman and Selker [2003]. The most sophisticated way to acquire user models are adaptive, which means they can create dynamic behaviour without being pre-programmed. For example, the user interface could learn common misspellings and typos and remind a user of how to correct them Lieberman and Selker [2003].

The user modelling approach has been adopted to build various agent systems. For example, Maxims Metral and Maes [1998] is an agent that assists the user to organise their emails. Maxims learns to prioritize, delete, forward, sort and archive mail messages on behalf of the user. The agent continuously learns the user as the user deals with emails. The user modelling technique is also applied to implement a meeting scheduling agent Kozierok and Maes [1993]. The agent assists a user with the scheduling of meetings (accept/reject, schedule, reschedule, negotiate meeting times, etc.) based on continuous learning of user's preference. Other examples applications ranges from news filtering, music/book recommendation Lieberman and Selker [2003] to smart home control Costanza et al. [2014].

### *3.2.2.2 Adjustable Autonomy*

The 'Adjustable autonomy' is a concept emerged from the research of human agent teamwork. While in tradition systems, the division of labour between human and agent is pre-programmed (i.e. fixed level of autonomy), the system with adjustable autonomy have reasonable dynamism with a sufficiently fine-grained range of automation levels. People want to maintain that boundary of automation at a point that minimizes their need to attend to interaction with the agent while providing them with a sufficiently comfortable level of assurance that nothing will go wrong Bradshaw et al. [2003]. The concept of 'adjustable autonomy' has been widely adapted to guide a wide range of areas such as tele-operation Schwarz et al. [2014], Goodrich et al. [2001], smart home control Costanza et al. [2014] and the do-

main of space exploration Dorais and Bonasso [1999].

### 3.2.2.3 *Mixed Initiative Systems*

“Mixed initiative” is another approach adopted by researchers to design human agent interaction. Mixed-initiative refers to a flexible interaction strategy, where each agent can contribute to the task what it does best Allen et al. [1999]. In the most general cases, the agents’ roles are not determined in advance, but opportunistically negotiated between them as the problem is being solved. At any one time, one agent might have the initiative controlling the interaction while the other works to assist it, contributing to the interaction as required Horvitz [1999].

Practitioners have devised algorithms, interfaces and applications that facilities “Mixed Initiative” planning and control Ferguson et al. [1996], Burstein et al. [2003], Hardin and Goodrich [2009], Zimmerman et al. [2007] . One example is the interactive optimisation algorithm designed by Yang and Lee [2012] to support environmental planning. Problem-solving in environmental planning typically involves multiple criteria, which can be qualitative or quantitative. The Interactive algorithm (IGA) allows a human decision maker to actively participant in the optimization process, and thereby provides means to include qualitative expert knowledge within its solution space searching process.

### 3.2.3 *Summary*

Through reviewing HCI research from two perspectives (Automation studies and Human agent interaction), we developed the understanding of the interaction challenges raised from integrating technology with humans’ working process. First, the automation designers realised technology can bring unexpected human performance consequence. The automation designers devised LoA modal as a way to

view alternative ways we can automate a process. Although there are limitations, the model still provides useful guidelines/terminologies as a starting point for designing human system interactions. Second, the researchers of human agent interaction attempted to realise human system symbiosis by developing agent software with social capabilities of teamworking with human. A number of interaction design guidelines and metaphors raised from HAI literatures such as agent assistant, adjustable autonomy and mixed initiative interaction.

### 3.3 GAME AS AN APPROACH TO STUDY HUMAN SYSTEM INTERACTION

This PhD work adopts serious mixed reality game approach to investigate the socio-technical surrounding agent planning support for disaster response operations. This section will firstly review the literatures of serious games to give an overview of history and applications of serious games. In section 3.3, mixed reality game (MRG) will be introduced, followed by discussion of the potential for using MRGs to support ethnographic study of ubiquitous systems, which underpins rationale of the serious MRG approach applied in this PhD study.

#### 3.3.1 *Serious Game*

There are various definitions for the term ‘serious game’ in literatures. One issue that most of the literatures agreed on about ‘serious game’ is that the term is concerned with the use of games and gaming technology for the purposes other than mere entertainment, such as education, training, healthcare, and advertisement.[Susi et al. \[2007\]](#) Although serious games usually have looks and feels of digital games, they are actually simulations of real-world events or processes. by engaging the participants with simulated environments and systems, the serious games allow learners to experience situations that are im-

possible in the real world for reasons of safety, cost, time, etc. Squire and Jenkins [2003]; Meesters and van de Walle [2013]. Recently, the serious games have increasingly been applied in the area of disaster response. In particular, 'serious games' are developed for training and simulation of terrorist attacks, disease outbreaks, biohazards, traffic control and fire fighting etc Susi et al. [2007]; Squire and Jenkins [2003].

One good example of serious game for disaster response(DR) is the "Biohazard" developed by MIT Comparative Media Studies Squire and Jenkins [2003]. The video game is designed to train emergency responders to deal with toxic spills in public locations. Emergency responders work in teams to organize the response to a gas attack in a crowded suburban shopping mall. The game objective is to save as many civilians as possible under time pressure. In the game, players need to quickly assess the situation, divide into teams, and coordinate with each other to identify source of chemical spill. Players can thus practice recognizing the signs of different chemicals and viruses, examining victims' symptoms, and observing pattern of chemicals spread in differing environmental conditions Susi et al. [2007].

Another example of DR serious game could be the team coordination game developed by Toups, Kerne and Hamilton Toups et al. [2011], which teaches participants effective cooperation and communication, based on a zero-fidelity simulation of team coordination that focuses on distributed cognition in lieu of concrete details, yet draws directly from fire emergency response work practice Toups et al. [2011]. User study and evaluation of the coordination game have suggested that the a serious game built with low fidelity approach can still help responders to improve their coordination skills.

The advantage of serious games in disaster response domain may be obvious. Creating high fidelity excises for disaster response could be costly and dangerous, while the serious games allow participants to repetitively practice without danger and high cost. For instance,

the game Biohazard [Susi et al. \[2007\]](#) enable players to experiment with a multitude of different task conditions and strategies with simple change of some game variables.

However, there are also concerns that the existing serious games often fails to capture the social aspects of DR operations. For example, it is argued that the game Biohazard failed to capture complexity of victims behaviour in highly stressful, emergency situations. Therefore, the game may not be able to help responders to develop interpersonal skill (expressed through voice, gestures) which are required to deal with panicked victims [Susi et al. \[2007\]](#). In fact, the serious games are usually not designed to simulate all aspects of DR operations, but only to mirror some aspects of DR practices and processes (e.g. zero fidelity coordination game). Serious games are thus not a replacement for field trials and other training methods, but a tool responders can use to explore ideas and talk about their practice.

### 3.3.2 *Mixed Reality Games*

Mixed-reality games are one type of digital game which tries to bridge the physical and the digital [Benford et al. \[2005\]](#) would. The term ‘mixed reality’ refers to virtual experiences being played out in real-world spaces. This kind of games typically use pervasive technologies, such as cellular phones, GPS, Bluetooth, wireless network and sensors, with the aim to blend virtual game events into people’s life and real world environment. Some researchers have recognised the potential to adapt mixed reality games for training purposes in Disaster Response (DR) domains [Fischer et al. \[2012\]](#), as the mixed reality game is thought to be a powerful way of exposing participants to learning experiences not otherwise possible.

Arguably, the mixed reality game is also becoming an established vehicle to study distributed interactions across multiple devices and ubiquitous computing environments ‘in the wild’ [Crabtree et al. \[2006\]](#);

Benford et al. [2005]; Fischer et al. [2012]. The emergence of ubiquitous computing features distributed interaction across a burgeoning array of small, mobile devices and online environments. Because the mixed reality game also create such an ubiquitous computing environment, the mixed reality game is thought to be an ideal platform for ethnographer and system designer to investigate issues of distributed interactions in the future ubiquitous computing systems.

Further, the literature Fischer et al. [2012] also discovered that a DR support systems potentially shares a set of characteristics with mixed reality games, which suggests mixed reality game could be a platform for investigating issues of interactions in the DR setting:

1. Bridging the physical and the digital. Both DR as well as MRGs routinely bridge the physical and the digital as part of their actors' coordination Benford et al. [2005]. DR for example makes use of the twitterverse to inform real world response (e.g., Sarcevic et al., 2012 Sarcevic et al. [2012]).
2. Orchestration. DR and MRGs are both highly orchestrated activities. Author-ing and orchestration tools 'behind the scenes' of an MRG, as well as player interfaces, provide managers, players and spectators with different temporal and spatial views of the game world in order to support the experience Crabtree et al. [2004]. These settings are surprisingly comparable to the 'control room' of a disaster response operation, in their collections of sophisticated technological arrangements to communicate and coordinate real-time information streams, in order to create a holistic view amidst an immersive setting of interest.
3. On-the-ground and online. In both DR, as well as in MRGs, people on the ground often work with people online to solve a common problem. Sarcevic et al. (2012)Sarcevic et al. [2012] show how understanding online content can foster understanding of medical coordination challenges in DR on the ground.

MRGs often leverage the fact that people on the ground and online have different views of the world, which are turned into different abilities within the game [Flintham et al. \[2003\]](#).

These key characteristics illustrate the overlap between time-critical, distributed coordination in mixed reality game and DR operation, which underpins the motivation for applying the mixed reality game as the approach to investigate socio-technical involved in developing future DR support systems [Fischer et al. \[2012\]](#).

### 3.4 SUMMARY

There has been a long standing tradition for HCI community to study the relationship between human and technology support. Studies in three HCI sub domains (CSCW, Automation design, and Human agent interaction (HAI)) all recognised the socio-technical challenges raised from integrating technology with humans' working process. The studies in this PhD work align with the tradition of empirical CSCW systems to investigate complex collaborative work in organisational setting. On the other hand, the research of automation design developed LoA (Level of Autonomy) model to frame alternative ways we can automate a process. Although there are limitations, the model still provides useful guidelines/terminologies as a starting point for designing human system interactions. Further, the study of human agent interaction tried to tackle the interaction challenge by developing agent software with social capabilities of teamworking. Various approaches have been adopted by HAI researcher (e.g. interface agent, mixed initiative, adjustable autonomy), which can serve as guidelines for interaction design.

Further, study of disaster response operation is difficult due to its safety critical nature. Game approach has long been an established vehicle for behavioural studies in disaster response setting. In partic-

ular, this PhD work adopts the mixed reality gaming as the approach to study distributed interactions across multiple devices and ubiquitous computing environments ‘in the wild’.

## Part II

### METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

# 4

## APPROACH

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This PhD work adopts a socio-technical view towards the planning support systems in disaster response setting. Introducing a planning support to Disaster Response(DR) operations may create a socio-technical gap that need to be considered by system designers. We argue that the gap can be reduced by an appropriate interaction design supported by deep understanding socio-technical issues surrounding the planning support. In order to gain insight into the socio-technical issues, we adopted an ethnographic approach to explore and unpack interactions between human and planning support agent in disaster setting. A serious mixed reality game (MRG) approach is adopted to create MRG AtomicOrchid(AO), which are used to simulate DR operations. We outline two interaction designs that are later implemented in AO platform for field studies. In addition, efforts have been made to establish contact with professional response agency Rescue Global(RG), which leads a workshop centered on the AO game. Professional feedbacks on AO are collected from the discussions in the workshop.

In this chapter, we go through the socio-technical perspective of planning support system adopted by this PhD work (section 4.1 ), followed by introduction serious mixed reality game (MRG) approach (section 4.2) and description of AtomicOrchid platform (section 4.3). The section 4.4 outlines the two interaction designs that were deployed to AO for field studies, and the section 4.5.1 gives an introduction of the workshop with RG for professional feedbacks.

#### 4.1 ADOPTING THE SOCIO-TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE

This research is aimed to inform the design of planning support for organizational work conducted by responder teams. This PhD work adopts the a socio-technical view on the responder teams and their technological supporting systems. Integrating new technology support into a human organisation is a well-known challenge for socio-technical system design. In this PhD study, we anticipate the same challenge will be encountered for introducing the planning support to disaster response operations.

The term socio-technical systems are used to describe systems that involve a complex interaction between humans, machines and the environmental aspects of the work system (see section 3.1). The term stands for the recognition of both technical and social subsystems and the very complex relationship between the two. Social systems are characterized by phenomena such as communication and cooperation between human individuals, emergence of meaning systems, self-referential development of structures. In contrast, technical systems are characterized by artefacts, control, anticipation, state-transitions, pre-programmed adaptability, learning in respect to purposes which are determined from outside the system []. Introducing a technology support system into an organization requires the technical system and a social aspects to be integrated.

In the context of this study, a multi agent coordination algorithm is used to build a automated planning agent. The agent requires a set of rigid inputs and produces task assignments. On the other hand, planning activities of responder teams are characterized by natural social processes such as communication, negotiation and cooperation. To support the responder teams with multi-agent coordination technologies, the confrontation between social and technical is inevitable.

CSCW Researchers have pointed out the existence of the inherent social technical gap - the great divide between what we know we

must support socially and what we can support technically. Some argued that human activity is highly flexible, nuanced, and contextualized and that computational entities and processes such as information sharing, roles, and social norms need to be similarly flexible, nuanced, and contextualized. However, current technology support systems for organisations are often rigid and inflexible, failing to fully support the social world. Computer science is learning how to use techniques such as machine learning, user modelling to fill social-technical gap (section ??). It is hard to disprove that a technical solution is imminent. However, some argued that such a technical solution is unlikely, given that computer science, artificial intelligence (AI), information technology, and information science researchers have attempted to bridge the gap without success for at least 20 years [Ackerman \[2000\]](#).

We argue that the social aspect does not need to be fully supported through technological advance. A deep understanding of social issues and appropriate interaction design may lead to possible “workaround” of the socio-technical gap. Although technology support may be not fully integrated with the social aspects, we believe appropriate interaction design can reduce its negative impact on social process so that the benefits of technology can overweight its adverse social impact.

#### 4.2 SERIOUS MIXED REALITY GAME AS A TESTBED

One of our work’s main objectives is to study interaction and coordination situated in rich and ‘messy’ real-world socio-technical settings. As it is difficult to deploy technological prototypes in real disasters, serious game approach has been adopted by researchers to study technology interaction in disaster scenarios through game-like simulations, for example to prepare first responders for scenarios in which hazardous materials are involved [Losh \[2007\]](#). [Abbasi and Kumar \[2012\]](#) presented a study in which locally distributed participants

played the role of victims asking for help via social media in a simulated crisis, and participants that played the role of first responders used a coordination system to filter messages and mobilize the appropriate responder teams according to their assigned capabilities.

This PhD work also adopts serious game approach to simulate a disaster response setting in which distributed responder teams coordinate under time and spatial constraints (see section 2.1.3). More specifically, we create a Mixed Reality Game (MRG) as a testbed that enables studying team coordination, interaction and communication in a real-world disaster scenario whilst providing confidence in the efficacy of behavioural observations. The Mixed-reality games are recreational experiences that make use of pervasive technologies such as smart phones, wireless technologies and sensors with the aim of blending game events into a real world environment. The MRGs serve as a vehicle to study distributed interactions across multiple devices and ubiquitous computing environments ‘in the wild’ (Section 3.3).

The MRG testbed called AtomicOrchid (AO) simulates a radioactive incident. Participants of the game play both the role of responders ‘on the ground’, and coordinators in the control room. They coordinate with each other through GPS, map sharing and messaging, to achieve game objectives. The AO game system can be integrated with planning agents to support players on the ground, and the interaction layer between players and agents can be configured in different ways through modifications on the game interface. Through agent integration and interface modifications, we created three ‘probes’ of agent planning support with different interaction designs. The three probes are then be used to conduct behavioural studies, which allows us to unpack human-agent interaction with different interaction design patterns.

### 4.3 THE ATOMICORCHID PLATFORM

We designed and implemented the mixed reality game AtomicOrchid(AO) as a testbed for our field trials of different system interaction designs. The game involves field players on the ground (play as field responder) and online players in a control room (play as Headquarter (HQ)).

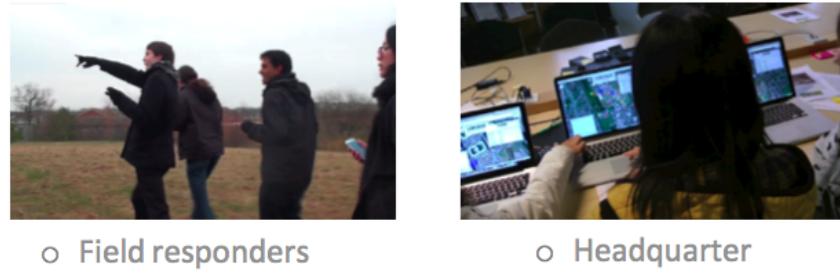


Figure 5: HQ and field players in AO

In the following sections, we give a detailed description of the game design, which covers grounding of the design rationale, iterative design process, and the system architecture.

#### 4.3.1 Game mechanic

The AtomicOrchid is based on the fictitious scenario of radioactive explosions creating expanding and moving radioactive clouds that pose a threat to responders on the ground (field responders), and the (virtual) targets to be rescued from around the game area. We chose a radiation scenario because other than disasters that cause physical devastation it poses an invisible threat, which creates the need to monitor the environment closely with sensing devices, and communicate frequently.

Field responders are supported by a centrally located headquarters (HQ) control room, staffed by HQ players as coordinators who exchange messages with field players through an instant messaging style communication system. The messages are broadcasted, which means they are visible to all players. The core game mechanics are designed to allow us to explore specific aspects of team coordina-

tion. In particular, this is inspired by the real coordination challenge of resource and task allocation to coordinate spatially distributed resources and personnel.

**Responder roles and targets.** Each field responder is assigned one of four roles:



Figure 6: The AO targets

There are four types of (virtual) targets:



Figure 7: The AO targets

The objective of the field responders is to rescue as many targets as possible by ‘carrying’ them to a drop off zone. To pick up and carry one of the target objects, two responders with particular appropriate roles are required in immediate proximity to the object. For example, a soldier and a transporter are required to pick up and carry fuel, and a medic and a soldier are required to pick up an animal (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Role target mapping

The role-target mapping mechanic requires players to engage in resource coordination. Field responders have to engage in ‘agile teaming’ forming, disbanding, relocating and re-forming in teams over the course of the game in order to complete the game objective.

**The radioactive cloud.** The cloud is a danger zone that can incapacitate field responders. It imposes spatial and temporal constraints on task performance and well-being. The cloud is analogous to various spatial phenomena in disasters (e.g. spreading fires, diseases and floods). In require communication between HQ and field responders, the spatial position and movement of the cloud is only known to HQ. The cloud is shown in a heatmap style in the figure 9. The field player can detect ‘radioactive intensity’ on their locations with mobile responder app.

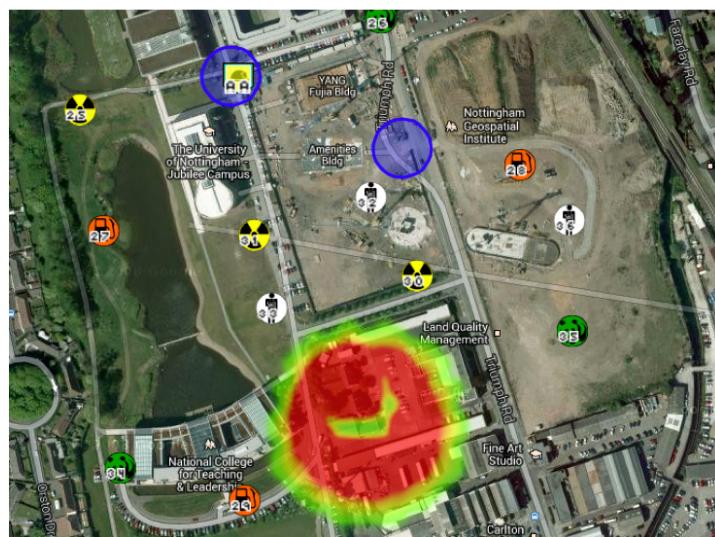


Figure 9: The radioactive cloud

**Command-and-control(C<sub>2</sub>) structure.** The division of responsibility into HQ and field responders simulates a situation where volunteer responders are connected to a generic two level C<sub>2</sub> structure proposed by Chen et al. [2005]. This structure highlight the division between remote control room and on-site teams. On-site responders react to immediate scene without global picture, while the coordination center deals with strategic issues and works with a global picture, leveraging external resources to help on-site response. Instead of simulating real command and control model such as BSG (Section 2.1.2), we chose the generic structure to simplify the game play, and also mirrors main characteristics of C<sub>2</sub> settings in DR.

**System interface.** System interface design is closely related to specific interaction designs, and it keeps evolving throughout three iterations of field trials. Therefore, the details of interface evolution is left to be introduced in the subsequent chapters (Chapter 6,7,8) of field trials.

#### 4.3.2 System Architecture

The AtomicOrchid is based on the open-sourced geo-fencing game MapAttack that has been iteratively developed for a responsive, (relatively) scalable experience. Our mixed-reality game relies especially on real-time data streaming between client and server. The client-server architecture is depicted in figure 10. Client-side requests for less dynamic content use HTTP. Frequent events, such as location updates and radiation exposure, are streamed to clients to avoid the overhead of HTTP. In this way, field responders are kept informed in near real-time.

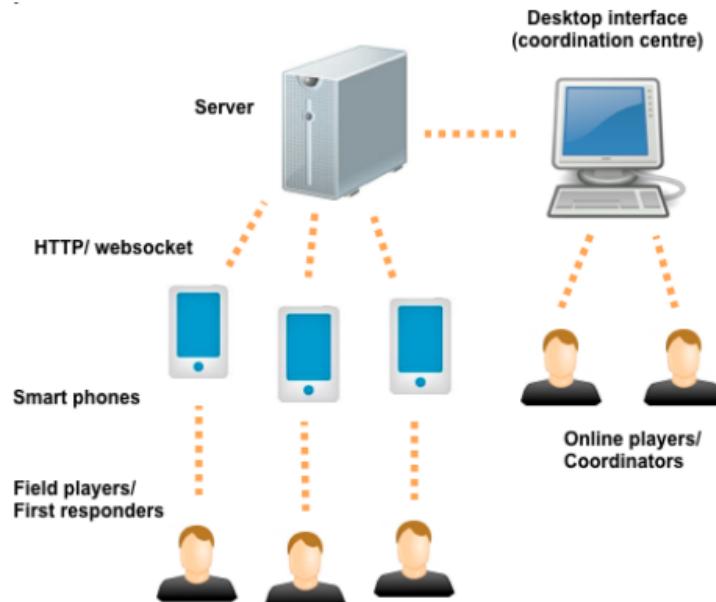


Figure 10: System Architecture

The platform is built using the Sinatra for Ruby, and state-of-the-art web technologies such as socket.io, node.js, ruby Sinatra and AngularJs, and the Google Maps API. Open source mobile client apps exist for iPhone and Android; we adapted an Android app to build the Mobile Responder App.

#### 4.3.3 *The planning agent*

In study 2 and 3 (chapters 7,8), planning agents are integrated into the AtomicOrchid to support player's planning activities. Two types of agent has be used in study 2 and 3 respectively. In what follows, we briefly describe technical details of the agent and system integration between AO and the agents.

The coordination problem (described in section 4.3.1) is modelled using a Multi-Agent Markov Decision Process (MMDP) that captures the uncertainties of task execution, extending earlier work Wu et al. [2015]. The modelling allows responder actions to be delayed or to fail during the rescue process. The MMDP modelling leads to a large search space, even with a small-sized problem. Hence, we devised an approximate solution to save computation time, which can be executed to support real time planning. The planning algorithm takes into account both time (cloud and human movement speed) and spatial (path planning for responders) constraints. The planning algorithm run by the planning agent produces high task allocations that minimise the travelling distance of first responders, and maximise the number of targets rescued. Before the agent was deployed to support human teams in the game setting, computational simulations were used to benchmark our MMDP algorithm against greedy and myopic methods (see figure ??). The results confirm that our algorithm produces efficient task allocations. It should be noted that the agents are developed by ORCHID Research partners from Southampton, more technical details of the planning agent is available in Ramchurn et al.

[2015b].

Metrics	MMDP	myopic	greedy
#completed task	71%	65%	41%
#responders survived	100%	25%	0%

Table 2: Result for MMDP, Myopic and Greedy algorithms

For integration, the agent is deployed on a separate server. It communicate with the AO game server through a pre-defined HTTP protocol (Appendix X). The agent takes game status from game server as input, which includes player's health, road connectivity, locations of players, targets and radioactive clouds. The output of the agent a set of task assignments like 'player A and player B, go to target C' (see figure 11) . The task assignments are sent to the AO game server and present to game players. Detailed interaction design between human and the agents will be presented in Chapter 7.8. In order to facilitate the different interaction designs, the input of the agents are slightly different between study 2 and study 3, which will be detailed in section 7.2.1 , 8.2.2.

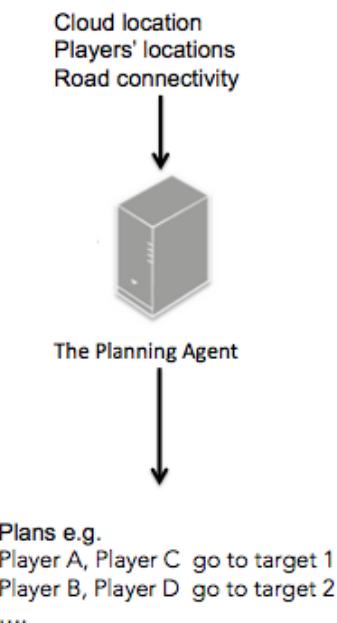


Figure 11: Input and output of the agents

#### 4.3.4 *Logging component*

A logging component is also built into the AtomicOrchid system. The updates of game status sent between game server and clients (both HQ and mobile clients) are all recorded in JSON format with system timestamps. The logs contains the information of cloud status, task location and status (pick up/ drop off), messages, player location and health. Automated tools are also developed to reconstruct game play and visualise (Section 5.3) the log for data analysis. The detailed log format is documented in Appendix x.

#### 4.3.5 *Iterative design and development*

Before the game is deployed for observational studies in this PhD work, the game went through a iterative design and development process to test, refine game concepts and system robustness. We briefly describe three cycles of iterative game design and evaluation before the system is ready for the first formal field study.

In the first iteration, we used a paper-based prototype to test and refine the core game mechanics. We recruited 12 participants, allocated one of four roles to them, and equipped them only with paper maps with locations of targets. They had to form different kinds of teams to retrieve the different kinds of boxes placed in the game area. The paper prototype demonstrated the demand for better support of situation awareness and communication to enable coordination. The technology prototype was first tested with users in the second iteration. Users were equipped with the responder smartphone app to communicate, navigate, locate and pick up targets in teams formed according to role requirements. HQ was staffed by members of the research team. A pilot study was conducted with members of the public that visited an Open Day at a local university. A total of 20 members of the public tested the game in four ad-hoc game trials. The lessons learned in the pilot study revealed problems with user interaction, networking, and game parameter tuning, which we sub-

sequently addressed.

In the third iteration, we improved system stability and interface designs. We conducted a pilot study at the campus of another university, to test the system in place. The full-fledged study we report on here was conducted shortly thereafter.

#### 4.4 EXPLORE INTERACTION DESIGNS WITH THREE ATOMICORCHID STUDIES

Based on serious game approach, three studies are planned to explore the interactional issues related to the socio-technical integration of the planning agents and the responder team. To build such a socio-technical system, there are various ways to arrange the interaction between responder teams and a planning support agent. Inspired by the model of Level Of Automation (LOA) from the research of automation design, we outlined 4 paradigms of human agent interaction loosely based the automation level of planning activities: Full manual, Human-in-the-loop, Human-on-the-loop, and Human-out-of-loop. Arguably, the paradigm of Human Out-of-loop is believed to be unrealistic compared to In-the-loop, On-the-loop and full manual. Therefore, this PhD work will only consider the latter 3 notions of automation.

In research of automation design, the LOA model has been developed to categorise systems into a linear spectrum according to degree of automation (reference to literature review). Arguably, the model may not fit into context of socio-technical system due to some of its limitations identified in section 3.2.1.1. However, the terminologies that come with the model can still serve as a reference point for interaction designs to be studied in this PhD work.

1. **Human Out-of-the-loop** Out-of-the-loop represents the highest level of automation. Out-of-the-loop system is supposed com-

pletely run independently. Human is replaced with machine, therefore no human system interaction is required. It is unlikely to be realized in a socio-technical system in which organisational work is mainly carried out by human and supported by technologies.

2. **Human On-the-loop** In this research, we use the term Human On-the-loop to describe a system with high level of automation, which requires minimum level of human intervention. Compared to Out-of-the-loop, the On-the-loop system is designed to run without human intervention at most of the times. However, human supervision and intervention are still required for contingencies.
3. **Human In-the-loop** In this research, Human In-the-loop represents a system with medium level of automation. Compared to the On-the-loop system, the In-The-Loop system can not run without human input. Constant human interactions are required to achieve goal of the socio-technical system.
4. **Full manual** In full manual system describe a system without automation. In the context AtomicOrchid, the platform without integration of planning agent can be seen as a full manual system.

In the context of AtomicOrchid platform, the notions of In-the-loop and On-the-loop can be used to describe the degree to which the planning agent automate the real-time task planning and to what extent human Headquarters need to be involved in the plan-execution loop. Guided by the 2 notions, we devised two detailed interaction designs for integrating the planning agent into AO game. In next the two sections, we give detailed description of the two interaction designs, followed up by an overview of three field studies, which details how a series of system prototyping and field trials are organised based on the two interaction designs, and how they are designed to serve the

research objectives.

#### 4.4.1 *The On-the-loop interaction*

The On-the-loop interaction is designed to facilitate the division of labour between humans and agent: a planning agent routinely assigns tasks to distributed responder teams, while human coordinators (the HQ) monitor and support the task execution by responding to arising contingencies (see figure 12). In this design, the agent can directly contact field responders to allocate tasks. The responsibility of the planning agent is to generate and distribute plans for execution. The agent is also responsible for initiating re-planning according to the changes of game status. The agent can also directly handle feedbacks from the agent. i.e. the field players can feedback to the agent by accepting or rejecting the plan, while the agent can generate new plans according to the feedbacks.

The role of the HQ is to monitor the planning process and provide support when contingency rises. For example, the HQ may decide to stop some tasks issued by the agent if threat of radiation increases unexpectedly. It should be noted that The agent can operate without HQ input , and the HQ intervention is supposed to be only occasional.

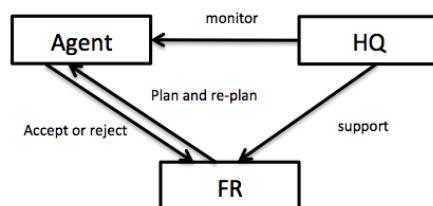


Figure 12: On-the-loop interaction design

#### 4.4.2 *The In-the-loop interaction*

The In-the-loop interaction is designed to facilitate a different pattern of labour division between humans and agent: a planning agent propose the task assignments, and the human HQ need to approve the tasks before it is sent to the field responders. In this design, the HQ can be seen as a mediator between field responder and the planning agent. If the HQ don't agree with a task allocations from agents, they can intervene by directly editing part of the plan or require the agent to re-plan.

On the other hand, the feedbacks from the field responders (i.e. accept/reject) are delivered to HQ before any actions are taken. The HQ are responsible to review the feedbacks and decide the actions to be taken (e.g. decide to initiate re-plan, or ignore). Compared to On-the-loop interaction, the agent in this design will never directly communicate with field responders and the agent can not operate without HQ's input, i.e. the HQ have to make decisions on every agent proposed tasks, and take actions on the feedbacks from field responders.

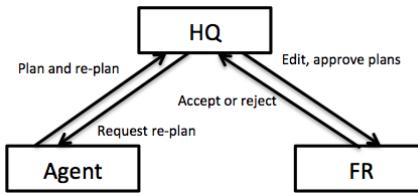


Figure 13: In-the-loop interaction design

#### 4.4.3 *The three AO game studies to explore socio-technical issue of human agent interaction*

Three studies are conducted to explore the socio-technical issues related human agent interaction. The first study focus on a 'manual' version of AtomicOrchid without agent support, while the latter two

study focus on On-the-loop and In-the-loop respectively. For each study, we develop a game probe, to facilitate the interaction design to be studied.

The first study is aimed to observe and explore human coordination without planning agent support. The non-agent trial supports the two later (chapter 7, 8) agent-supported system trials by 1) Revealing baseline performance of human coordination without agent support 2) Generate design requirements which feeds into subsequent prototyping of AtomicOrchid. The purpose of the second and third studies are aimed to investigate socio-technical issues related to the On-the-loop and In-the-loop interactions and derive design implications of interaction designs from the field observations.

#### 4.5 COLLABORATION WITH PROFESSIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE ORGANISATION

In addition to the three observational studies of AtomicOrchid games, a workshop with Rescue Global (a professional disaster response agency) was organised to get professional feedbacks about the AtomicOrchid system and planning support agent. Because the contact with Rescue Global was established in very late stage of this PhD work, the feedbacks from Rescue Global (RG) workshop are not used to drive the development of AO game and interaction design, but to get an insight into similarity and difference between AO simulation and the real world disaster response(DR) operations, which help us understand limitations and strengths of our observational study. The first RG workshop happened between study two and study three (section 8.7). The In-the-loop AO probe was demonstrated to RG team and a discussion was organised to get feedbacks from RG. It contains a hands-on session for RG to experience AO game, and the feedbacks are collected from discussions during and after the game session.

#### 4.5.1 *Introduction of Rescue Global*

Rescue Global (RG) is a disaster response organisation. They are a UK charity and a US not-for-profit headquartered in London, UK. Their remit is to provide “immediate crisis and disaster reconnaissance ability, delivering accurate and timely information and risk data, as well as performing emergency search and rescue operations where needed to save life.”. An example of their operation is the deployment of a reconnaissance team in Philippines for super typhoon Haiyan 2013. After the typhoon strike, the team conducted disaster reconnaissance on isolated islands from the air and on the ground, assessing needs and deliver aid based on priorities of water, food, medical and shelter.

RG’s organisational structure represents a typical hierarchy found in emergency services U.S. Department of Homeland Security [2008], termed Gold, Silver and Bronze. Gold denotes the strategic lead, which is associated with RG’s senior officers (often referred to as the ‘head shed’) and the headquarters in London, Silver is the tactical lead, which is ‘spun up’ for mission planning, both to assess feasibility of deployments and when actually deployed on-site. Bronze refers to the operational level, in which ‘Pathfinders’ (field responders) carry out operations ‘on the ground’ supported by Silver command [Rescue Global \[2012\]](#). RG’s core staff consists of around 20 highly specialised experts and admin support, many of whom have had prior careers in the military, and emergency and first response services.

## METHODOLOGY TO INVESTIGATE HUMAN AGENT INTERACTION

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This chapter takes an in-depth look at the methodology that underlies the empirical approach adopted in the presented studies. This PhD study is aimed to conduct ethnographic-oriented field studies based on AtomicOrchid(AO) platform to generate descriptive results, which contains rich interactions among participants and planning support system. Ethnographic observations and interaction analysis are central to all three field studies, while group interviews, message classification, and system log analysis are introduced to supplement the two former in-situ methods.

### 5.1 ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Observation of participants in the field study is informed by Ethnomethodology (EM). Following the tradition of ethnography, EM seeks to explicate real-world organisation of works by adopting the naturalistic stance. The EM places methodological emphasis on rigorous description of the situated (i.e. local, observable) actions and practices Suchman [1987] in and through the contingent accomplishment of daily activities. The EM-informed ethnography arguably helps answering what might be regarded as an essential question in design: what to automate and Crabtree et al. [2012] what to leave to human skill, competence, judgement, experience and expertise. By producing description of the actions and practices in and through which the work ‘gets done’ time and time by the members, The EM could inform the system design by uncovering what actions and activities we should therefore support.

For the purpose of this thesis, the social situation the interaction with and around the planning support is argued to be a critical factor to understand how social organisation of work is achieved by participants with the existence of a planning support system. Observation of the situated actions and practice employed by the participants was a key method for the field study. The use of the system was observed and filmed for later analysis. Video is widely recognised as an important resource for ethnography around technology use [Crabtree et al. \[2012\]](#). The next section will go through the method of video-based interaction analysis for unpacking the interactions observed in the field.

## 5.2 INTERACTION ANALYSIS

Interaction analysis can be defined as an interdisciplinary method for empirical investigation of interaction of human beings with each other and with objects in their environments [Jordan and Henderson \[1995\]](#). In the context of HCI study, it is a method of analysing naturally occurring talk and activity, with the aim of uncovering, describing something of the order and organisation by which people interpret and interact with each other and with the things around them.

The Advantage of Interaction analysis lies in its ability to deal with actual details of technologically mediated interactions and allows technology developers to see exactly how technology fits (or doesn't fit) into current working practice. Other methods such as questionnaires and interviews relies upon report from participants, rather than actual, reasoning and behaviour. The over-reliance on participants' report make those methods vulnerable to the problems of people producing post-hoc rationalisations of actions, forgetting or incorrectly estimating aspects of behaviour, expressing ineffective attitudes, and generally lacking insight into the tacit procedures underlying much of their activity. Instead, interaction analysis can expose the practical reasoning activities of participant's themselves in a way which does not require them having to remember, justify or even

know what they did. This effectively indicates how people think and make sense of technology they are using, in the performance of some task. However, interaction analysis is extremely time-consuming, which means it can only be carried out on small number of participants. The limitation makes it unsuitable for answering to very specific design questions and for examining the needs and behaviours of diverse groups of people. Further, the generality of its findings may need to be established by other means.

For the purpose of this PhD work, interaction analysis is applied to evaluate the game probes undergoing field trials in the work settings of Disaster Response. In this case, the description generated by interaction analysis could expose information on the sequential organisation of technologically and socially mediated activities, which in turn, reveals how the activities can be supported. The main resource of interaction analysis is video recording of AO game plays. The video analysis generally consists of three stages [Heath et al. \[2010\]](#) :

1. Cataloguing the data corpus: This step involves a preliminary review of the corpus. Basic aspects of the activities and events are catalogued at this stage. Preliminary reviews and cataloguing should involve no more than a simple description and classification of the materials without detailed analysis.
2. Selecting Episodes: In light of preliminary review of data, a more focused substantive review of data is carried out in this stage. Repeated analytical searches of the data corpus is also involved to find examples of actions that appear to reflect similar characteristics. Candidate episodes of the particular phenomena, actions or organisation under scrutiny should be gathered in put into collections.
3. Detailed analysis: We begin to look more closely at the selected candidate episodes to unpack the way in which interaction is accomplished by participants. The process generally involves

transcribing and analysing both talks and visible conducts in the candidate episodes.

### 5.3 DATA COLLECTION AND HANDLING

Interaction analysis has been introduced as the main method for investigating socio-technical issues in our studies. This section will introduce a number of methods employed for data collection and handling. In particular, the group interview supplements field observation by providing subjective description of game play experience. The message classification method gives an quantitative overview of remote communication. It also provides context for interactions in the field and help to identify interesting game events. The system log analysis produces game events visualisation and replay. When triangulated with the video data, the log data analysis also supports interaction analysis by providing context and help to identify interesting episodes in videos.

#### 5.3.1 *Shadowing*

Audio recorders and video cameras are believed to valuable resources for ethnographic study. Both audio and video recordings offer us rich resource and enable us to elucidate the methodical ways in which work is organised and accomplished as an interactional matter Crabtree et al. [2012]. This PhD work uses video/audio recordings to capture distributed activities in AtomicOrchid(AO) game as it happens, and the subsequent interaction analysis is based on reviewing the video recordings.

For each AO studies, multiple researchers were hired to capture activities of distributed teams in the field. The researchers were instructed to follow player teams and film their actions including talk-

ing, gestures, and other bodily activities. In some cases, there wasn't enough researchers to cover all the player teams in the field. To maximise the number of teams covered, the researchers were instructed to avoid filming same player teams at a same time. In the control room, one researcher records the actions of Headquarters players with two camcorders. One camcorder was fixed on tripod and the other was held by researcher.

As the coverage of video recordings may be a concern, the audio recordings were used to supplement videos. An audio recording app is installed in the Android phones that are used by the field players in the AO game. The app works in the background, recording player's voices without interrupting players' use of the AtomicOrchid client app. The obvious limitation of audio is that we can not visually see player's actions with it, while its strength lays in its guaranteed coverage of all player teams at all times. As a great deal of the work of a setting is conducted through talk [Crabtree et al. \[2012\]](#), audio recordings are useful alternative resources for interaction analysis when video coverage is not sufficient.

### 5.3.2 Log Data Handling

Now days, the HCI researchers often collect rich dataset for investigating interactions. The data set becomes larger and larger as digital record systems increase in availability ?. Automated tools are increasingly necessary for managing the organisation, replaying, structured and free coding (and annotation) and analysis of these growing data sets ?. For this research, the logging system of AtomicOrhid produces time-stamped system logs. The raw log data is hard to be used directly as a resource for interaction analysis. In order to reveal the information buried in the logs, the data has to be processed so that it can be easily read and triangulated with data in other modalities i.e. video and audio recordings. There are a number of tools already in existence to automate data handling and support the analysis of

interactions. However, these tools often have limited or very specific functionalities ?. Therefore, we developed our own data visualisation and log replay system which are tailored to handle the raw log data from AtomicOrchid studies.

To recap (Section 4.3.4), the logging system records players's location, health, targets' location and status (pick up/drop off), task assignments and players' feedback (reject/accept). The data visualisation tool (Figure 14) focus on visualising task assignments in the game play. The game events related to task allocations, including task assignments, player feedback, target pickup and dropoff, are all plotted on a time line with different annotations. The colored dots and squares denote various game events (Figure 14). Detailed information of the event can be displayed when mouse hover on. As you can see for figure 14, the deep blue dot with mouse cursor hover on denotes a target pick up event. The two players with initials CY and DS (see lines connecting the pick-up events) picked up target 598 at the 10th minute of game play. This data visualisation tools give an overview of game-event sequence. It assists interaction analysis by providing context and guidance on episode selection process.

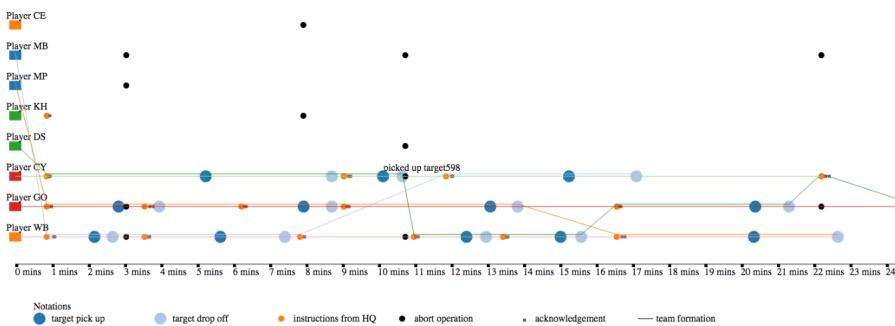


Figure 14: Log visualisation

A replay system is also built to triangulate multiple video with log data. The main map view on the replay interface (Figure 15) displays game status reconstructed from log data, in a way that similar to the HQ interface does (Section x for details). By giving a time offset to video file, the videos are synchronised with the main map view of game status. The replay system is important tool for interaction anal-

ysis, as it presents distributed game play with a single interface in a synchronised way, providing insights into the distributed interaction among participants and the system as it happened in parallel.

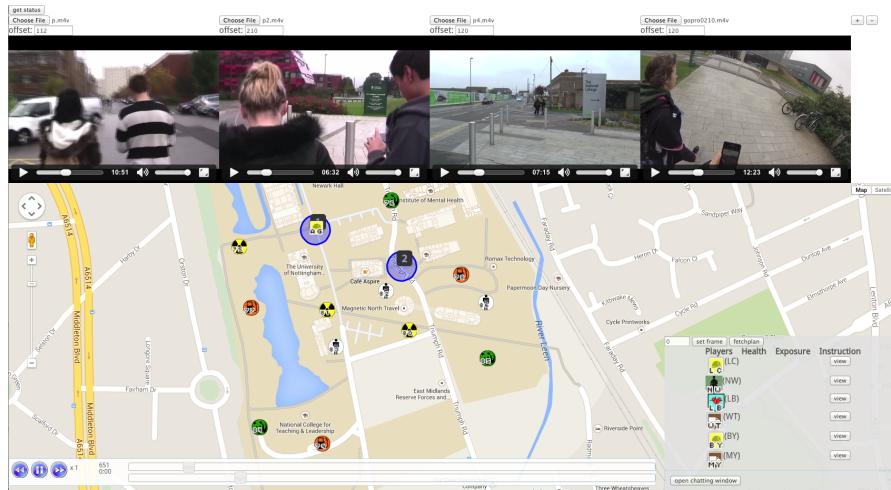


Figure 15: Replay system

### 5.3.3 Message classification

In AtomicOrchid, remote coordination between field and human HQ is achieved through a text messaging channel. The remote messages are recorded as part of system logs. To understand how the team members interact through the remote messages, we devised a message classification method based on speech act theory [Searle \[1976\]](#). We used speech-act theory and the notion of adjacency pairs [?](#) to classify messages sent between and among responders and HQ. According to speech act theory, utterances in dialogues can be considered as speech acts from three dimensions [Searle \[1976\]](#). We were primarily concerned with the illocutionary dimension of speech acts.

Searle's classification of illocutionary acts is used to categorize messages in the communication system as follows.

1. Assertives: speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition.

2. Directives: speech acts that are meant to cause the hearer to take a particular action, e.g. requests, commands and advice.
3. Commissives: speech acts that commit a speaker to some future action, e.g. promises and oaths.
4. Expressives: speech acts that express the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition, e.g. congratulations, apologies and thanks.
5. Declarations: speech acts that change the reality in accord with the proposition of the declaration, e.g. pronouncing someone guilty.

The notion of request-response adjacency pairs are also used to gain insights into the reciprocity of communication. In linguistics, adjacency pairs describe conversational turn taking ?. In AtomicOrchid, we expected many actions in remote conversation to be accomplished through pairs of utterances such as request-response, question-answer, or inform-acknowledge.

The purpose of message classification is to give an overview of the communication in the message channel. Meanwhile, the result of message classification supports interaction analysis, as it helps to identify interesting moments of team interactions in the game such as important decision points.

#### 5.3.4 *Group interview*

For all three field studies, group interviews were conducted with all participants after each game sessions. The interviews consists of open-ended questions with the aim to supplement the field observation and interaction analysis with participants' comments about their experiences of the game. The interview is 'informal and unstructured' in a sense that it is not driven by a pre-defined questions, but only research scope and interest. It is conducted in the manner of a conver-

sation taking place between the researcher and the participants [Crabtree et al. \[2012\]](#). The interview does not stand on its own and provide distinctive results. The primary aim of the interview is to develop an overview of participants' experience of the game. Meanwhile, emergence of unanticipated issues and events was also fostered by asking open-ended questions, which in turn, are used to establish context of the issues for interaction analysis.

#### 5.4 ANALYTIC PROCEDURE

To sum up, interaction analysis is the main in situ methods applied in the studies. Data collection and handling process are supported by methods including log data handling group interviews, and message classification. With this inventory of research methods, we will depicts a typical analytic procedure for analysing the interactions in AtomicOrchid studies.

The procedure (Figure 16) begins with field studies after which a set of data are collected from three sources including system logs (1.1), video/audio recording (1.2) and group interviews<sup>1.3</sup>. The messages logs are then classified according to speech act theory. The resulted classification gives quantitative insight into the remote communication. The further log data handling produces replay and visualisation of game events.

The output of data handling process are then used as resources for interaction analysis. The message classification (2.1) contribute to catalogue building process (2.1) in the interaction analysis by augmenting context of remote communication. The data visualisation (2.2) also help us identify important episodes of interactions and provide context for further episode analysis. The game replay (2.2) triangulate video recordings with system logs. it is used as the major tool for in-depth data examination in the episode selection and analysis process (3.2,3.3), as it provides synchronised view of multiple videos

and system logs. Additionally, the players' comments from the group interview give us insights into participants' subjective game experience, which are also important context for episode analysis.

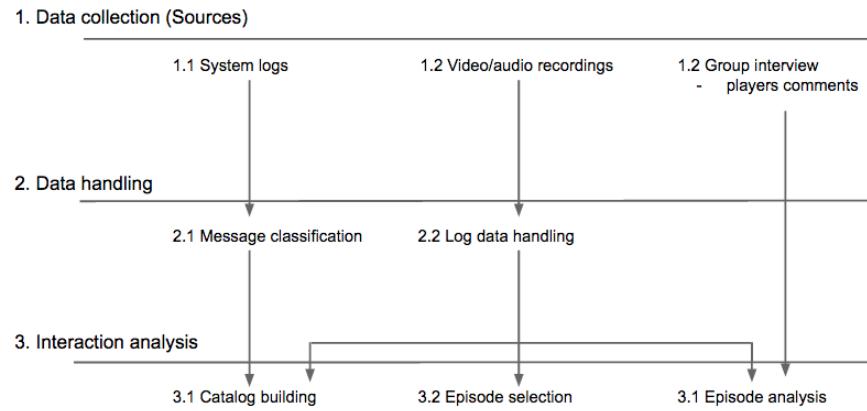


Figure 16: Analytic procedure

Part III  
STUDIES

## ATOMICORCHID STUDY 1: NON AGENT VERSION

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In this study, we analyse team interactions in AtomicOrchid (AO) game setting which simulates time-critical distributed task environment in disaster operations. Field responders in the AtomicOrchid game use smartphones to coordinate, via text messaging, GPS, and maps, with headquarters(HQ) and each other. Interaction analysis is conducted to examine log data and field observations revealing local and remote coordination within the responder team. We generate design implications for HACs system to support team coordination and uncover requirements that highlight the role of local coordination, decision-making resources, geospatial referencing and message handling.

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Disaster response (DR) has been characterised as highly coordinated, time-critical collaborative activities [Mendonça et al. \[2007\]](#). Coordination is essential in such settings so that time critical interdependent activities such as search and rescue can be completed in a timely and satisfactory manner [Bradshaw et al. \[2011\]](#). Opportunity space for building ‘intelligent’ task planning support for such activities has been recognised by the researchers of HACs systems (Section [2.3.3](#)). However, little study has explored the design space for HAC systems to support time-critical coordination settings. Therefore, little is known about the challenges and requirements in building systems to support responder teams in such settings.

Due to the critical nature of the disaster operations, it is hard to design and deploy ‘intelligent’ task planning support in the field before

we thoroughly explored the requirements of interaction design. On the other hand, computational simulation of an ‘intelligent’ system is fundamentally insufficient for studying socio-technical issues (Section 4.1). Therefore, in this study, we are aimed to use AtomicOrchid game as a research probe to uncover the requirements and design implication for building ‘intelligent’ coordination support system.

The AtomicOrchid game creates socio-technical setting in which player teams plan and executes spatially distributed tasks (see section 4.1). Although HACs researchers has envisioned that an intelligent agent can support task planning by providing computational optimised task allocations in real-time, we focus on a base version of AtomicOrchid which does not involve any computational planning support. The primary objective is to unpack how human teams coordinate in the time and space constrained task setting through interaction analysis of behaviour data collected from field trials. In particular, the interaction analysis focuses on two aspects of coordination in AO, namely ‘remote’ and ‘local’. The remote aspect is concerned about the coordination activities across distributed teams and remote HQ, which are typically mediated by computational systems. The local aspects is about coordination within co-located teams, in which face-to-face conversations plays a major role. Drawn on the result of interaction analysis, we are aimed to generate design requirements and implications for planning support agent as part of future HACs system.

Additionally, this study also supports our later system prototyping and trials. As first of three iterative system trials in this PhD work, this non-agent trial supports the two later (chapter 7, 8) agent-supported system trials by (1) Revealing baseline performance of human coordination without agent support (2) Generate design requirements which feeds into subsequent prototyping of AtomicOrchid. The requirements are critical in that (1) the later studies can use them to recognize non-agent related design factors and (2) It also can inspire the interaction design between agent and responders in later system

prototyping.

Findings from the study highlight the social processes in which players organise their coordination tasks locally and remotely. We discuss the division of labour between humans and teams; the interactional problems emerged from the remote coordination. We conclude the paper with a number of emerging interaction design requirements to consider when building planning support systems for human teams, which emphasises on enhancing system support for remote coordination.

In what follows, we go through AtomicOrchid system description with a focus on interfaces and interaction design that are specific to this study. We then present result of interaction analysis, followed by a discussion of performance implications derived from the results, before we move to design requirements.

## 6.2 SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

Basic game mechanic and system architecture has been introduced in the chapter 4. This section gives a detailed description of the system interface that support coordination between the field responders(FR) and headquarter(HQ) players.

The HQ is manned by two coordinators. All of the coordinators are provided with a web-based coordination interface (Figure 17). The interface gives them an overview of the game status and enable them to communicate with the field responders.

As you can see in the figure 17, the majority space of the interface is occupied by a map-based presentation of the game status. Roles and locations of field responders are represented on the map as icons. The field responders can be uniquely identified by their initials shown on the icons. The target types and locations are also shown as icons

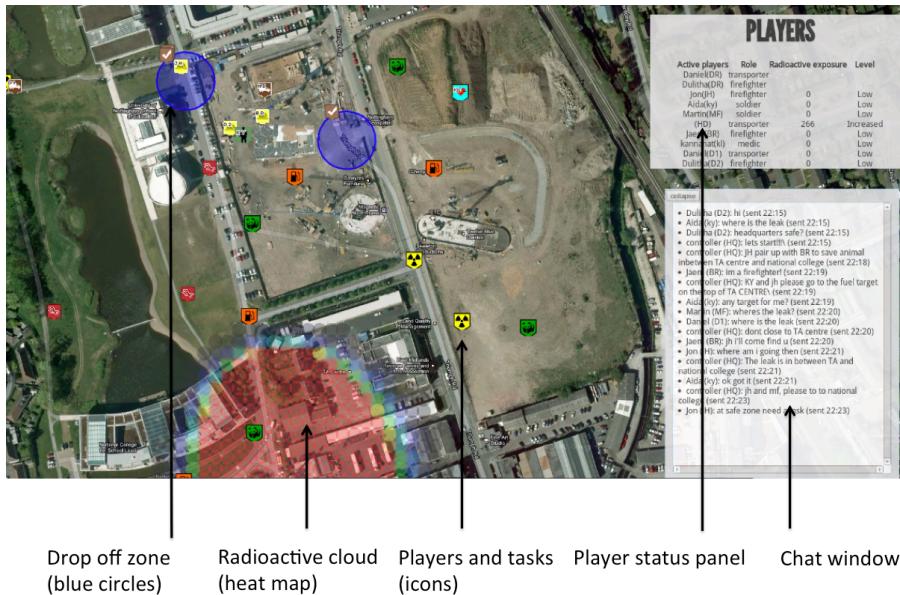


Figure 17: The HQ interface

on the map. Location and intensity of radioactivity is indicated by a heatmap. Health status (health value ranges from 0 to 100) of the field responders is displayed on the right-top panel. A chatbox is placed on right bottom for HQ to browse and send messages. The messaging system follows a broadcasting model. Everyone can send messages to one public channel, and the messages are visible to every play through the mobile and HQ interface.

Field responders are equipped with a mobile responder app providing them with sensing and awareness capabilities (figure 41). There are two tabs in the responder apps. The "map" tab displays a map showing locations of field responders and targets, which is similar to the map on HQ interface, except that the radioactivity is not shown. The radio level of players' current location is displayed as a Geiger counter reading (shown as a number on the top left of the screen), which ranges from 0 to 100. Health status of the field responder is indicated by a health bar on the right side of the Geiger counter. The chatbox (similar to the one on HQ interface) is placed on the "Messages" tab for field player to receive and send messages.

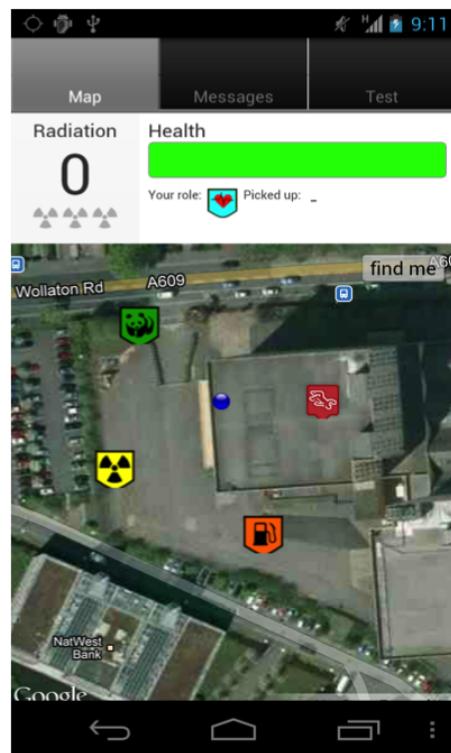


Figure 18: The mobile responder app

### 6.3 STUDY DESIGN

We ran two AtomicOrchid Game sessions, with volunteers recruited from the local university. We describe participants, procedure, session configuration, and methods used to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data.

Study participants were recruited through posters and emails. A total of 18 participants were recruited; 7 participated in session A and 11 in session B. All participants were reimbursed with 15 pounds for 1.5 hours of study. In session 1, there are 1 HQ player and 6 field players. In session B, there are 8 field players and 3 field players. The majority of participants were students of the local university. Procedure. Upon arrival in the HQ (set up in a meeting room at the local university), participants were briefed and asked to consent to participate. Roles were randomly assigned to all participants (HQ/field responders: firefighter, medic, transporter, soldier). Field responders were provided with a smartphone; HQ coordinators with a laptop. Game rules and interfaces were introduced, and participants were assisted

in setting up their phones and laptop clients. Field responders and HQ coordinators were given 5 minutes to discuss a common game strategy. All field responders were accompanied to the starting point within the designated game area, about 1 minute walk from headquarters.

Once field responders were ready to start, HQ sent a “game start” message. Gameplay commenced for 30 minutes. A “Game over” message by HQ concluded the game. Field responders returned to HQ for the post-game session. The post-game session consisted of a questionnaire aimed at collecting participants’ feedback on (1) first impressions of the game; (2) usability of the system, and; (3) coordination issues in the game. A group interview was then conducted, before participants were debriefed and dismissed.

The size of the game area on the local university campus was 400 by 400 meters, without heavy traffic. The terrain of the game area includes grassland, a lake, buildings, roads, and footpaths and lawns. There are two drop off zones and 16 targets. The pilot study showed that this was a challenging, yet not too overwhelming number of targets to collect in a 30 min game session. There were four targets for each of the four target types. The pattern of cloud movement and expansion was the same for both game sessions.

We took a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. Five researchers with camcorders recorded the game play. One researcher recorded action in the HQ, and four other researchers each recorded a field responder team. In addition to video recordings, a semi-structured group interview was conducted aimed at eliciting important decision points, strategies and the overall decision-making process. We also developed a log file replay tool to help with data analysis of time stamped system logs that contain a complete record of the game play, including responders’ GPS location, their health status and radioactive exposure, messages, cloud location, locations of

target objects and task status.

**Data handling** Firstly, the log data (including remote messages) are handled by a digital replay system to reconstruct game play that can be triangulated with video data to support interaction analysis (Section 5.3.2). Secondly, to give an overview of how remote messages are used as a coordination resource, we used speech-act theory and the notion of adjacency pairs in linguistics to classify messages sent between and among responders and HQ (Section 5.3.3). According to speech act theory, utterances in dialogues can be considered as speech acts from three dimensions. We were primarily concerned with the illocutionary dimension of speech acts. Searle’s classification of illocutionary acts [Searle \[1976\]](#) is used to categorize messages in the communication system.

**Interaction analysis** We focus on the analysis of local field responders’ interaction to unpack team coordination, including handling of messages sent by HQ. Video recordings of field action were catalogued to identify sequences (episodes) of interest (cf. [Heath et al. \[2010\]](#)). Key decision points in teaming and task allocation served to index the episodes. Interesting distinct units of interaction were transcribed and triangulated with log files of relevant game activity for deeper analysis that we present in this paper.

#### 6.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Here, we present findings from interaction analysis supported by message classification that reveal how team coordination was achieved. Overall, responders rescued 7 and 9 targets in session A and B respectively, out of 16 targets in total per session (Table 8). Two players were incapacitated in session A, and 1 player was incapacitated in session B. 117 and 70 messages were sent in session A and B, respectively.

	Saved targets	Incapacitated players	Remote messages
Session A	7 (out of 16)	2	117
Session B	9 (out of 16)	1	70

Table 3: Overview of game results

In what follows, results of the message classification will be presented first, followed by detailed analysis of episodes.

#### 6.4.1 Results of message classification

We used Searle's classification of speech acts to categorize messages (Table 4). The table x shows that the majority of messages are directives and assertives sent by HQ. The majority of messages from field responders are requests for information, team and tasks. In what follows, we present utility and examples for each category of speech acts, which in turn, provide an overview of remote coordination that heavily relies on the messaging system.

Speech acts	Session A		Session B		Example	Total
	HQ	FR	HQ	FR		
Directives	57	0	32	0	JH pair p with BR to save animal in between TA centre and national college	89(47)%
Assertives	25	2	8	4	The leak around geospatial is big- ger	39(20)%
Expressives	5	0	0	0	Good Job, JJ, TV and RL	5(2%)
Declarations	3	0	0	0	NOTICE - TEAM B: NS + TD	3(1.6%)
Commissives	0	4	0	4	ok got it	8(4%)
Requests	8	6	0	19	wheres the leak?	34(18%)
Unclassified		7		2		9(5%)

Table 4: Speech act classification

#### 6.4.1.1 *Directives*

Most messages in the category of directives are instructions sent by headquarter (HQ) players. The content of instructions can be related to two themes: task allocation and task execution. Therefore, we further categories the instructions into two categories: instructions for task allocation, and instructions for task execution. The purpose of task allocation instructions is to distribute plans to field teams and require them to execute it. Most instructions in this category follow a common pattern. Taking the following message as example:

"HQ : JH1 pair up with BR to save animal inbetween TA centre and national college"

The instruction sent from HQ consists of two parts: (1) Description of Teaming (who are involved) (2) Description of Location (Targets) to go. It is worth mentioning that HQ players use different strategies when they try to describe a location to field players. HQ players in session D frequently referred to landmark on the map in their description, while HQ in session C used simple directions (north, west, south east). For example:

"HQ: TEAM A, can you head south to the radiation and animal targets? Instructions for task execution"

The purpose of task execution instructions is to help players execute their tasks after they have been assigned tasks. Most instructions in this category are related to radioactive cloud. To help field players avoid radioactive clouds, HQ players frequently send directions to field players or simply urge field players to move quicker. For example:

"TEAM B you need to be quick"

#### 6.4.1.2 *Assertives*

in this game, assertives provide plain information to recipients. Most assertives are sent by HQ because they have access to critical information - the cloud location. Followings are two examples of assertives:

*"the leak around nottingham geospatial is bigger"*

*"HQ:There's another leak by the lake!"*

Interaction analysis shows that assertives are important for field players maintain situational awareness. We will talk more about this shortly in the section [6.4.4](#).

#### 6.4.1.3 *Commissives, expressives and declarations*

We also identified a small number of commissives, expressives and declarations. Commissives are field player's response to an assertive or directive. It can be an acknowledgement of receiving a piece of information or commitment to execute a plan. (e.g. "ok got it", "I am heading there"). Expressives are typically HQ's congratulations to field players. (e.g. "HQ:Good Job, JJ, TV and RL") In session C, HQ players sometimes declare field players to be in a team (e.g. "NOTICE - TEAM B: NS + TD"). The declarations help HQ to refer to a team easier.

#### 6.4.1.4 *Requests and Adjacency pairs*

In linguistics, adjacency pair is a term to describe conversational turn taking. The pairs can be question->answer, inform -> acknowledge, offer->acceptance et al. For simplicity, we ignore the typology of adjacency pairs and treat all pairs as request-> response. Any utterance that expects a response is considered as a request. We found a number of requests sent from HQ and field players (14 in session A and

20 in session B). Those requests can be related to a number of themes (Table 5).

	Themes	Example
FR	Task assignment	Anything for us to do?
	Teaming	Firefighter with me for fuel?
	Cloud info	Wheres the leak?
HQ	Player status	Firefighter who is free now?
	Acknowledgement request	Firefighter, respond

Table 5: Themes of requests

In comparison, only a small number of adjacency pairs are found in both sessions (8 in C and 8 in D), which means not all requests are responded. (Table 6)

	Total requests	HQ requests/ with no response	FR requests/ with no response
Session A	14	8/7	6/1
Session B	20	1/0	19/14

Table 6: Adjacency pairs

It is also worth mentioning that field players didn't send acknowledgements to directives from headquarter. Although we do not classify directives as a request which expect an answer, the headquarter players express their frustration for not having response to their instructions. A HQ player said in the group interview:

"I guess they did not look at it, they could not respond it, we were like saying "where are you, respond", but they did not respond. I guess they are busy seeing themselves and the targets"

A field players also commented on the issue:

"I almost would not use the communication system because I was too focused on trying to save the targets."

"Sometimes I check whether the radiation is close to us, but mostly the communication is between us (local team members)"

#### 6.4.1.5 *Summary*

To sum up, the majority of messages are assertives and directives from HQ. Directives are instructions sent by HQs as their attempts to guide/control task planning and execution of the team, while the assertives are mainly informational content about status of the danger zone (i.e. the cloud). Small number of commssives, expressives and declarations are also found in the messages. Both HQ and field responders send requests for various purpose (e.g. request for task, teammate, cloud status, confirmations). Based on analysis of adjacency pair, responses to the requests are poor, which align with the player's comments about their experience of using the message system.

#### 6.4.2 *Responding to directives from HQ*

We examine how field responders deal with messages from HQ that attempt to allocate tasks and manage task execution (i.e., directives). Classification of messages showed that directives were exclusively sent by HQ, and that they were the most frequent kind of message (Table 4). Overall, out of the 43 directives HQ sent for task allocation, the recipient field responders brought up only 15 messages in conversation in the team. The instances in which task allocation messages were addressed reveal the handling and value of HQ directives in the local coordination. Firstly, out of the 15 task allocation messages responders talked about, they decided to ignore the instructions only once. The re- sponders ignored instructions because they were engaged in another task that they did not want to abandon. Secondly, four HQ instructions to rescue a certain target coincided with the same plan that had already been made locally by the respond- ers. In 10 cases, field responders chose to follow the instructions. However, due to confusion and misunderstanding they failed to follow them

correctly six times. In fact, only 2 instances of directives from the HQ led to task completion. For the remaining 14 saved targets, field responders had locally allocated the tasks without HQ.

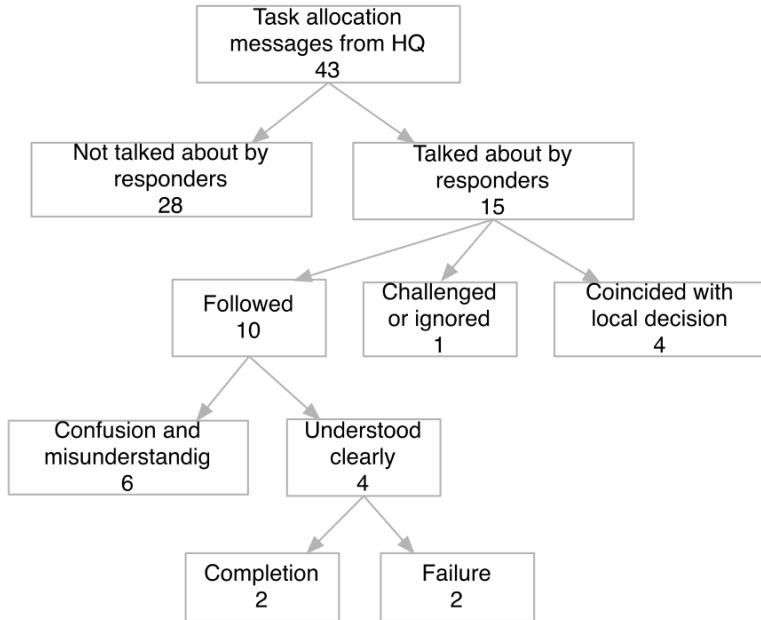


Figure 19: How responders addressed task allocation messages from HQ.

Directives index (attempted) the instances of remote coordination of field responders by HQ. The observed response to messages is critical to understanding relationships between local and remote coordination. The following episode depicts a team of three on their way to pick up fuel. Their path is blocked by radiation. Without a team, firefighter JH (on the left) has just joined soldier KY (on the right), and firefighter D2 who have just been allocated a task in a message by HQ. (Figure 20)

### Episode 1.1

**KY:** ((reading out message)) KY and D2, please walk fast to the junction and quickly return back ((laughs))

**D2:** Oh is that what we have to do? Ok so we have to run to (2.0) We need to work out where we have to run to first and then get (.) get it back. Which junction is that? If you run to the next (0.5) thing ((points)), and then come back (1.0) that would work



Figure 20: episode 1.1, JH (Behind Left), D2 (Middle Front), KY (Right behind)

(1.0) is it safer to go around?



Figure 21: episode 1.1, KY (Left) , MF (Right) holding mobile phones

*[The team tries to go around the cloud but is stopped by radiation, realising their target is in the cloud. Meanwhile, D2 has left due to increased exposure.]*

**KY:** So we have to run! [through the radiation]

**JH:** Do we have to run through the (.) through the radiation? ((looking at map)) (Figure 21)

**KY:** Yah this is what the headquarters told us to do ((looking at messages))

**JH:** I have a terrible feeling thats gonna kill us.

**KY:** But its gonna be meaningful ((laughs))

**JH:** We go around this corner, if it gets to half [referring to health] we should probably start running back.

[*KY JH begin running into the cloud*] (Figure 22)

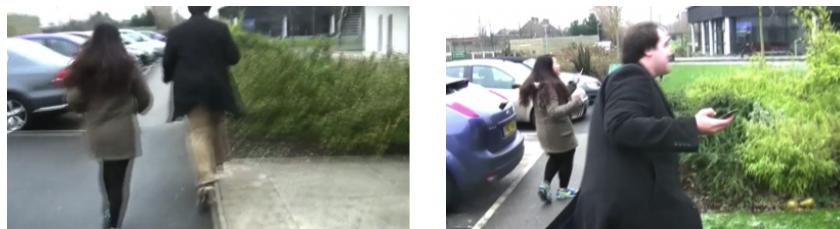


Figure 22: episode 1.1, KY,MF running into cloud

Figure 23: episode 1.1, KY,MF escaping from the cloud

**KY:** ((yells)) OH OH! It's a hundred! [refers to radiation level]

**JH:** We are basically in the middle of it! We are basically in the middle of it!

**KY:** ((shouts)) I'm going back? Get the fuel first! Get the fuel first! Oh no!

**JH:** We are not prepared for that! I blame our HQ.

[*They turn around and run back out of the cloud without the fuel.*] (Figure 23)

This episode begins with a message by HQ attempting to help give directions to the target. D2's response to the message is hesitant (is that what we should do?). His following question (which junction is that?) suggests the referent in HQ's message is not understood. They attempt to go around the radiation. They realise their target is in the cloud. They refer back to the message to support their intent to go into the cloud to attempt to save the target (Yah this is what the headquarters told us to do). Having run into the cloud, they refer to the Geiger counter and realise the exposure is too high. Meanwhile, their health is decreasing rapidly. They abandon the task and flee to safety, whilst JH expresses his frustration (We are not prepared for that. I blame our HQ.).

First, the episode shows that geospatial referencing in messages can be problematic. It is unclear to the responders which junction

HQ is referencing (and the responders do not ask for clarification), so they revise the route themselves. At the same time, they draw on the messages to justify their entering of the cloud. It does not occur to the responders that HQ allocated the task at an earlier time, before the cloud had covered the target. HQ does not update the responders on the increased danger, or revise their earlier task allocation. When the responder team fails to complete the task, they place blame instead of thinking self-critically.

#### 6.4.3 Local coordination without HQ

As presented, field responders predominantly coordinated teaming and task allocation without HQ instructions. Recall that 14 targets are saved without HQ's instructions, versus only 2 targets that are saved with HQ's instructions. The following episode illustrates how field responders achieve coordination of teaming and task allocation locally. We join the action as BR and another responder are waiting at the drop-off zone without a compatible teammate, as MF and his teammate join and drop-off their target.



Figure 24: episode 1.2, MF (right),  
BR (middle)



Figure 25: episode 1.2, MF (right),  
BR(left)

#### **Episode 1.2**

[MF (on the right) and teammate walking towards BR (center)]

**BR:** Any soldiers?

**MF:** I am soldier yeah.

**BR:** Would you like to pair with me? (2.0) to rescue a fuel?

**MF:** what are you after?

**BR:** I am a firefighter.

**MF:** Soldier and firefighter is fuel isn't it?

**BR:** yeah.

**MF:** What can we get? (2.0) ((looks at screen)) this one in the center? ((points at screen))

**BR:** ((glances MF's screen)) I think there are two people (the team D2,KY) going for that. I think we should go for this one ((points at screen)).

**MF:** We are going to get killed ((both laugh)).

*[The team begins walking to target.]*

At the beginning of the episode, MF met BR, who was waiting at the drop-off zone without a compatible teammate. BR requested to team up with MF ("Would you like to pair with me? (2.0) to rescue a fuel?") after MF identified himself as a soldier. BR and MF can then be observed sharing the screen of his device and using the map to identify potential targets (fuels) (Figure 25). They realise one of fuel targets is already being pursued by another team. They agree on another target fuel to pursue. Note that messages do not play a role in this episode. It exemplifies how teaming and task allocation are achieved locally, without consulting HQ.

The next episode is a follow-up episode, which demonstrates how two teams resolve the conflict when they approach a same target.

### Episode 1.3

**D2:** we are told to get this fuel (target 1) from HQ.((pointing to screen))

**MF:** you are going to the fuel (target 1) we are aiming for, we thought you are going for this one (target 2).

**D2:** we were until we got a message saying not to.

**MF:** you get that one (target 1), we get that one (target 2).((pointing to the two target locations))

**D2:** if you want get that one (target 2). It is somewhere in the building.



Figure 26: episode 1.3, MF(right), BR(left) met with D2(middle)

*[The two teams split, proceed with the new target allocations]*

At the beginning of this episode, the team (BR, MF) has decided to pursue (see episode 1.2) a target other than the one pursued by team D<sub>2</sub>, KY. However, instructed by HQ, MF and KY changed their target and met BR and MF on the way. The two teams then began to show their intended targets to each other. After they find they are heading to a same target, MF suggest a new allocation of tasks (“you get that one, we get that one.”). D<sub>2</sub> then offered some information about the target location to the team MF, BR (“if you want get that one. It is somewhere in the building.”), suggesting he agreed with the new task allocations proposed by MF.

The two previous episodes show that how teaming and task allocation are achieved in a “ad-hoc” manner. By using the word “ad hoc”, we stress the the actions of field responders are typically not planned ahead adequately. The players often exchange information through conversations when co-located, and their plans are ready to be changed when new information is acquired. Take episode x as an example, while BR was waiting at the drop-off zone, she requested to team up with MF who happened to pass by. MF agreed to team up and then decided to aim for an available target that have not been aimed by others. In episode y, the two teams quickly came up with

new task allocations when they found they were actually heading to the same targets . In the interview at the end of study, field responders also confirmed their “ad-hoc” behaviour in the interview:

“Just save the closest target then just pair up and go to the other one”

“We just check, with that group, which target we can get. We see on the map to find the closest one we can get.”

#### *6.4.4 Remote messages as a resource of situational awareness*

In the AtomicOrchid game, field responders need to be aware of what other responders are doing, where the ‘danger zone’ is (the cloud), and where it is likely to move. Awareness of each other’s actions helps responders avoid conflicts in planning, while awareness of the danger zone is essential to survive. The following episode illustrates how responders use remote messages as a resource to gain situational awareness.

The episode takes place towards the end of game session B. The radioactive cloud has grown so much that navigation in the game area becomes increasingly difficult. MF is with a group of five responders, two of which are carrying an animal. The cloud is blocking their way towards the drop off zone; they stop.

#### **Episode 1.4**

**MF:** ((reads message from HQ out loud)) There is another leak around Geospatial. (1.0) Which is Ah: so there’s a leak sprung up there. ((points)) Geospatial is like (.) that building right there. They say there is another leak. We should go all the way round (0.5) to the top left one, I think. (Figure 27)



Figure 27: episode 1.4, MF pointing to a building

MF brings up HQ's message of the new leak, and suggests a route around the new cloud. The group ends up following MF's route suggestion as a result. News of the new cloud, provided by HQ, enables the group to change their route to avoid danger. We commonly observed responders sharing information that provides situational awareness through face-to-face conversation. In the previous example, MF shared the message with a group of responders he was with already. The following example takes place between D2 and his teammate, as they are approached by JH, who is currently without teammate.

### **Episode 1.5**

**JH:** Where are you guys heading?

**D2:** To get the fuel.

**JH:** Okay. The closest one to you?

**D2:** I believe so.

**JH:** Ya okay cuz I think the leak is somewhere near the other one and the army. [referring to building]??[Figure 28](#)

**D2:** Oh (.) which one?

**JH:** They sent a message saying its between territorial army center.

**D2:** We are trying to get the one here ((points)).

**JH:** The closest one. Okay.



Figure 28: episode 1.5, JH(left) met team D2(male, middle) and KY(female, right)

Making use of the map as he approaches them, JH asks the others to clarify which fuel they intend to pursue (the closest one to you?). He proceeds to inform the team that the “leak is somewhere near the other one”. D2’s response (Oh, which one?) suggests they did not know this. In turn, JH elaborates on the location of the cloud, using an anonymous “they” to refer to the source of his information. “They” is likely to refer to HQ as they previously sent a message with the information of the cloud’s location. Conversational sharing of important information was a common resource responders employed to achieve and maintain situational awareness. However, requests for information in the messages channel were regularly not reciprocated with a response: out of 14 requests in session A, 8 were not responded upon; and in session B, 14 out of 20 requests were not responded upon (Table 6).

## 6.5 DISCUSSION

This section will present broader concerns emerged from the game for the design of HAC systems that support task planning and team coordination.

### 6.5.1 *Division of labour and its implications on computational support*

Firstly, the HQ plays an important role in providing situational awareness to the whole team. As the game mechanic provides the HQ exclusive access to location of radioactivity, the HQ managed to provide informational messages about the radioactivity to field players. Field players are able to pick up the information and spread it to other field responders through face-to-face conversations (see episode 1.2). Although HQ attempted to organise task allocations directly (through directives), their attempts are often problematic. Although the field responders did not get too much planning support from HQ, they naturally organise themselves into small teams and carry out tasks. As shown in episode x and y, face-to-face conversation is vital for task and team organisation. We observed that co-located team members collectively make sense of the remote messages and game status shown on mobile screen. The decisions such as choices of team, targets and routes are predominately made through local conversations.

The pattern of division of labour between field responders and HQ indicates the weak role of HQ in terms of task planning. The responder's choices of teams and targets seem to follow an "ad-hoc" manner as they heavily rely on face-to-face conversation , which can only happen when players are co-located. Despite some disruptions from communication channel (misunderstanding and confusions), field players seem to be able to find team-mates and avoid conflicts in their plans (e.g. pursuing the same target) through local coordination. [connect to situated planning by Lucy suchman].

However, the dominance of "ad-hoc" local coordination indicates the absence of the notion of resource optimisation, which is often the main concern of multi-agent coordination algorithm. In a sense, it opens opportunity for computational support, but it also highlights some potential challenges for such support system. Firstly, it would be problematic if globally optimised choices conflict with the "ad-hoc" choices that are obvious for human field responders. As we can

not assume either the agent or human choice will be always correct, we need to carefully design the interaction between human and agent to ensure that they can collectively reach an informed decision. Secondly, there is a danger to impose an inappropriate “work model” (assumed by agent support) on the human team. The studies of CSCW systems [Bowers et al. \[1994\]](#) raise a concern that the work model held by the technological system sometimes comes into tension with the natural human workflow achieved through methods internal to the work. For example, current division of labour between HQ and field responder suggest that HQ plays a supportive role (providing situational awareness). However, a centralized coordination algorithm may need to coordinate the whole team, requiring every players to follow top-down instructions to reach global optimum of resource allocation. In that case, the role of control room may need to change and it is unknown whether the change will disrupt or support human workflow.

### *6.5.2 Breakdown of remote coordination*

The observed division of labour (Section [6.5.1](#)) highlights heavy reliance on the local coordination. To some extent, the heavy reliance on the “add-hoc” local coordination can partly be a result of the lack of remote coordination support. In other words, local coordination become important when system support for remote coordination is problematic. In a co-located setting, players can naturally make their actions observable and accountable to each other through conversations, body languages, gestures , screen sharing et al, and organise coordination activities reflexively. However, in the remote setting, the natural accountability of their activities become opaque. The game probe provides a set of functionalities supporting remote coordination, including GPS/map sharing, broadcasting. We have observed players utilise the functionalities to make sense of other team members’ actions (see section [6.4.3](#)) and act accordingly. However, coordination with remote players is still overall problematic which can be evidenced by lack of response and acknowledgements to requests in

the messaging channel (Section 6.4.1.4); Misunderstanding and confusions observed when field responders try to follow the directives from HQ (Section 6.4.2).

We suggest the future planning support should properly support remote coordination in a way that facilitate accountability among distributed team members. The section x discuss some detailed requirements of remote coordination support drawn from the field observations. The next section expands on the design requirements that can enhance remote coordination in a way that supports natural accountability of human activities.

## 6.6 DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

Drawn on the problems observed in remote coordination (Section 6.5.2), we now discuss the design requirements that enhances remote coordination. The embodied game probe embedded responders in a challenging setting. They needed to communicate effectively to make time critical decisions on teaming and task allocation, both locally in the field as well as remotely through messaging. Field responders physically engage and navigate the environment to perform tasks while maintaining awareness of risk and danger. The data reveals multiple challenges for team coordination involving communication and decision-making.

**Sharing of local decision-making** The study showed that teaming and task allocation were predominantly organised locally among field responders, in an “ad-hoc” manner, on-the-fly fashion. Despite the fact that HQ attempted to coordinate task allocation remotely, few of these directives were brought to conversation locally. Only 2 out of 16 tasks that field responders completed were remotely allocated by HQ (Figure 19). Although players are able to smoothly conduct local coordination, the local coordination heavily relies on and limited by the face-to-face conversations, which means some conflicts of plan-

ning can only be found and resolved when players meet each other (e.g. episode 1.3). Therefore, the local decision-makings can benefit from a shared picture of team-wide planning decisions. We thus argue that local decision-making needs to integrate capabilities to enable team-wide sharing of the local decisions.

**Coordinate resources** While field responders made decisions on teaming and task allocation in a seemingly ad hoc fashion, game data reveals how field responders draw on resources to achieve situational awareness in order to coordinate successfully. A common understanding of the location and movement of the radiation cloud was achieved by sharing information from game messages verbally in a local group. Face-to-face talk was an essential resource for relaying information from the Mobile Responder App to teammates, such as radioactive exposure, others' whereabouts, task status, and other monitoring of the broadcast messages. Future planning support systems need to take into account that such coordinate resources are likely to be comprised of digital as well as embodied human resources.

**Geospatial referencing** The results show that geospatial referencing was problematic in various ways, particularly in directive messages sent to the field players. Participants had different levels of knowledge of the campus, which made understanding of landmark references uncertain. Some participants also struggled with making sense of north/south/east/west directions in relation to their current position and orientation. To deal with misunderstandings, players had to ask for clarification via messages or spend valuable time discussing the reference locally in order to understand it. Consistent with the findings of Toups et al. (2009), designers need to think carefully about how the presentation layer of HAC systems may be augmented with information that facilitates geospatial referencing (e.g., grids, labelling etc.) to facilitate human in addition to machine readability. Freshness of messages. Problems arose from erroneous instructions or otherwise out-dated messages sent to field responders. In one case HQ sent a message in which two players with non-compatible

roles were instructed to team up. This was particularly costly, as the players attempted to team up, and lost valuable time until they realised the game mechanics barred them from forming a team.

**Freshness of messages** As demonstrated in one of the episodes, reading out-dated messages in a dynamically changing environment can contribute to responders taking dangerous actions that they believe to be safe, because they do not realise that the information is out-dated. However, in most cases, recipients managed to identify temporally irrelevant messages, and thus avoided following them.

To reduce confusion about message freshness, HAC systems should address these issues at the UI level, both for responders and for HQ. Develop functionality to flag messages as out-dated or retract incorrect messages. Up-to-date messages are particularly valuable. Thus, our findings support the use of fresh social media as a source of information for disaster response, despite problems that can arise with validation, because crowdsourced information will in many cases provide better coverage than official sources.

**Acknowledgement of messages** In most cases, field responders did not acknowledge or respond to messages sent by the HQ. This was particularly problematic for directives (task allocation), as task status and field responder compliance often had to be inferred by observing their location updates on the map. This consumed HQ attention, with negative impact on HQ's overall work on state assessment and task planning. Observations in the field suggest that the physical demands (e.g., co-located team movement through terrain at speed) and cognitive demands to maintain situational awareness (e.g., monitoring of radioactivity and messages) are likely factors that explain lack of acknowledgement.

As a result, user interfaces that enable and encourage field responders to quickly acknowledge HQ messages, with minimum cognitive load, should be considered for messaging in HAC systems in such

high demand settings. For effective team coordination in disaster response, interface and workflow designs need to factor in cognitive load and task demands for effective information distribution.

### 6.7 SUMMARY

The objective of this study is to unpack how human teams coordinate in the time and space constrained task setting. In particular, we focussed on a scenario in which responders coordinate role-based teaming and spatially distributed task allocation and execution using a real-time location and messaging system.

We presented the design and study of the AtomicOrchid game as a mixed-reality game probe to investigate challenges for team coordination in a setting in which participants experience both physical strain through bodily activity, and cognitive challenge through time pressure and task complexity. We eschew high-fidelity simulations in favour of mixed-reality game probes as a platform for investigation of concomitant socio-technical issues: handling of mobile devices to communicate and maintain situational awareness (messaging, sensing, interaction, and display) intersect with face-to-face interaction, whilst the physio-cognitive challenges created through game mechanics and environment induce stress. We created a setting that allows exploring requirements to support team coordination of relevance to time-critical coordination domains such as real disaster response.

Findings from interaction analysis of field observations, triangulated with log files, reveal how field responders achieved coordination by drawing on local face-to-face conversation with fellow responders, and situational information provided by the interactive map, the Geiger counter, and the messages sent by HQ. Drawing on these findings, we generated requirements for supporting team coordination, emphasising the roles of local coordination, decision-making resources, geospatial referencing and message handling. These require-

ments inform future work on building planning support system by emphasising the role of human interaction in team coordination in time-critical settings.

## ATOMICORCHID STUDY 2: THE HUMAN ON-THE-LOOP DESIGN

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This chapter presents the second iteration of AtomicOrchid field trials. In this study, a planning agent is integrated into the system by following a Human On-the-loop interaction design, in which the HQs only monitor and occasionally intervene the planning agent. The purpose of the trials is to investigate socio-technical issues related to human agent interaction. Interaction analysis is conducted to examine log data and field observations unfolding how human agent interaction plays out, which in turn, revealing the process by which players interpret and negotiate the agent guidance as well as how these are intertwined with social dynamics of the teams.

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Task planning in teams can be complicated by both spatial and temporal constraints, particularly in time-critical task domains such as disaster response (DR). In a DR setting, responder teams have to coordinate sparse resources and personnel to prioritize geographically distributed tasks, forming and disbanding teams dynamically to carry out DR operations [Chen et al. \[2005\]](#). Multi-agent researchers have devised a number of agent coordination algorithm to coordinate task allocations for multi-agent systems, which can be adapted to support planning activities of DR teams.

However, these algorithms typically model humans as computational agents with respective capabilities, for example to dynamically allocate teams of agents to tasks in order to maximise an objective (e.g., number of lives saved), taking into account other aspects of the real world (environment, infrastructures, victims, etc.) [Ramchurn](#)

et al. [2010a]. Therefore, the quality of the planning results can be constrained by limited assumptions of human behaviour (e.g., human psychosocial characteristics, movement, and learning ability) and real world environment Armenakis [2012]. These limitations highlight importance of human input in the planning process. Thus, we argue that effective collaboration between human and agent is required to produce and execute high quality plans in the disaster setting. .

In order to support effective Human agent collaboration, two patterns of interaction design (Human On-the-loop and In-the-loop) are presented in section 4.4. In this study, the planning agent is integrated into the AtomicOrchid system with a straightforward Human On-the-loop design (Figure 29). This design assumes minimal Headquarter intervention, that is, the agent can directly interact with field responders to generate and implement plans without constant involvement of HQ. The interaction design is aimed to facilitate a pattern of division of labour, in which a planning agent routinely assigns tasks to distributed responder teams, while human coordinators (the HQ) monitor and support the task execution by responding to arising contingencies. The agent is designed in a way to take into account simple human feedback, i.e., a field responder can either reject or accept their task assignment. The agent will consider the feedback for the next iteration of task assignment.

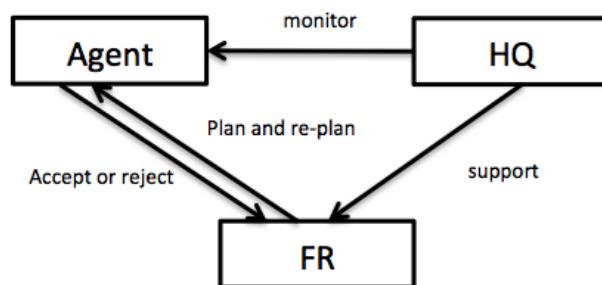


Figure 29: On-the-loop interaction design

This study uses the agent integrated version of AtomicOrchid as a probe to unfold socio-technical issues in human-agent interaction, with focus on the implications of the Human On-the-loop design on

human team performance. More specifically, this chapter addresses the following research questions on how agent guidance affects the social organisation of team performance:

1. How do human teams respond to being instructed by an agent, particularly on switching teams and tasks?
2. The planning agent makes decisions based on limited assumptions about human behaviour, but what are the hidden costs of human behaviour that the agent does not take into account?

Findings from the study highlight the social processes in which members interpret, negotiate, and manage the agent guidance within the social dynamics of teams. We discuss the division of labour between humans and teams; the hidden costs of instructions that suggest team reformation and interrupt on-going tasks. We conclude the paper with a number of emerging interaction design recommendations to consider when building planning support systems for human teams, which emphasise the need for common ground between humans and the agent, facilitate accountability between team members, and balance responsibilities between humans and the planning agent appropriately.

## 7.2 SYSTEM EVOLUTION

Compared to study 2 (Chapter 6), the system has evolved to provide agent planning support with On-the-loop interaction pattern. This section gives a description of the changes of system, which cover integration of a planning agent, implementation of a quick feedback system, and improvement in both HQ and mobile interface.

### 7.2.1 The planning agent

One major change of the system is the integration of a planning agent into the AtomicOrchid platform. The planning agent is developed by ORCHID research partner Wu Feng, Savapali Ramchun. The coordination problem (Section 4.3.1) of the AtomicOrchid is modelled using a Multi-Agent Markov Decision Process (MMDP) that captures the uncertainties of task execution, extending earlier work [Ramchurn et al. \[2010b\]](#). The modelling allows responder actions to be delayed or to fail during the rescue process. The MMDP modelling leads to a large search space, even with a small-sized problem. Hence, we devised an approximate solution to save computation time, which can be executed to support real time planning [Wu et al. \[2015\]](#). The planning algorithm takes into account both time (cloud and human movement speed) and spatial (path planning for responders) constraints. The planning algorithm run by the planning agent produces high quality task allocations that minimise the travelling distance of first responders, and maximise the number of targets rescued. Before the agent was deployed to support human teams in the game setting, computational simulations were done by Wu Feng to benchmark our MMDP algorithm against greedy and myopic methods (Table 7). The results confirm that our algorithm produces efficient task allocations.

Metrics	MMDP	Myopic	Greedy
Task completed	71%	65%	41%
Responder survived	100%	25%	0%

Table 7: Performance comparison of coordination algorithms

The agent is wrapped in a Java server framework and deployed on an independent server separate from AtomicOrchid. The agent server exposes a HTTP interface for AtomicOrchid to request plan. Each plan request issued by AtomicOrchid is appended with updated game status, which includes players' health, distribution of radioactive cloud and locations of players, and targets. Based on the updated game status, the agent will produce an optimised task allocation and

return it to AtomicOrchid. The plan requests are triggered frequently in game sessions so that the task allocation can be frequently adjusted according to task execution status. Plan requests (and thus re-planning) is triggered by two kinds of game events:

1. Completion of task. On successful rescue of a target, a new plan (i.e., allocation of tasks to each responder) is requested from the agent.
2. Explicit reject. On rejection of a task allocation by any of the first responders, a new plan is requested. The feature of rejection is part of a feedback loop between human and agent, will be introduced in next section.

### 7.2.2 *A feedback loop*

The feedback system is part of the On-the-loop interaction design, which enables the agent to take into account simple human feedback. It is also partly inspired by a requirement generated in the study 1, which highlights the importance quick acknowledgement from field responders. The feedback system can be seen as system mechanism for the field team to provide quick response to the planning agent. This section goes through the implementation details of the feedback loop.

Once a plan is received from the agent, the AtomicOrchid game engine splits the plan for a given team into individual task allocations and sends these to each responder's mobile app (Figure 30). The app displays the task allocation in a pop-up and details it in the task tab, including: i) the responder to team up with, ii) the allocated target (using target id), and iii) the approximate direction of the target (e.g., north, east) (Figure 31).

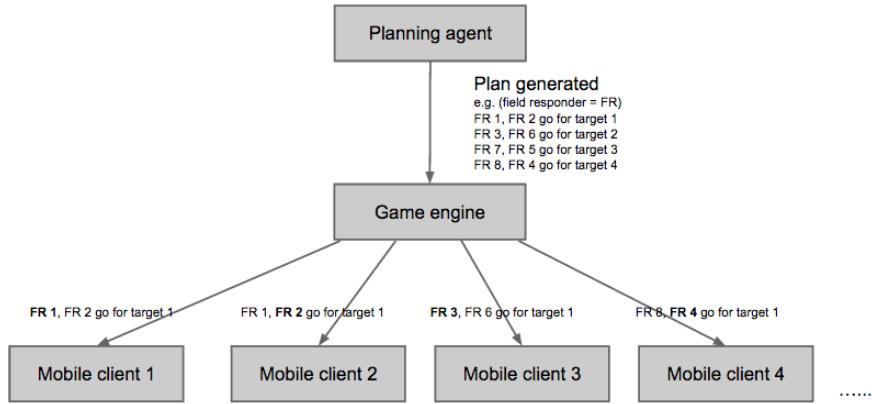


Figure 30: Game engine handling plans from agent

On receiving a instruction from agent, the field responder can choose to either reject or accept the instruction (Figure 31). In the case of rejection, new plan will be requested and the agent will consider the feedback for the next iteration of task assignment. More importantly, the rejected allocation is used as a constraint within the optimisation run by the planner agent. For example, if two responders (a medic and a soldier) were allocated a task and the solider rejected it, the planning agent would return a new task allocation with the constraint that this soldier should not be allocated this task. The instructions sent to field responders is also displayed in the HQ interface for monitoring purpose. The task allocations are represented as yellow lines connecting players and their targets (Figure 31). Only one task allocation is displayed at one time, HQ player can click on the 'show' task button on player status panel (top right) to chose whose task to be shown.

### 7.2.3 Interface improvement

Apart from the integration and feedback system, two small modification of the interface is inspired by the requirements of coordination system generated in the previous study (Section 6.6). Firstly, all icons of targets are now marked by a unique target number for HQ and field responders to cross-reference. Secondly, all the messages are labelled by timestamps for players to help identify outdated messages

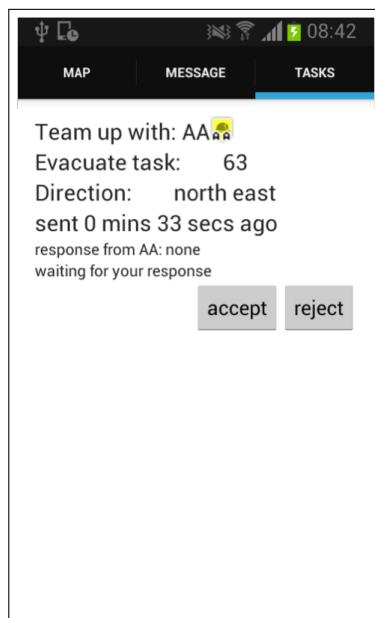


Figure 31: Mobile task interface in study 2

(Figure 33).

### 7.3 STUDY DESIGN

Study participants were recruited through posters and emails. A total of 18 participants were recruited for 2 sessions of Game play. For each session, there are 1 HQ player and 8 field players. All participants were reimbursed with 15 pounds for 1.5 hours of study. The majority of participants were researchers and students of the local university. Upon arrival in the HQ (set up in a meeting room at the local university), participants were briefed and asked to consent to participate. Field responders were randomly assigned to all participants (fire-fighter, medic, transporter, soldier). Roles of field responders were provided with a smartphone; HQ coordinators with a laptop. Game rules and interfaces were introduced, and participants were assisted in setting up their phones and laptop clients. Field responders and HQ coordinators were given 5 minutes to discuss a common game strategy. All field responders were accompanied to the starting point within the designated game area, about 1 minute walk from head-



Figure 32: HQ and mobile interfaces in study 2

quarters.

Once field responders were ready to start, HQ sent a “game start” message. Gameplay commenced for 25 minutes. A “Game over” message by HQ concluded the game. Field responders returned to HQ for the post-game session. A group interview was then conducted after the game play, before participants were debriefed and dismissed.

The size of the game area on the local university campus was 400 by 400 meters, without heavy traffic. The terrain of the game area includes grassland, a lake, buildings, roads, and footpaths and lawns. There are two drop off zones and 16 targets. The pilot study showed that this was a challenging, yet not too overwhelming number of targets to collect in a 25 min game session. There were four targets for each of the four target types. The pattern of cloud movement and expansion was the same for both game sessions.

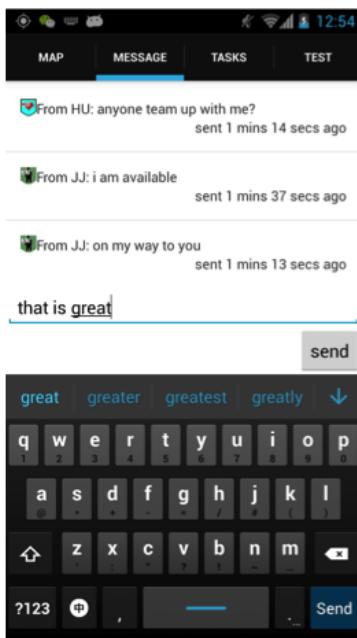


Figure 33: Mobile message interface in study 2

#### 7.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Here, we present findings from interaction analysis that reveal how team coordination was achieved. Overall, responders rescued 12 and 11 targets in session A and B respectively, out of 20 targets in total per session. No player was incapacitated in the two sessions. The planning agent sent a total of 51 instructions (Figure 34), 24 of which are accepted and 11 of them are rejected. The remaining 16 instructions do not receive complete response (at least one of the players did not reply). A total of 21 instructions are finished successfully, versus only 2 of the targets are saved without agent. The 19 instructions are unsuccessful, some of which are ignored or violated by players and some of them are overridden by agent in the replanning process due to change of circumstance.

	Saved targets	Incapacitated players	Average Health
Session A	12 (out of 20)	0	80/100
Session B	11 (out of 20)	0	82/100

Table 8: Overview of game results

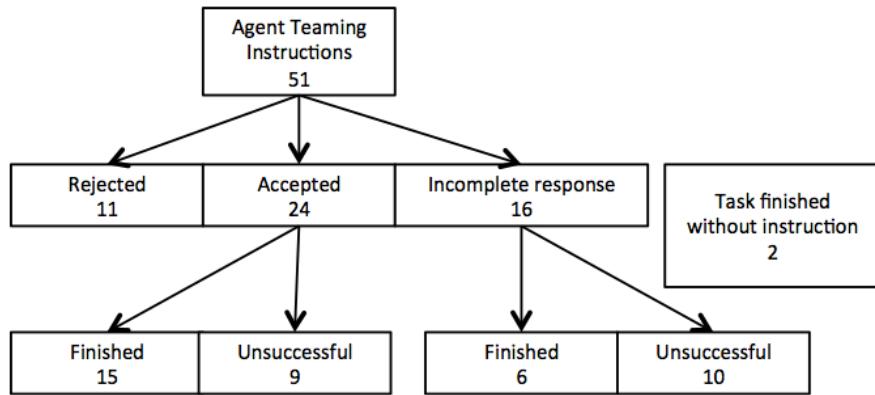


Figure 34: Overview of agent instructions

In what follows, we presents selected episodes of game play to reveal how teams accomplish the tasks in the rescue mission, particularly focusing on the social organisation of interaction with and around the agent instructions. The order in which we present the episodes follows the common practice of moving from exhibits of typical/unproblematic instances, via more complex/difficult instances, to exhibits that display problematic interaction or even complete breakdowns. In the episodes, players can be uniquely identified by their initials. Targets are denoted by their unique numeric target id. Task assignments from the agent are represented as two initials and one target id connected by a rightward arrow. For example, the notation PC, CR -> 22 means player PC and CR are instructed to team up and go for target 22. A standard orthographic notation [Jordan and Henderson \[1995\]](#) is complemented by timestamps [0:00], and system messages from remote players and HQ.

#### 7.4.1 Assigning task assignments to existing teams

The following episode depicts a team of two dropping off a target and planning the next step.

##### **Episode 2.1**

[0:00] *The team dropped off a target.*

**PC:** I think we dropped off now. Ok.

[0:07] *The team receives a new agent instruction: PC, CR -> 22*

**PC:** I have a task now (3.0) ((studying screen)), I need to go with CR to 22. Are you CR? (Figure 35)

**CR:** Yes.

**PC:** go 22.

**CR:** We have done 22.

**PC:** Oh (1.0), no (2.0) 22 is there ((pointing to direction of 22)), Let's go ((PC leads the way, they start walking to 22))

**PC:** Right this way. (Figure 36)

[0:28] *The team finishes the task assigned by the agent.*



Figure 35: episode 2.1, CR (Left) and PC (Right) studying screen together after drop off.



Figure 36: episode 2.1, PC (Right) leading the way to new target.

At the beginning of this episode, the team (PC, CR) drops off a target at a drop off zone. Player PC vocalises that they have finished the task (PC: I think we dropped off now. OK). After about 7 seconds, PC says she received a new task allocation from the agent (PC: I have a task now). PC confirms the initials of the other player (CR), and suggests CR to join her to go for target 22. The action is consistent

with the agent instruction (PC, CR -> 22), suggesting that PC has read through the instruction and decided to follow it. CR said that they have already finished target 22 (CR: We have done 22), which indicates he is confused about the current task allocation. PC resolves the confusion by pointing in the direction of 22 and repeating to go for it. Later, the team successfully drop off target 22 as instructed by the agent.

The episode shows how an agent instruction is brought up and followed by a team in relative straightforward manner. The instruction was delivered immediately after the drop off of a previous target (7 seconds after). PC successfully locates the new target in the instruction and leads the team to pick it up. Although CR is confused at first, PC manages to rectify CR mistake and they finish the task successfully.

This episode is a typical case of task assignment to existing teams, i.e. the agent sent a new task to a team immediately after they finished their previous task. Out of a total of 51 agent instructions, 23 fall into this category. The rate of compliance is high for these cases of task assignment to existing teams (21 out of 23; 91%).

#### *7.4.2 Task assignments involving team reformation*

Unlike episode 2.1, sometimes the agent instruction implies players need to disband and form new teams after finishing their previous task, in order to enact the computationally optimal plan. 10 out of 51 agent instructions fall into this category (Table 9). The compliance rate of instructions that require reteaming (50 percent) is substantially lower than compliance of instructions where players can stay in the same teams (91 percent). The following episode depicts a typical case in which team reformation fails.



Figure 37: episode 2.2, players from left to right: LT, SS, CR, PC. LT walking around the team, her body orientation suggesting attempts to leave the group.

### **Episode 2.2**

[0:00] After a target drop off, LT and SS joined PC and CR at drop off zone.

[0:24] HQ sent message A: LT, if you think you have the stamina to run to 10 around the north of the lake do so now with a firefighter.

[0:28] Agent instruction received: NK, LT -> 16

**LT:** They said ((reads out aloud HQ message A))

[0:35] CR ((facing LT)): Shall we go get 10

**LT:** Mine is 16.

[0:38] HQ sent message B: Avoid 17 at all costs (...) I'd avoid 10, too.

**CR:** ((read out HQ message B)) avoid 10 now.

[0:55] New agent instruction received: NW, LT -> 15

**LT:** 15!

[Fig. 3] LT keeps walking and turning back and forth from others.

PC and SS discuss next steps, LT does not engage in the discussion with them.

[1:12] SS ((facing PC)): Shall we go get 19? ((turning towards LC and CR)) are you going to 10 or something?

**CR:** Eh::, HQ said no. [referring to message B]

[1:24] SS and PC decide to go for target 19, and leave.

[1:29] NW sent message: LT where you

**CR:** ((facing LC)) Are you LT?

**LT:** Yes.

**CR:** NW is looking for you.

**LT:** Yah thanks. ((turning away from CR)) Ah::: I will go towards them. ((starts walking))

**CR:** Okay. Do you want company?

**LT:** ((turning back towards CR)) Yeah.

*CR and LT leave drop off zone together to find NW.*

The episode begins with a recommendation by HQ to LT to go for 10 (message A). The message is topicalised by LT, but it is soon overridden by an agent instruction (NK, LT -> 16). When CR proposes to team up with LT to go for target 10, LT declined (LT: mine is 16). HQ then withdraws its previous suggestion to go for 10 in message B. Shortly after; a new instruction (NW, LT-> 15) prompts LT to read out the target number (15), but she fails to raise the other players attention. While other group members engaged in planning next steps, LT does not engage and keeps looking around. She can be seen turning and walking back and forth (Figure 37). Perhaps LT is trying to locate the player NW who she had been instructed to team up with. LT does not take any action until prompted by CR (CR: are you LT? NW is looking for you). Then, LT begins to walk to find her teammate. However, when she finally manages to meet up with NW two minutes later, NW has already been assigned another task.

On one hand, LT seems to feel obliged to follow the agent instructions. She turns down other teaming invitations and appears to try to look for NW in her immediate vicinity, indicating difficulty with locating teammates out of sight (despite the real-time location map). On the other hand, her body orientation displays a sense of attachment to the existing group. Her indecisive walking and turning back and forth suggests she struggles to leave. She does not leave the group to follow the instructions until prompted by someone. When CR points out NW message, LT does not answer the message either. The episode illustrates a combination of interactional troubles as a result of which

the reteaming fails: being attached to the local group, struggling to locate teammates out of sight, and failing to reciprocate messages.

Further, we found the distance between instructed players to be a key factor in successful reteaming. That is to say, if instructed players are not within line of sight, the rate of non-compliance with the agent instruction is high. Take episode 2.2 as an example, player LT was instructed to team up with a distant player twice. Neither one of the instructions was successfully implemented. Overall, there were 17 agent instructions that implied teaming with distant players; only 1 of them were actually followed by players. Players explicitly rejected 11 of them by pressing the rejection button; the other 5 were not followed without an interface action (neither accept nor reject).

#### 7.4.3 Task assignments involving task interruption

In some other cases, the agent also sent new instructions to teams that had already commenced their task; that is, teams were interrupted by the new instructions. The following two episodes C and D describe how players handled task interruptions caused by the agent.



Figure 38: episode 2.3, AW (right) leads the way, heading to target 44 as instructed.

#### Episode 2.3

[00:00] HB, AW at drop-off zone, new instruction received: AW,  
HB->44

**HB:** Alright, who is AW?

**AW:** Me.



Figure 39: episode 2.3, After the team received an instruction to disband, AW (right) and HB (left) simultaneously turn back and start walking back to the drop off zone, displaying bodily alignment.

**HB:** let's go southeast (the direction of target 44).

[00:07] *AW, HB looking at their screens.*

[00:26] **HB:** There is no 44.

**AW:** down there.

**HB:** Ok, yea, yea, yea (0.5), I can't see, Oh, there, yea, let's go.

[00:35] [Fig.4] Team begins moving towards 44.

[00:48] HQ sent message: Target 42 and 44 is not reachable.

**AW:** ((reads out the message))

*AW and HB stopped walking.*

[00:52] New instructions received: AW, KD -> 44, HB, AR->31

**AW:** I got a new instruction.

[Figure 38] AW and HB simultaneously turn and start walking back towards the drop off zone.

**HB:** I need to team up with AR.

**AW:** I need to team up with KD! Oh, it is 44 again.

[01:01] *AW, HB arrived at drop off zone, met AR, KD.*

**HB:** AR?

**KD:** AW? We have got (1.0), 44, right?

**AW:** It said 44 is not reachable, but I got it again, so, let's try.

**KD:** Alright.

[01:14] *AW, KD begin walking to 44, AR, HB team up as well.*

This episode begins with an instruction (AW, HB -> 44) from the agent. At that moment, there were 5 players at the drop off zone (AR,

KD, LC, HB, AW). Immediately after the instruction, HB starts looking for AW in the local group. Shortly after, AR and HB team up to go for 44 as instructed. However, 13 seconds later the team is interrupted with a HQ message telling them not to go for 44 (Target 42 and 44 is not reachable). Four seconds later, a conflicting agent instruction was delivered, implying they disband the team (AW, KD -> 44, HB, AR->31) but still pursue the target 44. At first, AW stops walking and topicalises the instruction (AW: I got a new instruction), followed by both teammates simultaneously turning towards each other (Figure 38, 39). The bodily alignment in the action suggests agreement to follow the new instruction. On their way back to drop off zone, HB and AW confirm their intentions (HB: I need to team up with AR, AW: I need to team up with KD!). In this case, the teammates respond to the interruption by mutually agreeing to abandon the current team and task in favour of following the new assignment.

It should be noted that the interruption was received only 17 seconds after the team commenced the task, probably contributing to a low perceived cost of abandoning the current task. Further, all players involved in the subsequent reteaming were not far away from each other. AW and HB had not walked too far from the drop off zone; so everyone was still within line of sight, further facilitating successful reformation.

#### 7.4.4 Disagreement on task interruption

##### **Episode 2.4**

[Following on from Episode 2.3]

**AW, KD on their way to target 44.**

[01:39] *New instruction received again, AW, HB -> 44, AR, KD ->31*

**AW:** new instruction, HB and 44 again, haha.

**AW** turns back towards drop off zone immediately.

**KD:** AR and 31 ((Reading his new instruction)) ehh, have they gone?

Because we can just decline and carry on.

**AW:** Ok, I rejected it.

*AW turns back towards KD, who also rejects the new instruction.*

*They resume their walk to 44.*

[01:54] *New instruction delivered to AW (AW, YF ->46)*

**AW:** new instruction 46, yeah! ((team stop walking))

**KD:** Do they know we are already on the task?

[02:00] *New instruction delivered to AW (AW, LC ->37)*

**AW:** yea, but I think, Oh, no, got new instruction again, (team up with) LC.

[02:13] *AW starts walking to LC, who is at drop off zone within line of sight, leaving behind KD.*

**KD:** ((reads out HQ message)) AW and KD you won't reach 44. Alright, Let's go to 46.

*AW ((turning back towards KD)): I don't know, I got a new task with LC.*

**KD:** Ahh, I do not have a task.

*AW turns and walks towards LC again. KD follows.*

In this fragment, we can observe disagreement and negotiation of team reformation. Following episode 2.3, player AW disbands his team with HB and teams up with KD. However, 20 seconds after the reformation, AW is instructed to abandon the on-going task again. AW laughs, but turns back to find player HB again. Before AW sets off, KD disagrees with the new instruction and proposes to reject it (Ehh, have they gone? Because we can just decline and carry on). AW accepts KDs suggestion and turns back to KD.

After the rejection, AW receives 2 consecutive reteaming instructions from the agent, finally teaming them up with LC, while KD does not receive another instruction. KDs question (Do they know we are already on the task?) suggests that he might think the agent is unaware of their situation, and that he disagrees with disbanding the existing team. In spite of KDs disagreement, AW declares his intention to follow the new instruction (got new instruction again, [team

up with] LC) and he turns to find LC. However, KD ignores this (KD: Alright, Lets go to 46), indicating he does not agree with AWs intention to disband the team. AW interjects (I dont know, I got a new task with LC), and continues to walk towards LC, denying KD. As KD realizes he is without assignment (Ah, I do not have a task), he follows AW to find LC.

In this episode, teammates agree to reject the first task assignments. We found task interruption could be a major reason to reject new instructions. 10 out of 11 rejected instructions are associated with task interruption. In an extreme case (not pictured), one team reached an agreement to ignore any agent instructions after the agent tried to interrupt the teams on-going task.

In the end, the player that received the new instruction disagrees with his teammates suggestion to ignore the instruction and decides to leave the current team. The team is disbanded in disagreement, in contrast to episode 2.3 where both teammates agree to leave the team after both received new instructions at the same time. Here, the teammates spend a fair amount of time arguing whether to follow or ignore instructions, hinting at the hidden social cost of agent coordination algorithms when applied to human teams.

Overall, the majority of new instructions that interrupted on-going tasks required team reformation. When tasks were interrupted, the rate of compliance (22 percent) is substantially lower than when teams were required to reform after a task was completed (50 percent). Task interruptions were also much more likely to lead to rejection of the new assignment. 10 out of 11 assignments that interrupted tasks were rejected.

#### 7.4.5 *The headquarters*

HQ sent a total of 147 messages in the two sessions. We identified 50 assertives and 68 directives in two sessions through speech act analysis. The majority of assertives were focused on providing situational awareness and safe routing the responders to avoid exposing them to radiation. E.g. “NK and JL approach drop off 6 by navigating via 10 and 09.” Or “Radiation cloud is at the east of the National College.”

16 out of 68 directives were directly related to task allocations and teaming, which is substantially less than the number of agent instructions (51). Among the 16 directives, HQ sent 11 direct instructions to the field players (e.g. SS and LT retrieve 09), while the remaining 5 are related to forward planning, (e.g., DP and SS, as soon as you can head to 20 before the radiation cloud gets there first). 6 of the HQ instructions are consistent with agent instruction, while 5 other HQ instructions override the agent instructions. It is worth mentioning that field players implemented only 5 out of 16 HQ instructions. In the interview, HQ reported that they felt they supported the agent rather than take control.

Insert a diagram here.

## 7.5 DISCUSSION

In the previous sections, we described how the agent guidance is interleaved with the social interaction, in which teammates organise the task planning and execution. We found that while the agent supported division of labour, the agent guidance had various social implications. We now reflect on (A) how division of labour is achieved; (B) the social implications and hidden cost incurred by team reformation and task interruption; and (C) the limited feedback mechanism.

### 7.5.1 *Division of labour between the agent and the human teams*

Overall, players followed 30 out of 51 agent instructions, out of which 21 tasks were completed according to the instruction (success rate of 70 percent). Only 2 targets were evacuated without agent instruction (Figure 34), which indicates that, to a large extent, the agent successfully supported routine task planning activities. Episode A demonstrates a typical case of division of labour: the agent handles planning of teaming and task assignment, freeing the team to focus on other issues such as navigation (identifying the target on the interactive map and finding directions) and organising team meet up. The following of agent instructions speaks of players trust in the agents decisions. In the 30 cases where instructions were followed, we can observe similar patterns of labour division.

The distribution of HQ messages may also indicate a division of labour between HQ and the agent. Only a small proportion (16 out of 147) is directly related to task assignment, indicating routine task allocations were delegated to the agent. A relatively large proportion (118 out of 147) of messages are used to provide situational awareness and safety routing the responders to avoid radiation exposure. However, the fact that only 5 (out of 16) HQ instructions are implemented suggests that HQ was unable to effectively override the agent when they wanted to. This fact highlights that the planning agent plays a strong role in the control loop, compared to the human coordinators in the HQ. The planning agent can directly instruct field responders without consent of the HQ, and the HQ does not have an effective way of overriding the agents decision.

### 7.5.2 *Hidden costs of team reformation and task interruption*

While team compliance rate with agent instructions was high when no reteaming was required (91 percent), we found that the rate of compliance with agent instructions is much lower when team refor-

mation is involved (50 percent), and even lower when in addition an on-going task is interrupted (22 percent) (Table 9). Our interaction analysis shows the ways in which team reformation and task interruption are associated with hidden costs in the social organisation of team performance.

Context	Instructions	Followed by FR	Compliance rate
Instructing existing team	23	21	91%
Require team reformation	10	5	50%
Interrupting tasks	18	4	22%
Total	51	30	59%

Table 9: Compliance with agent instructions by context

Firstly, we found that team disbanding can be difficult. Players have to make their actions accountable to gracefully disengage from an existing team to avoid breaching social norms (e.g., politeness). Members have displayed a sense of attachment to a local group (episode 2.2), which delayed the task substantially until the team reformation failed. Despite interrupting an on-going task, new instructions for both teammates can facilitate smooth, mutually agreed disbanding (Episode 2.3), while instructions for only one member have coincided with interactional trouble, disagreement and delays (episode 2.4).

Secondly, the impact of attachment between co-located teammates was further amplified by distance between proposed teammates. While they frequently accounted for actions with co-located players, they did not make their actions equally accountable to remote team members. For example in episode 2.4, the agent interrupted the local teams task and instructed them to team up with distant players. The co-located team decided to reject the instruction without contacting the potential teammates they rejected. The system lacked support of accountability between remote members.

A further observation is that players were unwilling to give up on-going tasks after a certain time. In episode 2.4, the teammates first

agree to ignore new instructions. This preference to stick with on-going tasks may also explain the high rejection rate for instructions involving task interruptions.

The social organisation of coordination reveals implications for the simplistic model of interaction held by the agent. The agents algorithm re-plans and reshuffles teams, in order to optimise group performance by minimising the travel distance to the targets. However, our study has revealed the ways in which social norms and the accountability of social conduct get in the way. This raises questions of the effectiveness of approaches that treat coalition formation of humans as unproblematic. The agent does not consider the social cost of team reformation and task interruption. Our field study has shown that the social process to disengage from groups and on-going tasks can be costly. The tension between the social process and the model held by the agent echoes the notion of workflow from within and without [Bowers et al. \[1994\]](#). The authors point out that models imposed by technology (from without) may come into tension with the actual workflow achieved through methods internal to the work (from within).

### 7.5.3 Feedback to the agent

To recap, a feedback mechanism is included in the interaction design to give responders some control over the task assignment (Section [7.2.2](#)). On receiving an instruction, players can either accept or reject instructions. On rejection of a task allocation, a new plan is requested. The rejected allocation is, in turn, used as a constraint within the optimisation run by the planner agent, which means the rejected target will not be assigned to the rejecting player for a while (1 minute).

Our observations show there may be a significant cost associated with rejection. Overall, 6 out of 25 re-plans were triggered by rejections. In turn, tasks were re-assigned to all players. Frequent new instructions may cause extra coordination overhead (time spent on

interpreting new instructions, more team reformation and task interruptions, and over-constrain the planning). Players did not seem to be aware of the implications that their rejections had on others.

We also found that players expectations of the rejection were not always aligned with its actual effect. Instructions involving reformation and interruption are more likely to be rejected. Players statements indicate they perceive the rejection as a way to reverse to previous states (see episode 2.4). Other statements indicate rejections were expected to pair them with a new teammate instead of a new target. The mismatch between expected and actual effect highlights the lack of intelligibility in the current interaction design. We aimed at simplicity (by providing only accept/reject options), which might be important for interaction in time-critical task settings, but it comes at the cost of intelligibility. Therefore, we argue that intelligibility and simplicity need to be carefully balanced according to details of the setting.

## 7.6 DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Our observations reveal the tension between agent planning support and the social organisation of teamwork. The tension does not simply mean the model held by the agent is incorrect; it highlights potential trade-offs we need to consider in system design [Bowers et al. \[1994\]](#); [Sukthankar et al. \[2009\]](#). Providing a detailed design solution is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, we propose three design implications to scaffold the division of labour when building agent-based planning support for human teams.

### 7.6.1 Achieve common ground

Two main issues arose that challenged this basis for collaboration [Bradshaw et al. \[2011\]](#). Firstly, a notion of the social cost associated

with instructing teams should be taken into account when designing planning agents. For example, disbanding teams can be difficult and time-consuming as it is governed by rules of social conduct and etiquette, particularly where the new teammates are out of sight or only one of the teammates received a new instruction. Secondly, a mismatch between the expected and actual function of rejections further shows intelligibility needs to be improved. Therefore, we suggest the design of agent support that a) takes social factors into consideration (e.g., ensuring team disbanding is facilitated by reteaming both teammates at the same time; avoiding task interruptions etc.), and that b) agent functionality is appropriately surfaced to help achieve common ground (e.g., by providing explanations of agent action at the interface level).

### *7.6.2 Facilitate accountability*

while the rules of social conduct ensured accountability of action among co-located teammates, we found the impact of rejections on remote players was not properly appreciated; nor did the interaction design support making these rejections accountable. Therefore, we believe the interaction design shall reveal the hidden cost of certain actions (e.g., rejections) to facilitate local decision making accountable to remote team members, ensuring consequences of local decisions for the welfare of all teams are understood.

### *7.6.3 Balance responsibilities between humans and agent*

The social implications and other situational contingencies are likely difficult to be modelled computationally. Alternative approaches argue for mixed-initiative control and flexible autonomy between humans and agents Bradshaw et al. [2011]. The ways in which the HQ used messsages to provide situational information that complemented the agent instructions show that humans are readily able to deal with arising situational contingencies. The division of labour between hu-

mans and the agent appeared most effective in that the agent took on routine and repetitive jobs (task assignment), which freed the responders to focus on the situated rescue mission. In our interaction design, the role of the human HQ was relatively weak. For example, the HQ struggled to overwrite the agents instructions through the messaging channel. In the future, we seek to allow the HQ to play a stronger role in the control loop to enable more direct mediation and amendment of agent instructions (e.g., by directly modifying the task assignments, or by adding information relating to the assignments, such as safe routing).

## 7.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter, we examined how the guidance from a planning agent is handled socially in the Human On-the-loop setting. To support our field trial we integrated a planner agent with AtomicOrchid and modified both mobile and HQ interface to facilitate the On-the-loop interaction pattern between human and agent. Findings from interaction analysis of field observations, triangulated with log files, reveal how the On-the-loop interactions played out. The results of analysis show a division of labour in which the agent takes over the majority of planning activities while field responders only focus on other issues such as finding routes and targets. However, field observations also reveal significant costs associated with instructions that require members to reform new teams, and that interrupt on-going tasks. In addition, some confusions and misunderstanding are also discovered in the human agent feedback loop. Based on the findings, we presented three design implications to consider when creating agent-based planning support systems for human teams, including establishing ‘Common Ground’, facilitating accountability and balancing responsibilities between human and agent.

## ATOMICORCHID STUDY 3: AGENT-SUPPORTED IN-THE-LOOP DESIGN

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This chapter presents the third iteration of AtomicOrchid(AO) field trials. The purpose of these trials is to investigate socio-technical issues relating to agent planning support with a Human In-the-loop interaction design. Based on the On-the-loop version of AtomicOrchid (Section 7.2), the system have gone through another development iteration to facilitate a In-the-loop interaction pattern. Through interaction analysis of video recordings and game log data, we reveal how this In-the-loop design unfolds and, through a number of critical incidents, how it breaks down. We find that the human coordinator and automated planner agent can successfully work together in most cases, with human coordinators inspecting and ‘correcting’ the agent-proposed plans. However, occasional failures of planning are also observed due to: complacency; silent, missing or invisible information; and limited support for human planning. A workshop with a professional disaster response team is conducted to reflect on realism of AtomicOrchid scenario and raises the challenge to extend this work to more complex but slower paced situations.

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Most disaster operations require responder teams to plan and carry out task under spatial and time constraints. which means the teams often have limited resource and personnel to deal with large amount of geopolitically distributed tasks in limited amount of time. How do they optimise the use their rescue resources become computationally complicated problem. Multi-agent system researchers have developed a number of multi-agent task allocation algorithms. As soft-

ware components, they have all done very well in the computational simulation, therefore there is potential to apply those algorithms to support planning activity of human responder teams.

However, these algorithms necessarily depend on abstracted models of the environment and human behaviour which might lead to task allocations that are flawed in practice, due to the contingent nature of situated action Suchman [1987]. We might conjecture that a human coordinator working together with the planning agent could notice and help to deal with such emergent problems. One way in which this working together might be achieved is by placing a human coordinator In-the-loop between the planning algorithm and the physical world. The In-the-loop design pattern assumes the constant HQ supervision and intervention is required to ensure the agent works properly (section 4.4). In this study, the AtomicOrchid system has evolved from the 2ed game probe in the study 2 (chapter 7), to facilitate the In-the-loop interaction. The In-the-loop design enables HQ human to involve in the planning process by:

1. allowing HQ to review, edit and approve every instructions generated by agent. (Figure 40 (1)). In extreme cases, HQ can override all agent instructions, i.e. manually allocate all tasks.
2. allowing HQ to decide when to initiate re-plans. (Figure 40 (2))
3. allowing HQ to review feedbacks from field players and how to act on them. (Figure 40 (3))

Compared to the Human On-the-loop design in the previous study (Section 4.4) , the major change is the rebalance of responsibilities in the control room (between HQ and agent). The interaction between field responder and the control room is mostly unchanged. Therefore, this study has strong focus on control room interaction compared to the study 2. More specifically, objective of this study is to unpack the human agent interaction in the human In-the-loop paradigm, particularly in the control room, revealing labour division, interactional is-

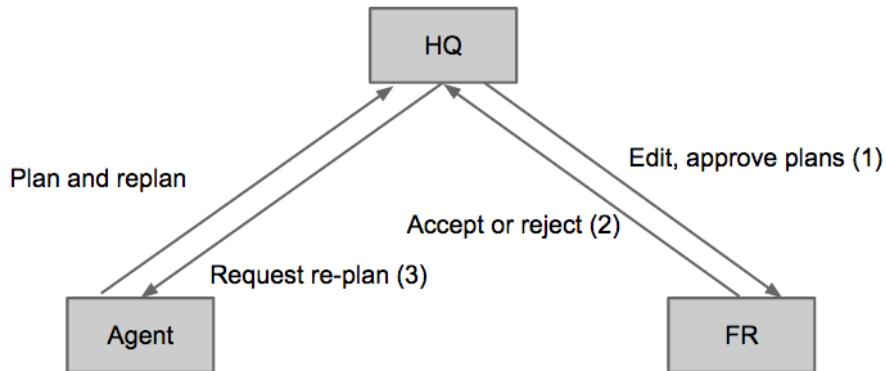


Figure 40: In-the-loop interaction design

sues and design implications that can be drawn from the interactions.

Findings from the study highlight the processes in which the agent and HQ players collectively generate task assignments for field players. The human coordinator and automated planner agent managed to successfully work together in most cases, with human coordinators inspecting and ‘correcting’ the agent-proposed plans. However, occasional failures of planning are also observed due to: complacency; silent, missing or invisible information; and limited support for human planning. A workshop with a professional disaster response team is conducted to reflect on realism of AtomicOrchid scenario and raises the challenge to extend this work to more complex but slower paced situations.

## 8.2 SYSTEM EVOLUTION

The In-the-loop version of AtomicOrchid is not designed from scratch, but evolved from the On-the-loop version introduced in previous study (Section 7.2). In the study 2, we have observed HQ struggling to get involved in the planning loop even when they want to intervene. Combining the observations from the study 2 and the definition of In-the-loop interaction pattern (4.4), we further generate several system

requirements for realizing the In-the-loop interaction.

1. HQ should be able to review, edit and approve every instructions generated by agent.
2. HQ should be able to decide when the agent should re-plan.
3. HQ should be able plan for part of the team, leaving the agent to plan for the team left.
4. HQ should be able to deliver their assignments(or task cancellation) to FR with a structured presentation.

The purpose of requirement 1-2 is to give HQ more control over the planning loop, by delegating them the responsibility of final decision in planning. The requirement 3 enables HQ to modify in the agent planning without having to take full manual control of plan generation. The requirement 4 is derived from the observations (study 1 and 2) that HQ struggled to override agent planning through a unstructured text messages. Therefore, we suggest to enable HQ to deliver and cancel their assignments in a structured in the same way that the agent do. Two interfaces are designed for the 2 HQ players in the control room. The task assignment interface provides a set of interface functionalities supporting task allocation activities, while the situational awareness interface provides game status and a broadcasting message channels.

### 8.2.1 *Interfaces*

This section describes three game interfaces used by players, which includes mobile responder interface for field responders, task assignment interface and situational awareness interface for HQ players.

Compared to the On-the-loop version of AtomicOrchid, the mobile interface is mostly unchanged except for the HQ task tab (see figure 42). The task tab now displays a task with text description and map

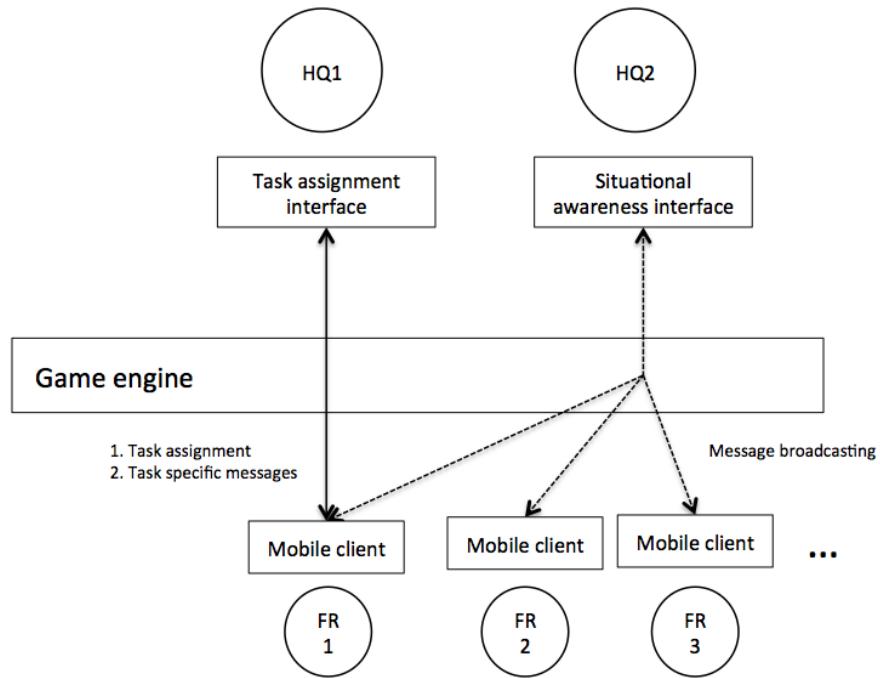


Figure 41: The mobile responder app

visualisation of task on the top. The bottom half of the interface is a message box showing task-specific information from HQ. It should be noted that the HQ can still send broadcast information (visible to everyone), which will be displayed in the chat tab.

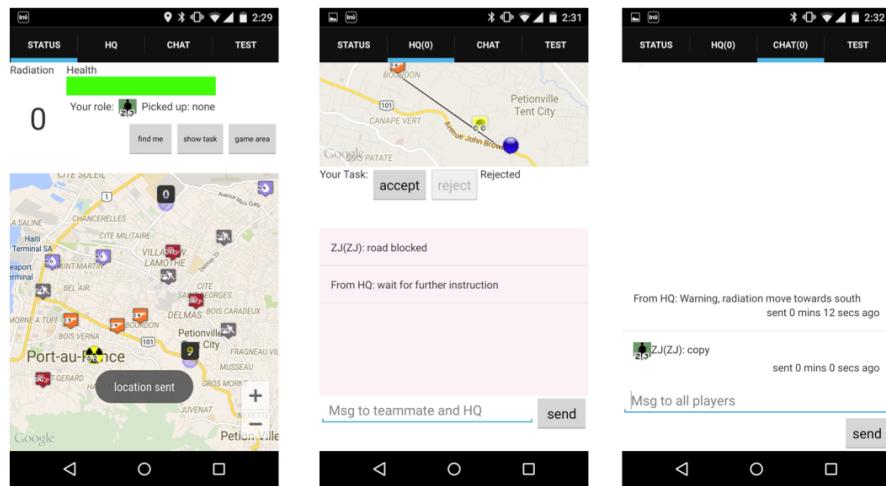


Figure 42: Mobile interface in study 2

The situational awareness interface is the same as the HQ interface used in study 2 (Study 7.2.3). It provides information for game status monitoring, and a broadcast message channel for communicating

with field players.



Figure 43: Situational awareness interface operated by HQ2

The task assignment interface is created to support In-the-loop interaction with Agent. As an overview, the interface has a map on the left (Figure 44). Player/target locations, assignments are presented on the map. At right side of the interface is a task assignment panel. The left (1) column of the panel shows pending assignments while right column (2) shows existing task status. Figure 44 (5) shows an example of a proposed task assignment: player MD and GO are assigned to target 07. Within each confirmed task assignment (6) a feedback indicator indicates the field player's response to this assignments (no response, reject, accept).

### 1. Plan request button:

This button triggers agent re-planning. The agent will calculate an optimized plan based on task status, and present it to the HQ on the pending panel. The button allow HQ decide when to initiate a re-plan. (Figure 44 (3))

### 2. Plan keeping checkbox:

These checkboxes are attached to every task assignments in the confirmed panel. If the checkbox is ticked, the planner will keep the corresponding assignment in next re-planning. In other words,

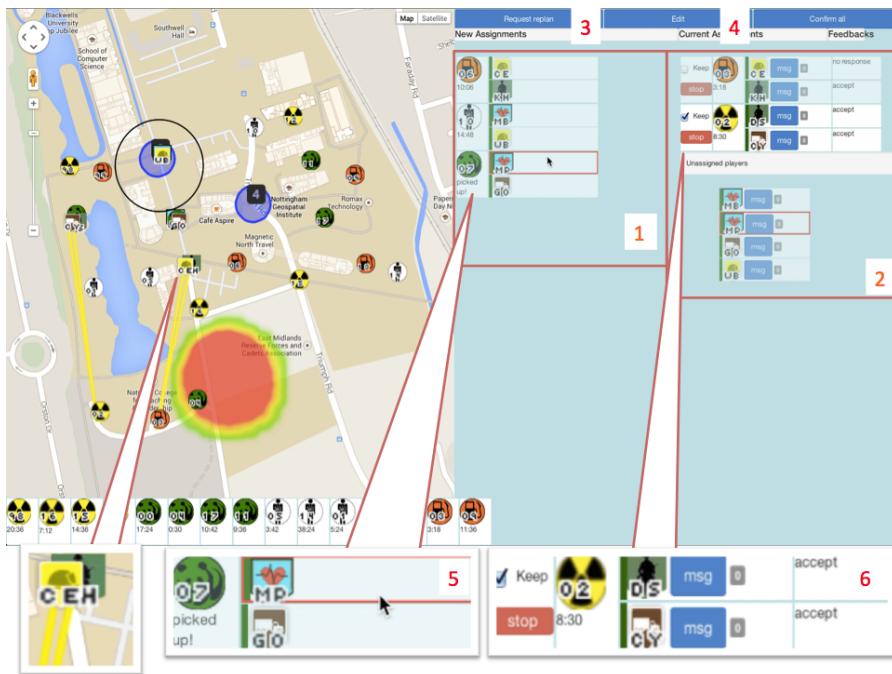


Figure 44: Interfaces in study 3

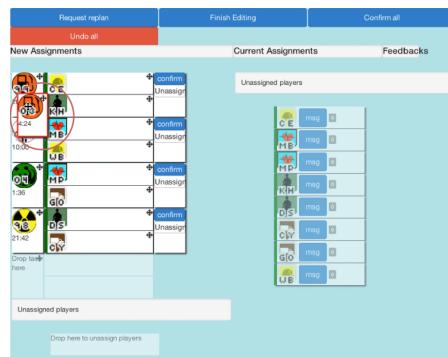


Figure 45: Edit mode of task allocation interface

the planner will keep the assignment fixed, performing partial planning for the rest of the team. (Figure 44 (6))

### 3. Plan edit panel:

Manual plan edits will be activated by clicking the 'edit' button (Figure 44 (4)). The assignments in pending area will change to edit mode. Assignment can be created, modified and deleted through drag and drop interaction. (Figure 46)

### 4. Plan approval button:

This button approves all pending assignments. All pending assignment will switch to confirmed area. Alternatively, assign-

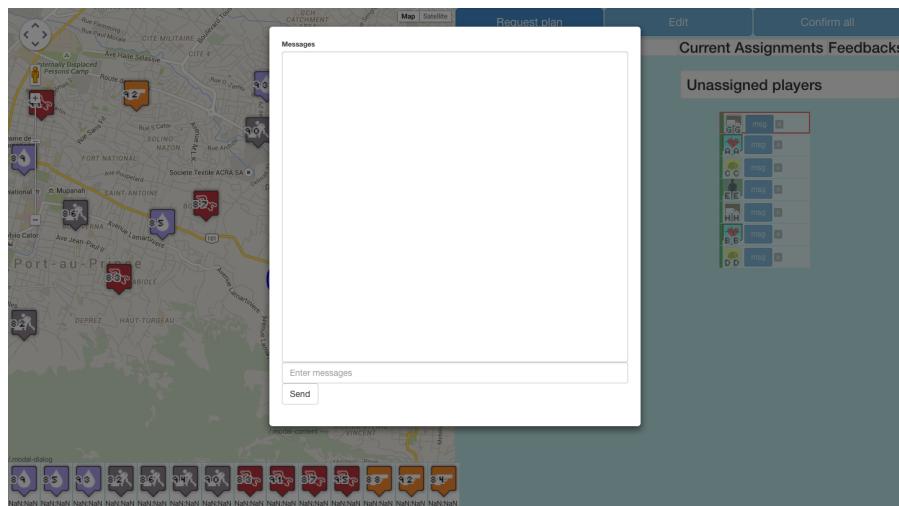


Figure 46: Pop up messaging panel

ments can be approved individually by clicking individual confirm button on the pending assignment when the edit mode is activated.

##### 5. Text messaging panel:

The messaging panel can be toggled by clicking msg button on the confirmed assignments (Figure 44 (4)). The panel is supposed to be used for assignment-specific information. Therefore, the messages in this plan are only visible to the two involved players and HQ. (Figure 46)

##### 6. The Feedback indicator:

The feedback indicators are attached to the right hand side of the confirmed assignments. The field players can easily provide feedbacks of their assignment through mobile responder interface (introduced later). There are three possible values for the indicator (no response, reject, accept). Because rejections typically indicate issues that needs to be followed up by HQ, the rejection will be highlighted with red color to grab attention of field players. (Figure 44 (6))

When two involved players both accept the assignment, the keep checkbox will be ticked automatically. This is a mecha-

nism to avoid interruption for the accepted assignments in the subsequent re-plans.

#### 7. Stop button:

The stop button can be used to indicate an emergency termination of an assignment. If this button is clicked, the assignment will be dismissed both in the mobile and HQ interface. (Figure 44 (6))

#### 8.2.2 *The planning agent*

One big change of the planner (compared to that in study 2) is the partial planning feature. The agent can takes a list of fixed assignment as input. It then allows optimize the players and targets that are not involved in the fixed assignment list. The functionality has two potential usages:

1. allows human operators to contribute part of a plan and ask the agent optimize the rest.
2. allows human operators to annotate some on-going tasks, that should not be changed in dynamic re-planning.

Apart from the partial planning feature, the input/output of agent is not changed.

### 8.3 STUDY DESIGN

Participants were recruited through posters and emails. A total of 20 participants were recruited. 10 participated in session A and 10 in session B. All participants were reimbursed with 15 pounds for 1.5

hours of study. For each game session, there are 2 HQ players and 8 field players. The majority of participants were students of the local university. The HQ players are recruited from researchers in the computer science department.

Because the HQ interface is a lot complicated compare to the that of the study 1 and study 2, we add an extra 0.5 hour training session before the formal study for HQ players to get familiar with the new task assignment interface. We anticipate the workload of operating the Human In-the-loop interface would be a lot more then that of operating the On-the-loop interface. Therefore, there are two HQ players recruited in each session to split work in the control room. One of the two HQ player operates the new task allocation interface (described in section 8.2), while the other player operates the situational awareness interface described in study 2 (Section 7.2.3) to assist the other HQ by providing situation awareness and sending broadcasting information.

Upon arrival in the HQ (set up in a meeting room at the local university), participants were briefed and asked to consent to participate. Roles were randomly assigned to field players (field responders: firefighter, medic, transporter, soldier). Field responders were provided with a smartphone; HQ coordinators with a laptop. Game rules and interfaces were introduced, and participants were assisted in setting up their phones and laptop clients. Field responders and HQ coordinators were given 5 minutes to discuss a common game strategy. All field responders were accompanied to the starting point within the designated game area, about 1 minute walk from headquarters.

Before the formal session begins, there is a training session for field players to get familiar with the mobile interface. The training session has a very simple game setting with only four targets nearby the starting point. The training session ends when field responders collect all four targets nearby. Once field responders were ready to start formal session, One research start the game engine, triggering a “game start”

message to be sent to mobile interface. Gameplay commenced for 30 minutes. A “Game over” message by HQ concluded the game. Field responders returned to HQ for the post-game session.

The size of the game area on the local university campus was 400 by 400 meters, without heavy traffic. The terrain of the game area includes grassland, a lake, buildings, roads, and footpaths and lawns. There are two drop off zones and 20 targets. The pilot study showed that this was a challenging, yet not too overwhelming number of targets to collect in a 30 min game session. There were four targets for each of the four target types. The pattern of cloud movement and expansion was the same for both game sessions.

We recorded both system logs and video of interaction in the field for analysis. To capture the distributed, concurrent nature of the interaction, four researchers with camcorders shadowed the field player teams, and one researcher recorded the action in the HQ. A replay tool was used to synchronise and analyse triangulated game events, player positions, and concurrent video recordings.

Our interest in this paper is how socio-technical interaction is organised around the computational planning support, hence our focus is on the control room first, but then we trace information flow and decision making into the field. In practice, video recordings of the control room were catalogued to identify key decision points in teaming and task allocation, which served to index sequences (episodes) of interest ([Heath et al. \[2010\]](#)). Interesting distinct units of interaction were then transcribed and triangulated with log files and field video for deeper analysis; the results of which we present in this paper.

#### 8.4 DATA ANALYSIS

This section starts with overview of game results, messaging system usage and task assignments, as they served to index episodes of inter-

ests. Selected episodes of game play are then presented in order to unpack the interactions surrounding the task assignment activities in the control room. We provide these episodes as vivid exhibits of how members accountably organise their team coordination *in situ* [Crabtree et al. \[2012\]](#). The order in which we present the episodes follows the common practice of moving from exhibits of typical/unproblematic instances, via more complex/difficult instances, to exhibits that display problematic interaction or even complete breakdowns ([Heath et al. \[2010\]](#)).

Overall the 28 of 40 targets were evacuated in two sessions (16 in Session A and 12 in Session B). The player's health status in session 1 is better (Avg 90, Sd 9.3) than that in session 2 (Avg 48, Sd 41). Two deaths occurred at the beginning of session 2, more details of death will be presented as episodes later in this section.

	Target saved	Health max	Health min	Health avg	Health Sd	Death
Session A	16	99	75	90.75	9.337	0
Session B	12	97	0	48.12	41	2

Table 10: Result Overview

#### 8.4.1 Messaging system

One change of the messaging system made for this iteration is separating channels for assignment-specific and broadcasting messages. The HQ1 is responsible for sending message in assignment-specific channel, while the HQ2 is responsible for sending messages in general message channel. This section will reveal how this design plays out in the field trials.

We found HQs frequently send messages to update location of radiation cloud, (e.g. " Radiation Status- 38 39 37 and Drop Point 7 all out of bounds ") and provide navigational guidance (e.g. " go north

Session 1	Sent by HQ	Sent by FR	Total
Broadcasting msg	35	3	38
Assignment specific msg	22	15	37
Total	57	18	75
Session 2	Sent by HQ	Sent by FR	Total
Broadcasting msg	31	13	44
Assignment specific msg	19	11	30
Total	50	24	74

Table 11: Task assignment overview

and west around the water ” ). HQ is also observed to send messages to repeat and enhance the task assignment (e.g. “ turn to 49 ”).

On the other side of the message channel, field responders send messages to request tasks (e.g. “ please advise ”) and cloud status (e.g. “ Which way is it moving? ”). Field responders also occasionally send acknowledgments to HQ’s messages (e.g. “ Copy that. ”).

Most messages in the general message channel are general information about the clouds. However, we also found 11 messages in the general message channel (out of 82) are clearly addressed to individual teams. The specific player initials are mentioned in those messages. (E.g. “ NG and YI approach quicker to 41 drop off to 8 ”)

#### 8.4.2 Overview of task assignments

In the following tree diagrams, plans are break into individual task assignment. Each individual assignment may go through 4 stages in the planning process (Creation, approval, feedback, and execution). The assignment status for each stage is summarized in the following diagrams.

The summary indicates that both HQ and the planning agent contribute to the task planning activities in the control room. The plan-

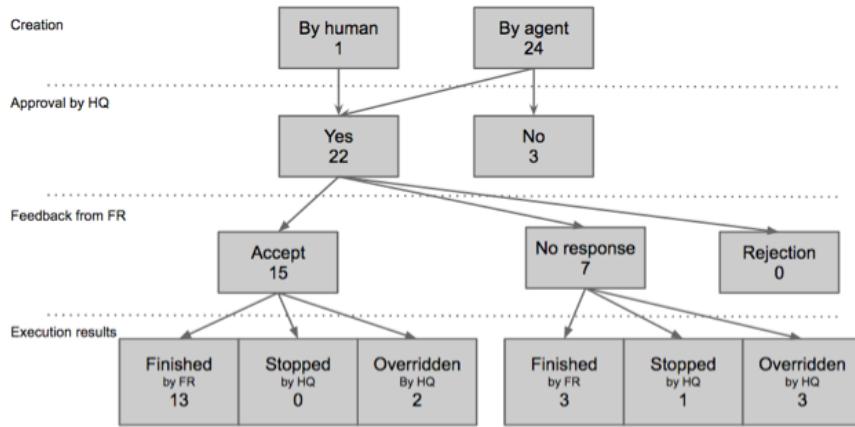


Figure 47: Task assignment in session 1

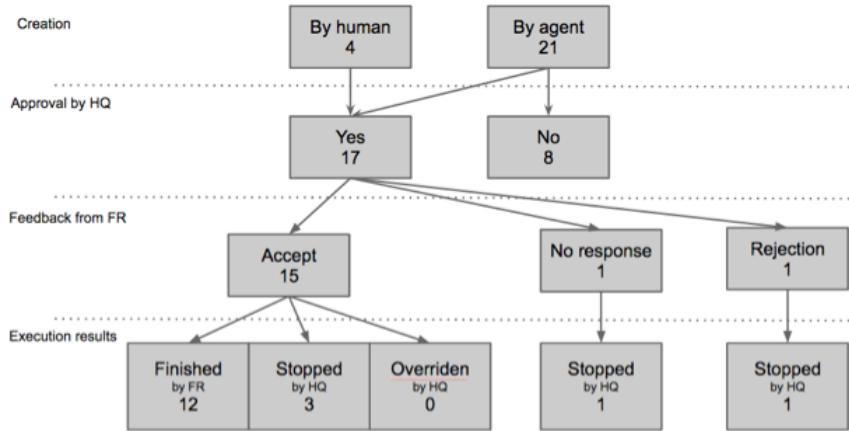


Figure 48: Task assignment in session 2

ning agent created a total of 45 task assignments with additional 5 assignments created manually by HQ. HQ approved a total of 39 assignments. Field responders accepted most of the approved messages (30 out of 39). 9 assignments were rejected or not responded. During the task execution, occasional HQ interventions result in 5 task cancellations and 5 assignments override. In the end, players managed to evacuate a total of 28 (out of 40) targets in 2 sessions.

Although the diagrams (figure 47, 48) show a sequential planning-execution process (creation->approval->feedback->execution), we actually found that various planning activities (e.g. assignment creation, approval, intervention, communication) are highly intertwined in the control room setting. In the rest of the section, episodes of game play

will be used to unpack the interactions surrounding the task assignment activities in the control room.

In the episodes presented in the following sections, players will be uniquely identified by their initials. Targets are denoted by their unique numeric target id. Task assignments from the agent are represented as two initials and one target id connected by a rightward arrow. For example, the notation PC, CR -> 22 means player PC and CR are instructed to team up and go for target 22. A standard orthographic notation is complemented by timestamps [0:00], and System Message from remote players and HQ. The HQ players will be denoted by HQ1 and HQ2. HQ1 refers to the player operating the task-assignment interface, while HQ2 refers to the player operating the situational-awareness interface.

#### 8.4.3 *Confirming the plan*

As summarised above, a majority of task assignments are generated by the planning agent and approved by the HQ players. The episode 1 demonstrates a typical case of routine task planning process in control room.

**Episode 3.1 Context:** HQ paid attention to a team (MV XW) who was carrying target 43 back to drop off zone 7.

**16:45, HQ2:** XW and MV.

**16:50, HQ1:** (taking) 43.

**16:51, HQ2:** They should be going to drop off (zone) 7 and get 36 [Fig. 1]

**16:58, HQ1:** why don't they go this way?

**16:49, HQ2:** tell them to go 36 afterwards.

**17:04, HQ1:** ok this one (refer to target 36). Do you tell them? [Fig. 2]

**17:05, HQ2:** Should I tell them? (Typing)

**17:07, HQ1:** Yeah, go for 36. Maybe After the drop off, I think

then (will) get confused.

**17:13, HQ2:** I will tell them to go after drop off.

**17:14, HQ1:** Yeah, Yeah.

**18:10,** (The team dropped off target 43)

**18:22, HQ1:** (click re-plan)

**18:26,** (new assignments, the team is assigned to MV,XW -> 36)

**18:28, HQ1** 36, yes (Click confirm)

At the beginning of this episode, the team MV, XW are carrying a target (43), approaching drop off zone. At [16:45], the HQ2 noticed the team was going complete its current task and began to consider a new target for them [16:51]. HQ2 proposes that 36 should be prioritized [Fig. 1]. HQ1 agreed with the suggestion and decided to send the assignment after the team completes existing task [Fig. 2][17:07]. At 18:10, the team dropped off target. After the drop-off, the HQ requested a re-plan. The agent assigns the team MV, XW to target 36, which is consistent with decision of the HQ players. At the end, HQ approved the assignment [18:28]. In this typical case of task assignment, HQ can be seen to be monitoring the task execution, and making timely requests for new task assignments. HQ's discussion suggested that the agent task assignment was approved after a careful review of player, target and radiation status. In addition, much of HQ1 and HQ2's discussion happens before the team drops off the target; this kind of forward planning was observed on several occasions.

#### 8.4.4 Just Following the Plan

Episode 2 gives a more problematic example of accepting the planning agent's task assignments. Episode 2.1 describes the interaction in the control room; while episode 2.2 gives the perspective of the field players.

**08:32, Episode 3.2-1**

*NG and YI have just completed a task together; DI is some distance*

away.

**08:32,** (HQ1 request assignment for Idle player NG, YI))

**08:37,** (New assignment NG, YI -> 50)

**08:40,** (HQ1 confirmed plan)

**09:09,** (HQ1 request assignment for DI who has just become idle)

(*NG have not confirmed the previous assignment; DI is closer to target 50*)

**09:16,** (New assignment arrived NG, DI -> 50 )

**09:17,** (HQ1 confirm NG, DI -> 50)

In this episode, the HQ1 request assignment twice for idle players, which is a routine activity for HQ1 (As discussed in episode 1). Firstly, HQ1 request and approve new assignment for NG, YI [08:32]. 30 seconds later, DI become idle [09:09], so HQ1 request plan again. Because DI is closer to target 50 and NG YI have not accepted their assignment, the agent replaces DI with NG in the new assignment to minimize travelling distance of field players. Although HQ1 does not verbalize his reasoning process the quick approval suggests HQ1 may not have inspected the new assignment carefully and may not have noticed that the previous assignment will be overridden, potentially interrupting a task in progress. The episode 3.2-2 picks up the activity of NG and YI as the second task assignment is approved by HQ.

### Episode 3.2-2

*NG YI received a task update after they finished their previous task*

*(Team NG YI received new task NG, YI -> 50)*

**08:39, NG:** Task changed, to what?

**08:43, NG:** Oh sh\*t, there is a radiation zone sh\*t.

**08:53, NG:** It (target 50) is close to the lake. It is triumph road we have to go that way.

**08:55, YI:** Yea, we need to. No this is the lake.

**09:00, NG:** Oh that is the river, so it is that way, Can we go?

Yes we can go, this road?

**09:10, YI:** Yes it should be.

*(Their task is interrupted by new assignment YI, DI -> 50) 09:18,*

**YI:** Task changed.

**09:19, NG:** Task changed? What?

**09:23, YI:** No, it is the same.

**09:26, NG:** I do not see anything.

**09:28, YI:** You are DI, right?

**09:29, NG:** No.

**09:30, YI:** En? You are no DI? DI, wait.

**09:37, NG:** I can not see my Task.

**09:45, YI:** You are NG, Oh no, I need DI.

**09:48, NG:** You should go back then. Or send a message, Oh I can not see my task.

**10:02, NG:** I think the page is not loading.

NG and YI have already received the task to rescue target 50 but have not accepted or rejected it. While they are discussing how to reach the target the second task assignment arrives [09:10], the agent requires YI to team up with the remote player DI to pursue the same target, 50. The team is confused after the change of task. YI thinks that the task did not change because the target is still 50 [09:23, YI: No, it is the same.], and NG thought the interface is no longer working [10:02, NG: I think the page is not loading.]. After YI confirms NG's initials, she realized she needs to switch teammate (to DI).

Overall, the task interrupt resulted in a problematic sense making process in the field. Meanwhile the players in the control room appear unaware that anything untoward has occurred. The observation also reveals that several factors could have led to the task interruption including the absent of response from field responders; computational planning performed by agent without timely field feedback; and HQ's failure to discover the task interruption during assignment approval.

#### 8.4.5 Correcting the plan

HQ players occasionally chose to change the task assignments generated by the planning agent; episode 3 presents one such example.

##### **Episode 3.3**

*CE and KH are currently assigned target 03 but have not accepted; other players are free 04:18, (HQ1 click request plan)*

*(Assignments arrived: CE KH -> 06, MP GO -> 07, MB ,WB -> 10)*

**04:24, HQ1:** What? Why I am getting? Ahh, one of these guys does not accept. [Fig 7]

*(Referring to the team of CE, KH.)*

**04:29,** (HQ1 clicked keep on assignment CE KH -> 03)

**04:33,** (HQ1 request re-plan)

**04:40,** (Assignment arrived: MB, WB -> 10, MP, GO -> 07)

**04:42,** (HQ1 click confirm)

**04:56,** (MP, GO accepted)

After HQ requests a new plan, agent proposes a set of assignments, one of which (CE KH -> 06) interrupts existing task of a team (CE KH -> 03). HQ1 queries this change (“What? Why I am getting?”) realises that they have not explicitly accepted the previous task [04:24]. It should be noted that this kind of task interruption only happens when field players did not accept the tasks (Section 8.2), making agent think they are idle at that moment. After finding this problem, HQ then requires the agent to “keep” existing assignment [04:29] and requests a new plan from the agent, which is then approved. In contrast to episode 3.2, HQ1 notices and compensates for the field players’ failure to explicitly accept the task, and the field players are able to continue with the previously allocated task without interruption.

#### 8.4.6 *Changing the plan*

At the start of session 2 there is an extreme example of the HQ players overriding the planning agent.

##### **Episode 3.4**

*Context: At start of the session 1, all players were idle waiting for initial plan.*

**01:25,** (HQ1 requested initial plan)

**01:28,** (4 initial assignments arrived) [Fig 3]

**01:29, HQ1:** why, it is stupid.

**01:33,** (HQ1 click edit)

**01:53, HQ1:** I want this one (HQ1 drag target x to replace agent planning, see Fig.4) this one and this one.

*HQ1 replaced 3 out of 4 targets in the task assignment. The three prioritized targets very are close to the original cloud*

**02:03,** (HQ1 clicked confirm) [Fig 4]

**02:07, (HQ1 talk to HQ2) HQ1:** I think we should get the far ones first.

The episode begins with HQ requesting initial task assignments for the whole team. When the agent gives HQ a set task assignments for approval, HQ complained about it [01:29, HQ: why, it is stupid.], indicating he is not satisfied with the plan. HQ then click edit button to switch to edit mode. Under the edit mode, HQ dragged 3 targets to replace the targets in agent assignments. The three prioritized targets are the ones that are closest to the radiation cloud [fig 3]. After HQ confirmed his modification [02:03], he said to HQ2 that the far away targets should be rescued first [02:07]. The execution result of this heavily edited plan is not ideal. Among the 3 three modified assignments, 1 finished 1 assignment is cancelled later, 1 assignment leads to player death.

#### 8.4.7 Coping with the unexpected

Episode 3.5 picks up shortly after episode 3.4, which exemplifies how HQ adapts task assignments to changing task status.

**Episoe 3.5 Context:** At start of the session 1, all players were idle waiting for initial plan.

**02:09, HQ2:** they cannot walk there straight. [Fig 5]

Referring to team MB, G0, HQ2 point out that the straight path to one of the target is blocked by radiation

**02:14, HQ1:** So who is that. (Target) 04 (HQ1 open the message panel)

**02:20, (HQ 1 Types message)** You are heading to an area affected by cloud, You need to be very fast. [Fig 6]

**02:45, HQ2:** 04 is now in the cloud.

**02:45, HQ2:** Oh god, that is so fast.

**03:20, (HQ1 Types message)** Stay to the lake as possible!

**03:33, HQ1:** Shall we cancel (assignment 04) that or shall we wait for report? (HQ1 opens msg panel to talk to MP G0)

**03:43, (HQ1 opens msg panel to talk to MP G0)**

**03:50, HQ2:** I think (Target) 04 is only an animal, screw the animal.

**03:52, (HQ1 Types message)** Abort, target compromised, proceed to target 07.

**04:06, (HQ1 sent message)**

**04:11, (HQ1 click stop on the assignment of MB, G0->04)**

After confirming assignments in Episode 1, the HQ2 point out one assignment may be impractical because the route to target has already been blocked by a radiation cloud [02:09] [Fig. 5]. HQ immediately open message panel to send warnings and urging the team to move fast [Fig. 6]. However the cloud expansion seems to be faster than HQ originally expected [02:51]. Apart from sending route guidance in the team, HQ started to consider cancellation of the assignment. After HQ2 agree with the cancellation, HQ send a message to the team

to inform them the assignment is going to be cancelled and instruct them to go to new target 07. The assignment is formally cancelled in [04:11]. After HQ1 cancelled the task, he started to request new assignments from planner and allocated target 07 to the team later. In this case the HQ players realise the risk and are able to abort the task and redirect these field players out of danger.

#### 8.4.8 When it all Breaks Down

In the episode 3.5, in which the HQ modified 3 agent assignments. In the modified plan, the team CE, KM is instructed to go for a target very close to a radiation cloud. We look first at the HQ perspective (episode 3.6-1), and then at the field players' perspective (episode 3.6-2).

##### **Episode 3.6-1**

(Context: One team (CE, KM) is end up heading to radiation cloud.)

**4:52, HQ2** They (CE KM) are walking right into their death.

(CE and KM were heading to target 03 which is now at opposite side of a radiation cloud)

**5:14, (HQ messaging)** Careful, you are approaching the cloud.

Move extremely fast to the cloud. Go around the lake to return.

**5:32, HQ:** God, too slow.

(The team CE KM is completely in the mid of radiation)

**5.46, (HQ typing message)** Move closer to the lake.

**5:50,** (The team went through the cloud, their health is below 20, the target 03 is now at the edge of the cloud)

**6.39, HQ2:** What are they trying to pick up?

**6:43, HQ1:** The fuel.

**6.48, HQ2:** I am not sure whether they can survive picking up the fuel. No, now is more concern of surviving.

**7:05, (HQ messaging)** Abort 03, return top to (target) 99.

**9.04,** (HQ1 stopped task of CE KM)

**9.05-10:08,** (HQ requested re-plan 4 times, no new plan available for CE KM)

**9.50, HQ1:** No targets for them? There are lots of them.

(Team CE, KM stay in the cloud all the time, and finally dead)

At the beginning of the task, the radiation cloud has already between target and the field team CE and KM. The cloud was expanding quickly, which caught the HQ1 in surprise. As a result, 2 messages were sent by HQ1 to guide the team to avoid the cloud [05:14,5:46]. However the team was still excessively exposed to the radiation when they reached the side of the target, so HQ1 decide to abort the task [07:05]. After HQ1 cancels the assignment, the team is still exposed to radiation. HQ1 then tries to assign the players to other targets by requesting agent for new assignment [09:05-10:08]. However, the agent does not assign the team to any task because the team's health is too low. HQ1 seems to be confused about why the agent refused to assign targets. He continuously requested plans for three times and said "No targets for them? There are lots of them (refer to targets)." [9:50] During this process, the team was still standing in the cloud. They finally lost all the health points and become incapacitated. Field player's perspective is given below.

### **Episode 3.6-2**

*CE and KM are heading towards target 03*

**05:15, CE:** (Reading out the message) You are approaching the cloud, move extremely fast to the cloud, Ok!

**05:21,** (CE grabbed KM and started running) [Fig 8]

**06:12,** (The team CW, KM ran all the way across the cloud)

*(After ran through the cloud, they are checking the health value.)*

**07:02, CE:** how dead are you?

**07:04, KM:** Pretty much dead.

**07:06, CE:** I am pretty dead as well.

*(The team is trying to locate the target, but it is unsuccessful)*

*[Fig, 9]*

**07:28, CE:** Do you know what is funny? We have to get back.

**08:24, CE:** It should be somewhere around here! We are getting close.

(Assignment cancelled)

**08:52, CE:** there is a new task, No task at the moment?

[...] (After assignment was cancelled, the team was still trying to locate the target)

**09:44, CE:** I am pretty much dead and radiation is 12. Where is it! It says it is on this street but it is not.

**10:06, CE:** Oh I am dead.

The part 2 began with player CE reading the HQ message ("You are approaching the cloud, move extremely fast"). After this message, CE grabbed teammate KM and starts to run through the cloud [Fig. 8]. After they ran through the cloud, the team check their remaining health value [07:02] and started searching for the target at the edge of the radiation cloud. About half minute later, the assignment is cancelled by HQ [08:52] and no further task is allocated (as seen above). Although the task has been cancelled, the HQ failed to assign new task to the team [3.6-1, 9:50]. The field players note but then appear to ignore HQ's instruction to abort [08:24] and continues to search for the target. The field players seem to interpret the lack of a new task as license to remain where they are and are eventually overwhelmed by the radiation.

#### 8.4.9 Missing feedbacks from field

Lack of feedback leads to false assumptions of the agent (players are still available), which in turn compromises its optimization (Section x). we also found that HQ may also be distracted by the lack of response, in that they have to guess player's intention without their feedback.

#### Episode 3.7

(New assignment MV XW -> 36, XW accepted, MV had no response)

**13:05, HQ1:** I think they have not received any task probably .

**13:22, HQ1:** Just do not have response, I do not know why.

**13:32, HQ2:** MV and XW, I suppose they go to 36.

**13:35, HQ:** They are moving, but they did not accept that.

**13:48,** (HQ click request, new assignment to MV XW -> 43, NO response from MV XW)?

**13:51, HQ2:** I am not sure they are still going south; I think they (MV XW) are going to 43 instead.

**13:59, HQ1:** HQ: they are going to 43.

**14:05, HQ1:** HQ: they just do not have any response, no reply. But they are coming for it, they are coming.

In this episode, the team MV, XW was assigned target twice [12:30,13:48], but the team neither rejects nor accepts those two assignments. The HQs are observed to guess intentions of the field responders 3 times [see 13:32, 13:51,13:59] and complain about the non-response twice [see 13:22, 13:48]

#### 8.4.10 Division of labour in HQ

In session 1, the responsibility for HQ1 and HQ2 to send messages are not fixed as original design, but dynamically negotiated between the two HQ operators. The following fragment is a typical case of the negotiations.

**Episode 3.8 17:04, HQ1:** Ok this one (refer to target 36). Do you tell them?

**17:05, HQ2:** Should I tell them?

**17:07, HQ1:** Yeah, (tell them to) go for 36.

**(HQ2 sent message)** MV and XW move north of the water and go round to 36

In this fragment, HQ1 asks HQ2 to send a message to instruct a team to go for a target 36. The message is a task-specific, but it is sent

by HQ2 through the broadcasting message channel.

In session 2, we do not find similar negotiations. However, in the post game discussion, the HQ2 expressed that he has too little to things to do (other then sending general messages), while HQ1 has too much to do:

"The interface I use was completely useless, became I can only message everyone at the same time, basically spamming everybody, so the only thing that I can do is, Oh , the cloud moves there and there. At the same time, Khaled (HQ1) had to message to everybody privately. While he was doing that, he coundn't do new plans. So there is a lot stuff for him be I coundn't do anything."

## 8.5 DISCUSSION

In previous section, episodes are presented to illustrate how the In-the-loop interaction design plays out in the field. The episodes reveal that, to large extent, human the HQ players are successfully involved in the control loop. However, we also found some confusions and misunderstandings occur between agent and human which may leads to issues and implications for interaction design.

### 8.5.1 How does the In-the-loop design play out?

The interface functionalities are designed to enable HQ to engage in arrange of interface interactions such as plan requesting, editing, approval and cancellation. This section exams how these functionalities are utilized and to what extent do they help HQ stay in the control loop. In what follows, we firstly examine the usage of individual interface functionalities. Combining the episodes presented in previous section, we then, reveal how the division of labour plays out with

support of these interface functionalities.

1. **Plan request and approval** The plan request function is used by HQ to trigger the agent re-planning. The design of the plan approval stage gives HQ an opportunity moment to review and influence the final plans before it is sent to field responders. Both functions are essential for human and agent to collectively produce task assignment, constituting the routine task planning work in control room. The two functions are the two most frequently used interface functionalities (HQ requested plans for 45 times; approved 39 task assignments). Deciding appropriate moment to request plan and approve desired assignments require HQ to closely monitor the task status. The uses of the two interface functionalities are usually observed together with discussion of task execution status, which indicates HQs are engaged in the planning-execution loop with a supervisory role.
2. **Plan edits** The “plan edits” enables HQs to directly intervene the planning. We observed HQ’s modified undesirable agent plans twice throughout the field study (Episode 3.3, 3.4). It should be noted that the function is designed to be used infrequently, because the planning agent is supposed to take over the majority of the computational intensive planning activities.
3. **Plan cancellation** Further, the task cancellation functionality allows HQ to influence task execution after the plan approval. In episode 3.5, we observed assignment being cancelled and teams being reassigned due to unexpected cloud activities. This may suggests that combination of cancellation and re-planning can be a useful tool for HQ to respond to contingencies in the task execution.
4. **Partial planning** The partial planning functionality allows HQ’s to indirectly influence on the planner. For example in

episode 3.3, HQ identified task interruption in proposed plan. He then required the agent to keep an existing assignment and perform re-planning again. This episode can be seen as a case in which HQ is able to make sense of the task status and utilize the partial planning functionality to influence the assumption of the planner agent.

Apart from the above mentioned functionalities to support HQ intervention, the task assignment interface appears in many cases to provide an effective shared representation of the current state of the game. As well as showing current player and target locations and player health it also makes visible the currently approved task allocations, field player responses and any new plan that has been requested or is being edited. This shared information forms the common ground between the HQ players and the planning agent.

HQ players are observed to closely monitor this view and its representation of plan execution. For example episodes 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5 and 3.6 all reveal HQ players' awareness of field player progress and current tasks, episodes 5 and 6 show awareness of the cloud's location in relation to players, and episodes 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4 show HQ players engaging actively with proposed (rather than current) task assignments. We observe that the HQ players are quite capable of modifying the agent's plans when they wish to, for better (episode 3.3) or worse (episode 3.4). HQ is also able to intervene in current task allocations, which is successful in resolving the situation in episode 3.5 (but not in episode 3.6).

On the other hand, the agent is found to take over computationally complicated task optimization, freeing up the HQ to play their supervisory roles. Throughout the two sessions, the HQ requested the planner to re-plan for 49 times. The agent generated 45 task assignments, 34 out of which are approved by Headquarters. In comparison with the agent planner, Human only created 5 task assignments. The fact that agent creates large proportion of assignments suggests the

agent successfully takes over the routine planning to a large extent.

In many cases the communication between HQ and the field players is unproblematic, and most targets are successfully evacuated according to plan. This situation seems to be considerably better than that reported in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, and we conjecture that this is due at least in part to differences in the mobile interface in the trials reported here. Specifically, unlike in the studies reported there, the current task allocation is shown as a graphical overlay on the mobile map, not just as a textual instruction (given by the HQ player in Chapter 6 or the planning agent in 7). This seems to significantly reduce the field players' confusion about their current target and team-mate and where to find them. The seemingly better situation of task communication is consistent with the requirement (Section 8.2) outlined for interface improvement that stresses the importance of structured, domain-specific task representation for both HQ and field responders.

A pattern of labour division is also observed between the two HQ players in control room. To recap, the two HQ players in control room are split into two roles. The role of HQ1 is responsible for handle task assignment and send assignment-specific messages to field responders. The role of HQ2 is to support monitoring task status and send general chat messages. As a result, the messaging system of the messaging is split in to two channels (general information and assignment-specific, Section 8.2). The messaging interface allows each HQ player to take control of one of the messaging channel. This designed role division is briefed participants in training session before the game play. However, the system does not play out as designed in the field study. 11 messages in the general message channel are task specific, which indicate the HQ players may occasionally violate the designed division of responsibility. As we have seen, in session 2 the HQ players accepted this division of capabilities but were frustrated by it. However in session 1 the HQ players developed their own work-arounds for this based on verbal negotiation, so that at times HQ2

would use the general broadcast interface to send task-specific messages for HQ1, relying on the identification of the intended field players by their codes within those messages.

### 8.5.2 *Responsibility and Complacency*

In the game probe, the planning can be seen as partially automated by the planner agent. The task optimization performed by agent is thought to be ‘imperfect’ because it fails to consider any organizational efforts/overhead required execute the plans and plan changes, that is, the social cost of implementing plans. The result of this imperfection has been exemplified in previous chapter (Chapter 7), and also Episode 3.2 and 3.3. In the episodes 3.2 and 3.3, it proposes new plans that will disrupt ongoing activities, albeit because the respective field players have not (yet) explicitly signalled their acceptance of these tasks.

The imperfections are thought to be “natural” for agent planning support, as computationally “optimized” assignments from the planner may not socially optimized for the responder teams (Section 7.5.2). It highlights the importance of human involvement in the planning activities. In principle, the human in-the-loop interaction design allows the human, in this case the HQ players, to take active responsibility for system. For example, in episode 3.3 we see HQ1 successfully ‘correcting’ the plan to allow for missing information (responses) from the field players. However in episode 3.2 the HQ player failed to prevent the unnecessary task interruption in the approval stage, resulting in extra coordination work and sense making for field responders. Considering this case in more detail we see that it arose from the combination of: lack of field player feedback; failure of HQ monitoring; and the particular computational optimization performed by agent (which assumes that there can be no overhead if a task has not been formally accepted).

The failure case in the episode is similar to the well-observed phenomena discovered by automation researchers called complacency [Kaber and Endsley \[1995\]](#). The complacency phenomenon refers to the human failure of detecting occasional automation failure. Study of automation suggests that complacency can be classified as attention-based monitoring failure, which is likely to happen when human is engaged in multi-thread tasking. In the case of episode 3.2, the quick approval of problematic assignments suggests the plan is not properly reviewed. The HQ's attention could be a factor of the monitoring failure. As the HQ player is trying to allocate tasks for idle players, they may exclusively focus on the new assignments for the idle players rather than other conflicting assignments. If the interface failed to attract HQ's attention to the conflict, HQ may approve the plan as long as idle players are properly assigned. Although failed in episode 3.2, the interface highlight does grabbed attention of the HQ in episode 3.3. Some study shows that complacency is found in both naive and expert participants and cannot be overcome with simple practice [Parasuraman and Manzey \[2010\]](#). Therefore other mechanisms to counter the complacency effect may be needed, such as a richer involvement of the human in the planning, which we pick up further in Section 8.5.4.

### 8.5.3 *Tacit confusions*

While many interactions were essentially unproblematic we do observe a number of areas where silent, missing or invisible information led to confusion and break down.

For field players, the task cancellation is presented a notification (“task changed”) followed by a blank task page only with the text (“No task assigned at the moment”). The field study suggests the presentation could be problematic for the field players. Firstly, being assigned with no task does not successfully convey the meaning task cancellation (“Don’t carry on”). The episode 3.6-2 (part 2) shows

a case in which the players completely ignores the task cancellation and carry on doing and risky task. In episode 3.2-2 (part 2), the player NG even think the blank task interface implies malfunctionality of the mobile interface. Even if the players understand task cancellation, its implication can vary. Without a task, the players can chose to, for example, (1) stand by doing nothing, (2) find targets by themselves, (3) escape for life. Therefore, the field players may be confused about what to do next. In another example (not presented) of cancellation, the field players were stuck in a radiation cloud when their task was cancelled. With high radiation reading and loss of target, they don't know what to do next so they send messages to HQ for clarification. They finally left the radiation cloud after they receive and accept new assignments from HQ. This example shows the implicit instruction of "DON'T CARRY ON" is confusing. Instead, the explicit instructions, which directly point out what to do next may be desirable. For example, in the case of AtomicOrchid, frequent instructions can be "stand by", "reverse back" and "escape". We therefore argue that interface should encourage HQ consider such "explicit" instructions and support quickly sending such instructions.

Second, episode 3.4 in which the HQ player drastically modifies the agent's proposed plan illustrates vividly that the current interface makes the agent's proposed plan available to the HQ player, but does not reveal the agent's priorities or reasoning. The HQ player enacts a policy of evacuating the targets nearest to the radiation cloud first, presumably in the belief that the planning agent has (a) used a different priority and/or (b) not given due consideration to evacuating those targets. In fact the planning agent will have considered and rejected those targets, based on its model of field player movement, radiation cloud spread and 'permitted' radiation exposure (none). None of the agent's models are likely to be perfect but at present they are not open to inspection. It soon transpires (episodes 3.5 and 3.6) that the HQ player's initial expectation of how quickly the radiation cloud will spread is very wrong. In an ideal world we would want this information to be available to the HQ players, so that the common ground

can be expanded to include not only the plan but the reasoning behind the plan. However, as in the previous point, there is also the challenge that we may overwhelm the HQ player with information in a time-critical decision-making situation.

Apart from the issues of task cancellation, the issues of field player feedback also emerged. The field observation showed that the feedback system is crucial for both agent and HQ players to keep track of the task status. Overall, most of (30 out of 39) the assignments have been responded by the field players. However, there are still a number of un-responded assignments that causes issues in coordination. For agent planner, the lack of field response may lead to false assumption of availability of the players, which in turn, compromises the subsequent re-planning (Episode 3.2 and 3.3). For the HQ players, the lack of field response adds to the uncertainties in the task status as well. HQ players have to take efforts to guess the intentions (Episode 3.7). We might wish that the field players would always respond in a timely manner. However there may be good reasons why they have not or cannot at present, e.g. if they are incapacitated or there are temporary problems with communication. Also, in the scenario of AtomicroOrchid, no matter how fast the responders accept assignments agent planning may happen concurrently.

One strategy to view the issue of field response is to treat the lack of response as an uncertainty in the task execution, and it might be better for the system and agent to view this lack of information more positively and concretely as a ‘known unknown’. For example, the planning agent might create a plan (or multiple plans) that take into account the possibility that these assignments may transpire to have been accepted or rejected (at least in the player’s thoughts). Similarly, the interface might make visible the uncertainty, and perhaps also highlight the other information which could be impacted as a result, such as contingent plans.

Interactive system researchers have outlined a list of strategies to tackle the inevitable uncertainties, one of which is to reveal the uncertainties to operators so that they can make informed decisions Benford et al. [2006] Skeels et al. [2008]. One straightforward approach for visualizing the uncertainties is to highlight the affected data. Methods for highlighting have been proposed in literature Conti et al. [2006]. However, in the real-time control scenario like AtomicOrchid, the highlighting approach has to be applied with caution. The operators have limited resources (attention, limited time and cognitive workload capacity) to tackle various issues in a multi threading, time constrained task setting. Abuse of interface highlighting may contend for the limited resources. There are evidences showing that, visualization of uncertainties is likely to overload decision makers in time limited decision-making, which in turn, degrade their ability to respond in a timely manner Zuk and Carpendale [2007]. Take episode 5 as example, although the system highlighted potential task interruptions as a result of lack of response, operator still ignored it.

In episode 3.6, the HQ become confused when the planner stop giving back assignments. In this case, the HQ repeated requesting plans four times and complains about no response from planner. However, the planner does not produce more assignments simply because the idle players have little health to take any more assignments. This policy and reasoning of agent planning is not visible to the HQ player (although in this case the reasoning leads to not doing something, which may have its own representational challenges).

#### 8.5.4 *Support human planning*

As seen in all episodes, HQ players are observed to utilise the task interface to assess current game status, while in episodes 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 we have also seen how they can modify the agent's plans. This suggests that the interface is sufficient in providing basic situational awareness for HQ players to make their own plans. The drag-and-

drop based plan editing interface also enforces various constraints on task assignment so that all plans are at least valid, i.e. well-formed. For example, each player and each target can be assigned to at most one task, and each task can only have players with the correct combinations of game roles for the target. The interface also highlights players and targets on the map when they are manipulated so that the HQ player can readily assess location and proximity when editing task assignments. However, the observations also reveal some potential for improving support for human planning.

Returning to episode 4, the HQ player massively revises the plan. The modified plan turned out to be undesirable as it leads to 2 assignment cancellations and 2 player deaths (Episode 3.6). We observe that the planning agent is silent with regard to the problems in the player's proposed plan. As the planner has ruled out the risky plan at the first place, the reasoning behind the original plan may be important information that should have been exposed to HQ to inform their decisions. While making visible the planning agent's reasoning might have discouraged the player from changing the plan so dramatically, there will still surely be situations in which plans could or should be changed. And in this case the player is currently left to "do their best"; in short, the current system will make plans for a person to change or approve, but will not help that person to plan beyond ensuring that their plan is well-formed. If, rather, the planning agent were to simulate (and perhaps extend) the proposed modified plan then it could provide the HQ player with at least one view of the possible outworking of their plan.

In the current system the agent performs forward planning, i.e. it considers what field players might do in the future, not just in the current/next task assignments. However this information is also not made available to the HQ players. In episode 3.1 we also saw one of several examples of the HQ players also planning for future task assignments. However they had no way to record this or feed it into the system; they simply had to make a note or remember what they

were thinking when the current task was completed and they had the chance to check and intervene. For at least some situations it might offer benefits if the agent's future plans could also be viewed, and if the HQ players also had some way to support their own future thinking.

However, again we are considering attempting to visualise and interact with significantly more data and more complex data which is liable to further complicate the interface. For example, for the agent to share information of its reasoning behind a particular task assignment, it may need to present its prediction of the future game status and its assessment of current game status. It may well be problematic for HQ to digest this extra information in a time-constrained task environment. Various studies have identified the problem of information overload in the system interaction design in disaster management domain Carver and Turoff [2007], Turoff and Chumer [2004]. The problem occurs when information presented at a rate too fast for a person to process Hiltz and Turoff [1985], and it may lead to a list of human performance consequence Hiltz and Turoff [1985]:

1. Fail to respond to certain inputs,
2. Respond less accurately than they would otherwise,
3. Respond incorrectly,
4. Store inputs and then respond to them as time permitted,
5. Systematically ignore (i.e., filter) some features of the input,
6. Recode the inputs in a more compact or effective form, or quit (in extreme cases).

Various techniques have been explored to alleviate the problem of information overload in different application domains such as security monitoring Conti et al. [2006], teleoperation Kadous et al. [2006], and communication systems Hiltz and Turoff [1985]. However, the specific research of information overload for task allocation support

in DR domain is still rare. We think that the extra forward planning support may introduce the risk of overloading human operators. Therefore, more studies are required to evaluate the trade-off between its benefits and consequences for human performance.

## 8.6 LESSONS FROM INTERACTION DESIGN

Herein, we offer a brief summary of the lessons learnt that may benefit the designers of planning support systems, in particular, in relation to situation awareness, human error, and interacting with computational planning. These may be particularly relevant for settings in which timely human decision-making is critical. We furthermore also set our lessons into context with related work.

### 8.6.1 *Common ground*

Common ground is a critical requirement to making collaborative decisions in an effective and timely manner. Through our field trials, we identified the following features as constitutive to common ground through providing a mutual situation awareness for the participating parties (HQ, field responders, and the agent).

- **Shared representation.** The task interface enabled common ground between HQ players and the planning agent – the basis for enabling HQ players to read, modify, and confirm the agent’s task assignments. Shared representation was also critical to align field players and HQ view of the environment, e.g., through the messaging channel.
- **Awareness of current state.** Episodes evidenced HQ displayed awareness of task progress, threats, and field responders’ locations and proximity as critical in their planning.
- **Domain-specific task representation.** Providing a consistent representation that made use of domain-specific visual cues was an

important feature to enable alignment and consistency across views and between mobile (field) and stationary (HQ) representations.

- **Awareness of future actions.** HQ engaged with *proposed* tasks – reading proposals in conjunction with awareness of current state, modifying, and confirming was seen to be an essential aspect of the situated planning work.

Our recommendations also align with the theoretical framework model of situation awareness proposed by [Endsley \[2001\]](#), which argues the SA needs to be supported by three levels including 1) Perception of the elements in the environment 2) Comprehension of the current situation and 3) Projection of future status.

### 8.6.2 Supporting Mixed-Initiative Planning

Some interactional challenges have become evident in the field trial that can be attributed to the interaction with the computational agent.

- **Constraining task assignments** was seen as a clear advantage of the planning support in this setting, to guarantee only well-formed task assignments.
- **Making reasoning visible.** Modifications of plans as a result of which responders were sent in harm's way may have been avoided if the grounds upon which the agent computed task allocations had been available for inspection. The challenge is how to implement this without inundating the operator with information.
- **Feedback on modifications.** As further step to making visible, the agent could also provide feedback on human modifications of its task assignments, e.g., in terms of safety and risk.
- **Forward planning** of the agent could be made visible on demand to enable planning ahead.

Our recommendations echo seminal work on human considerations in context-aware systems, which provided principles to support intelligibility and accountability Bellotti and Edwards [2001]; similarly we stress that the goal for planning support systems should be to be accountable for their actions, therefore, ‘what they know, how they know it, and what they are doing about it’ [ibid., p. 201] needs to be legible by the operator. Furthermore, as planning is oriented towards the future, yet produced as a contingent, situated activity Suchman [1987], the interface needs to support revision and revoking of plans in situ, and furthermore provide the situational awareness essential to do so.

### 8.6.3 *Interactional trouble*

We have encountered the following interactional challenges that likely generalise more broadly to related settings.

- **Complacency** describes the phenomenon whereby occasional failures of automation may be difficult to detect Kaber and Endsley [1995]. Particularly, when the operator has learnt to trust the computational component. Mechanisms to counter may turn towards more human involvement in the planning, however, there will be a fine line so as not to create information overload.
- **Non-responsiveness** has been observed to create uncertain situations. It is important to realise this could equally be caused by technical communication outages, as well as by human non-response. Designers may attempt to incorporate this as ‘known unknowns’ in the system, for example planning could be done with an estimated *probability* of a positive response.

The wealth of computational approaches to the problem of ‘planning under uncertainty’ Chang et al. [2007] suggests uncertainty are is a key recurring problem, particularly in time critical settings. In this context, it may also be important to look towards interface design guidelines to complement computational approaches in order to avoid or minimise human error at the interface level Norman [2013].

## 8.7 PROFESSIONAL FEEDBACKS

The section will present the results of a workshop we conducted with a professional disaster response charity called Rescue Global (RG). The purpose of these workshop is to get professional feedbacks about the AtomicOrchid(AO) platform to understand realism of the disaster simulation based on AO. Based on the feedbacks, we reflects on strength, limitations and potential improvements of AO platform.

The workshop is centred on a demonstration of HAC-ER system for disaster response (DR) [Ramchurn et al. \[2015a\]](#). The AO is a component of the HACs demo system. Others components include information crowdsourcing, multi-UAV control interface for DR, and DR operation provenance store (Section [2.3.3](#)). Each component are allocated one session (about 45 mins). The AO session is structured as follows:

1. A presentation introducing the AO platform and HQ interface.
2. A handles-on session for RG members to operate the HQ interface. For the purpose of demo, the field players in AO are simulated.
3. A discussion of AO platform for Rescue Global to reflect on some themes including: Command and Control structure, Division of Labour/Task and team planning.

We also encourages free discussions throughout the AO session, which leads to some emerged themes including: Data connection, time-scale of planning in real DR operations and other interface improvement suggestions.

### 8.7.1 *The Rescue Global feedbacks*

Based the feedbacks from the RG, the AO setting mirrors some aspects of the RG's disaster operations. Firstly, the RG member quickly

recognise the task-team matching mechanism is very similar to the aspects of resource-needs matching in their operation. At the beginning of the introduction presentation of AO, one of the responder commented:

“This is actually very similar to what we do when we do reconnaissance now. We identify needs, and we are aware of what the resources that we have and match it into what resources we have and match the needs into resources.”

Further, the team formation mechanism can also be mapped to aspects of their operations by the RG members. The RG confirmed that members from different organisations and different skills often teamed together for tasks. However, the cross-organisation teaming activities are mostly done in an informal way, as one RG members described:

“What we did in Philippine is that , say we found school, and we talked to the MSF medics we have bumped into. They have medics, can run some clinics there. Then they need some security, they are comfortable with Simon and Bren (two path finder in RG), we can help them out, we did that, but almost informal way”

The statements of RG indicates that their collaboration with the MFS medic teams are based on informal relationship with them and the formal organisational collaboration is often missing. The RG also stressed that the paradigm of cross-organisation team formation in AO is desirable, but difficult to achieve in a formal way. They highlighted the major challenge for realising AO paradigm is organisational. As the one RG member stated:

"The challenge with that is that UN clustering system, make separation of different tasks, they then delegate the tasks down to say Health cluster, and UNISAF, all the way to little agencies, they won't work with anyone else, because they do not know them, they do not have relationship, so UN structure stops that... does not mean you can not change it, but current paradigm would not allow it "

Based on RG's feedback, we also identifies some unrealistic aspects of AO setting. Firstly, RG member expressed the concerns related to data connection. They highlighted that the activity in AO requires good connection between field and HQ, which is not always the case in the disaster situation. Given that, the RG member can still imagine a picture of AO being used in the situation with poor data connection. They suggested that the information in the field can be collected and input into the planning support system in a slow and manual way (e.g. through satellite phone call). In that situation, they still think planning support aspects of AO would be useful to them, though the pace of planning and information collection will be much slower and manual.

"say OK, there is not live link between HQ and field responder, could you have that, in the field people can start sending reports, which could be done like satllete phone, then HQ can load on to this (AO), come up with suggestions, because can not task directly to the field , there is another call, it puts in lots of gaps and pauses, but still be able to have the system giving suggestions based on manual input, which do not require broadband. "

In terms of Command and Control(CC) structure, RG frequently refer to the two frameworks of CC, Bronze, Silver, Gold model (Section 2.1.2) and National incident command framework ([Department for Communities and Local G \[2008\]](#)). The assumption of Command structure in AO seems to be detached from both NICF and BSG in that both NICF and BSG have several hierarchical command levels

(Bronze,Silver,Gold) and ways to sectorising units (geographical, functional). In the AO setting , both the command hierarchy and units sectorisation are missing. As stated by the At interface level, the information presented to each command level may need to be tailored to their specific paradigms (operational, tactical, strategic):

“For operation, we would like have interface with 2-3 levels of sophistication, that takes you into different paradigm. For example, you do not what simple transactional barrier for your section commander,... you do not section commander know that. Simple data (at the bronze level), enhanced data (at sliver level), at gold, stripping away all details. ”

For feedbacks, we also noticed that the time-scale of the RG's operation is much longer then the AO. As one RG member describe how tasks are allocated in a multi-agency operations:

“The amout of work we do here , is probably a month of work from what we saw in Philippine, like 15-20 job orders, and that take about a month.... The problem is how they are all disconnected, you got tightly coupled system with lots of moving part, with massive gap between each one, so say example, that cluster of systems, you have that in .... , that in ..., that in another, they then meet once a week, can be once a week and then get information, disaminate and give out jobs, it is just unbelievably slow.”

Although the time-scale of AO is unrealistic for RG time, they think the AO can be seen as a ideal, speed-up version of mulit-agency operation, because it automates lots of manual process in terms of information capturing and presentation and promote commonly recognised information picture across agencies:

“What is good about this, it is getting torwards automating and visually representing what we manually constructing, with posts, white borad and flip charts. It is not because what we are crap, it because everyone in the world

does that ... That is why commonly recognised information picture is so important, you essentially got, here is what happen, here is our resource, then you can make decision."

Apart from information capturing and presentation, the RG team also see the value of AO as a tool to balance the work between field and the HQ:

"I think it (AO) could be useful that you can use to help ppl in the field to gether information, file it back and forget it, which is really helpful, because otherwise what we have to do is we do the plan do the resource allocation in the field which is really time-consuming, if we say field get information and send it back, HQ receive and plan based on them."

The statement indicates that planning of resource allocation does happen in the field and it is desirable to transfer the workload to HQ. The statement also identifies AO as a (potential) tool to balance division of labour.

### *8.7.2 Conclusion and Reflection*

In the previous section, we have reflected on both realistic and unrealistic aspects of AO setting based on the feedbacks from RG workshop. The resource target mapping and teaming aspects of AO setting are found to be similar to activities in the DR operations, though the teaming in DR operations are likely to be conducted in an informal way. On the other hand, both time scale and command structure in the AO setting do not match what happens in the DR operations. The time scale of RG's operation is much longer than the AO. And Command and Control framework in DR has hierarchical levels and sectorisation for some levels, both of which are missing in the AO setting. Further, the assumption of good data connections in the field

are also fund unrealistic. However the RG team thought the core planning support aspects of AO would still be useful even when data connection is poor.

Although AO are not built as a tool to support real disaster operation (It is designed to be a simulation game), the RG team still found some aspects of AO demonstrates elements of future planning support system desirable to them. Firstly, the AO portrayed a picture of automated information capturing and visualisation which is appreciated by RG. Secondly, RG also appreciate that the division of labour facilitated by the AO setting, in which the HQ (with the planning agent) handles the task planning while the field responders just need to “gather information, file it back, and forget it”

Elsewhere in this discussion (Section 8.5) we have touched on several areas where more information might in principle be shared between the planning agent and the HQ players, such as agent priorities and reasoning, uncertainty and future plans. However these would almost certainly make the interfaces and visualisations more complex and increase the risk of information overload. However, if the system were operating at the kind of pace that Rescue Global use to characterise their own activities then there would fundamentally be a lot more time to work with than in the current version of the game. So a challenge for future work is to understand more about the interactional challenges of this kind of time-constrained but relatively slow paced situation.

## 8.8 SUMMARY

The objective of the research presented here was to explore the design issues surrounding an In-the-loop interaction pattern. The exploration is conducted through field trial of an AtomicOrchid(AO) probe with In-the-loop support, with particular focus in the planning activities in control room. The Game probe is evolved from the On-the-loop

version of AO that is trialled in study 2. To realise a Human In the loop interaction, the game probe allows Human HQ to approve, edit and cancel the agent generated plans.

Findings from interaction analysis of field observations, triangulated with log files, reveal how the In-the-loop interactions played out. Our observations indicate the human coordinator and automated planner agent can successfully work together in most cases. Supported by a task assignment interface, human coordinators take active responsibility in the system by inspecting and ‘correcting’ the agent proposed plans. However, occasional failures of planning are also observed due to a number of issues including 1) complacency 2) silent, missing or invisible information 3) and limited support for human planning. Several of these observations suggest additions to the information to be conveyed by the interface, but at the risk of information overload for the people in the HQ. In addition, a workshop with a professional DR team reveals strength and weakness of current AtomicOrchid simulation, and in particular the challenge to extend this work to more complex but slower paced situations.

Based on the findings, we also summarised a list of lessons for the In-the-loop interaction design. Firstly, the importance of common ground for human agent coordination is highlighted and we suggest that the common ground should be supported by domain-specific information models, appropriate visual representations of the models, and articulation of future actions. Secondly, several interface features are highlighted for supporting mixed reality interactions, including constrained task assignments, visible plan reasoning, feedback on task modifications and forward planning support. Third, our observations reveal several interactional troubles including complacency and non-responsiveness.

In addition, a workshop with professional organisation has been reported in this chapter. The feedback reveals strength and weakness of AO simulation. In more details, the resource target mapping and

teaming aspects of AO setting are found to be similar to activities in the DR operations. However, the time-scale, command control structure and the assumption of data connectivities does not match to current paradigm of DR operation. Although there are several unrealistic aspects of AO simulation, the responders still appreciate the core planning support aspects of AO system.

Part IV  
CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

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This chapter briefly summarises the approach of this thesis, and then goes on to sum up the key findings from the field works. Finally, the thesis concludes with limitations and an outlook on future work that this thesis might inspire.

### 9.1 SUMMARY OF APPROACH

This PhD work use Mixed reality game - AtomicOrchid as a testbed to probe the design implications for agent planning support system. Field trials were conducted for the three versions of AtomicOrchid game with different interaction design patterns. The first one is a non agent version of the game. The second and third studies are planned to probe two interaction design patterns (On-the-loop and In-the-loop). Video and system logs of the field trails has been collected and interaction analysis has been conducted to generate requirements and interaction design implications.

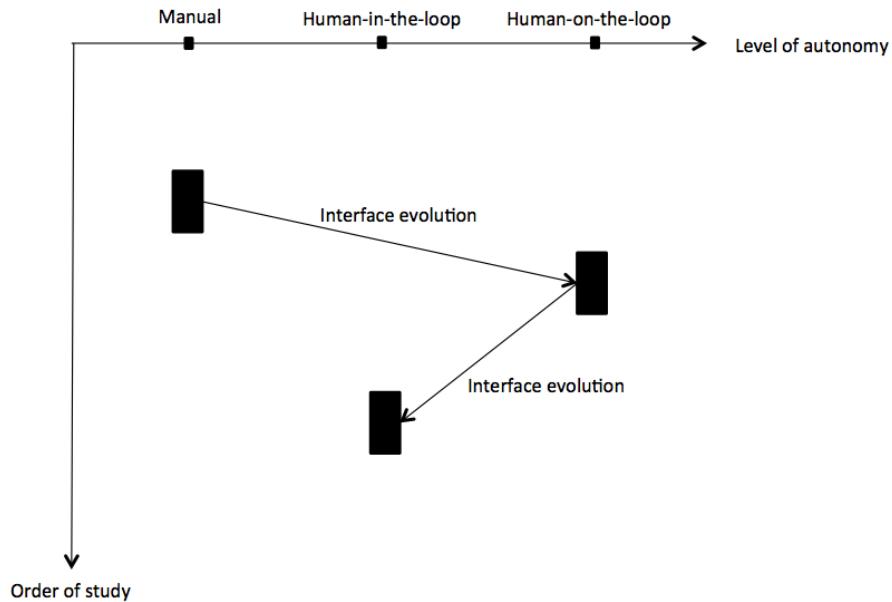


Figure 49: Interface evolutions

## 9.2 SUMMARY OF INTERFACE EVOLUTIONS

The section presents the interface evolutions of AtomicOrchid interface across three field studies and the design rationales behind it. The initial interface of AtomicOrchid (used in 1st study) is designed to display game status and provide broadcasting channel to support communication. In the first study, the control room is manned by 2-3 HQ players. Every HQ shares a same interface which shows game status on a map. A chat box is provided to send and receive broadcasting messages. The mobile interface is used by field responders. The responders share a same map with HQ, which displays game status with the exception of radioactive cloud. The messaging interface is placed in another tab.(see figure 50)

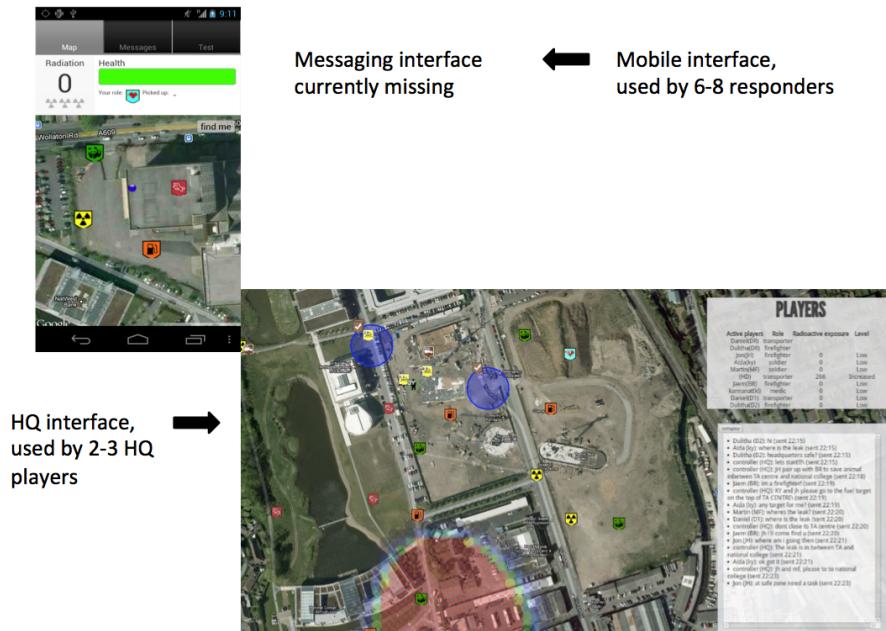


Figure 50: Interface of study 1

The 1st study discovered several flaws of the initial interface, which leads to a number of design requirements.

1. The interface should support quick acknowledgement and feedback in communication channel.
2. The interface should freshness of messages in communication channel.
3. The interface should provide support for geo-reference.

A set of changes in the 2ed version (used in study 2) of AtomimcOrchid are partly inspired by the requirements (see figure 51). In 2rd version, all targets are identified by unique task ids to support geo-referencing. Text messages in broadcasting channel are labelled by time stamp to flag potentially outdated information. With introduction of planning agent, the interface also supports quick feedback to the agent with one button press. To integrate agent planning support, a new tab ("task") is implemented in the mobile app to show a text-based description of agent task-assignment. In HQ interface, the agent assignments can be revealed on request of the HQ players (HQ clicking on "show task" button).

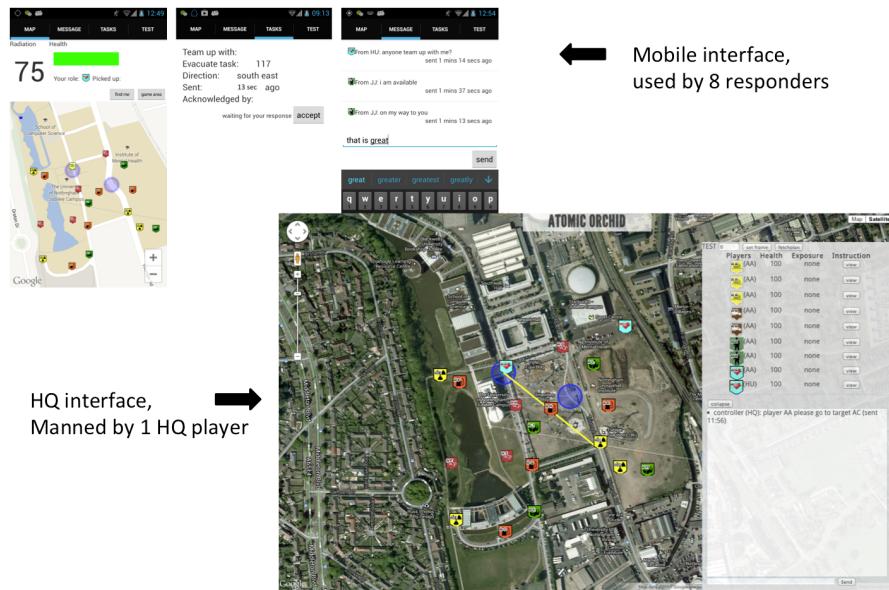


Figure 51: Interface of study 2

The result of the 2ed study revealed that interface level support for HQ intervention is missing in the 2ed version of AtomicOrchid. It is believed that the requirement for interface intervention support would also be important in the In-the-loop (the 3rd) study. Therefore, a task assignment (see figure 53) interface are introduced to enhance the HQ's ability to intervene the task planning. A task-specific communication channel is also introduced in the interface for players to avoid information overload in broadcasting channel. Compared to previous HQ interfaces, the operations on the task assignment interface is a lot more complicated. Therefore, one HQ player is dedicated to operate the interface and another player is provided with 2ed version of HQ interface by providing situational awareness and handling broadcasting messages.

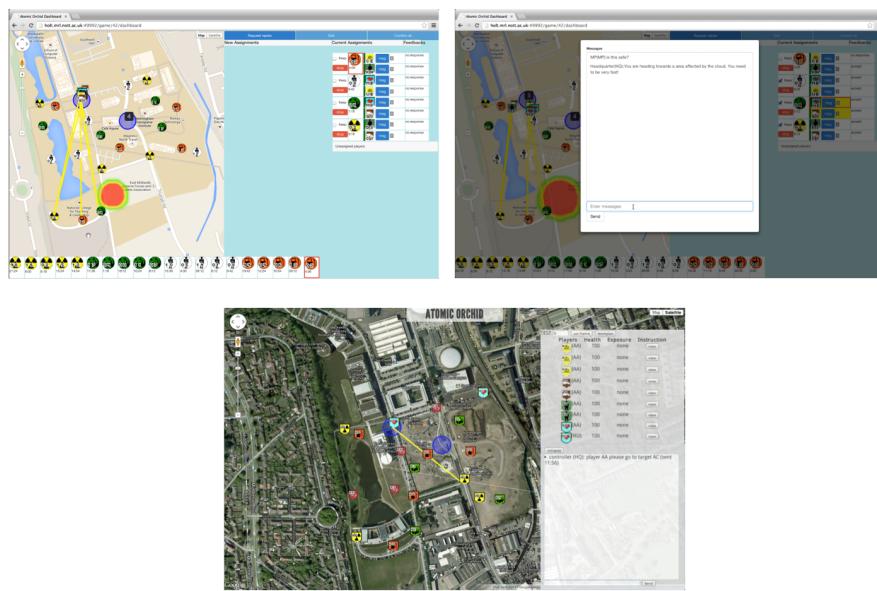


Figure 52: HQ Interface of study 3

For mobile interface, the tabs of “status” and “chat” kept unchanged from the version 2 (named “map” and “messages”). The task interface is enhanced by a map-based presentation of task assignment and the task-specific chat box is displayed below the assignment (see figure 53).

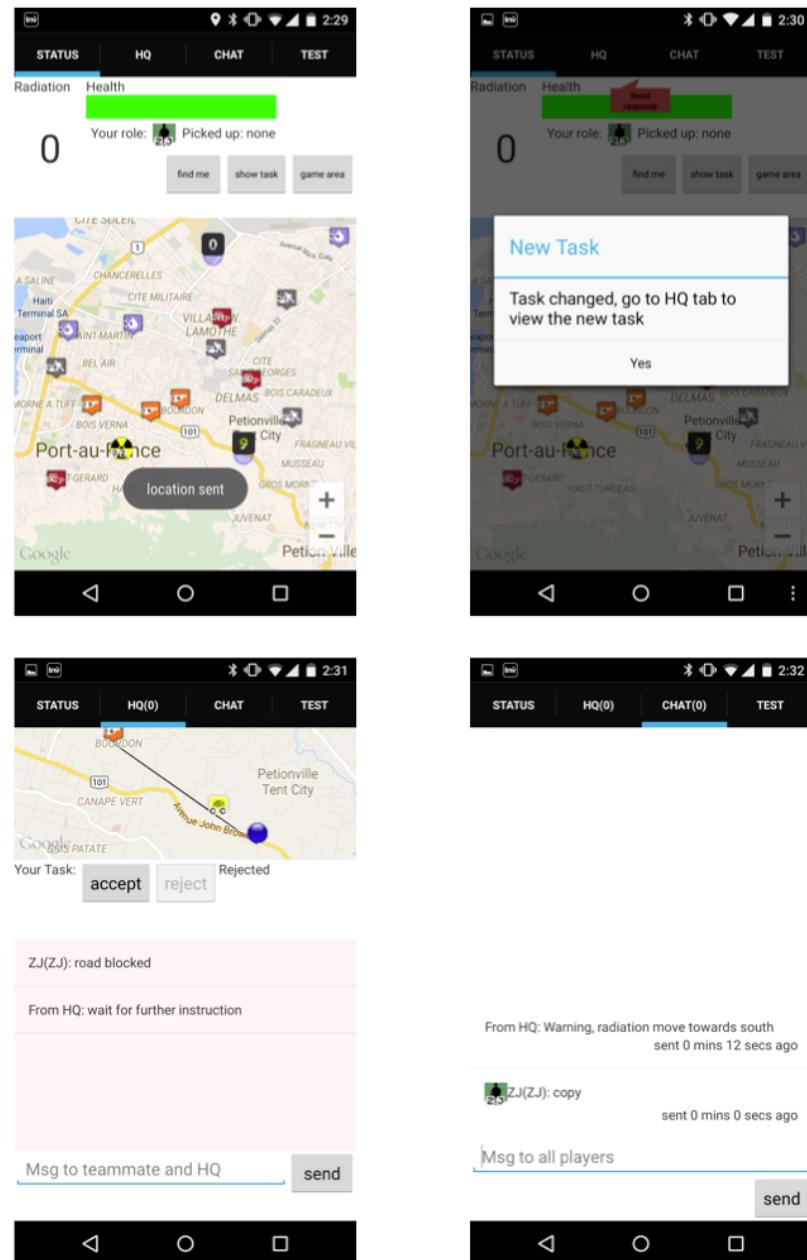


Figure 53: Mobile Interface of study 3

### 9.3 SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Three studies are carried out iteratively. The AtomicOrchid system evolves throughout the three studies. The interaction design for the study 2 and 3 follows the design patterns (On-the-loop and In-the-loop), but are also inspired by key observations from previous studies. The key observations leads to both interactional issues and detailed system requirements which inspires system evolution across the three

trials (see figure ??). The section 9.2 will give details about how the system evolves and the interface design rationales. The interactional issues emerged from field observations will be detailed in section 9.4. In what follows, the section will give a brief overview of the key observations from the three studies.

The non-agent AtomicOrchid trial (study 6) is aimed to give insight into how human conduct planning (without agent support) in the time and spatially constrained disaster settings and to generate general requirements of coordination support system which is also applicable to the next two agent-integrated version of AtomicOrchid. The result of interaction analysis showed the team planning is dominated by local coordination between field players with in an “ad-hoc” manner. The field teams managed organise their team and task allocations without conflicts. The HQ is found to successfully provide awareness of the “danger zone” to the field teams. However, they have little influence on the planning activities of the team. One potential reason could be the breakdown of communication between HQ and Field responders. The communication is thought to be affected by a set of factors including communication modalities (text vs voice), training level of players and HQ and system interface designs. A number of system requirements has also be introduced in the study 1 , which inspires system evolutions in the subsequent studies.

In study 2, a planning agent is integrated to the system with the Human On-the-loop interaction design. The general requirements from study 1 leads to a number of system improvements (see figure 9.2) in study 2, which help us to avoid non-agent related factors in field trials. Through interaction analysis, we gain insight into the division of labour between human and agent (see section 7.1) in which the agent takes over routine planning activities while the human focus on other issues such as finding teammates, targets and choosing the best routes. However, there are also evidence showing the agent planning occasionally interrupts workflow of human team because it fails to consider social cost of task changes. We also observed HQ player

struggled to influence the plan because the lack of interface level support. Further, a set of misconceptions in feedback loops (see section 7.5.3) are also observed.

In study 3, the system is evolved to facilitate In-the-loop interaction with the feedback from study 2. The main changes are a number of interface functionalities which enable HQ to approve, edit agent planning and monitor player feedbacks. Through observing the usage of this new functionalities in the control room, we found a new pattern division of labour between in which:

1. The HQ decide when to perform re-plan.
2. The HQ review every agent instruction for routine task planning.
3. The planning agent deals with player feedback.
4. The Agent propose task allocation

Field observation shows that task interruptions caused by the agent planning (observed in study 2) may have been reduced as a result of greater HQ involvement in the planning. Analysis of some failed cases of coordination also points out a number of issues, which highlights potential human performance consequences as a result of the greater HQ involvement in the planning. Some specific human errors are observed in HQ supervision. We found human HQ players sometimes quickly approve assignments without consideration of task interruptions caused by agent planning (section x). The HQ players also override (safer) agent plans to implement risky plans, which lead to player ‘death’. The errors indicates that stronger human involvement may come with undesirable performance consequence (e.g. complacency, uninformed decisions). Some of the observed undesirable human performance may arguably be a result of insufficient information sharing between human and agent. However, we also argue that the excessive information sharing may complicate interface and interactions between human and agent, which in turn, leads to information overload. Therefore, the trade-off may need to be carefully considered

for interaction design.

Additionally, a number of interactional issues are also identified which including lack of forward planning support, lack of acknowledges and ineffectiveness of task cancellations. Possible solutions and design implications are discussed in section x

#### 9.4 SUMMARY OF SOCIO-TECHNICAL ISSUES

There are a number of interactional issues emerged from the field observations of the three studies. This section will reflect on interactional issues related to 3 themes including Division of labour, common ground, and accountability.

##### 9.4.1 *Division of labour*

The On-the-loop and In-the-loop interaction designs have been trialled in two studies. The section will reflect on some of the findings related to the two interaction design patterns.

To recap, the main distinction between the two interaction design is the extent to which the human HQ is involved in routine task planning. The On-the-loop argues the minimal involvement of human HQ, leaving the agent to deal with the planning. HQ only need to deal with occasional contingencies. The In-the-loop requires constant HQ agent interaction to ensure the planning quality. Guided by these two patterns, detailed system design has been implemented.

There are several performance differences between the In-the-loop and On-the-loop studies. Direct comparison of performance between In-the-loop and On-the-loop is not applicable because the study 2 introduces a number of interface support (see figure 54) that influences team performance as well. However, the difference of performance

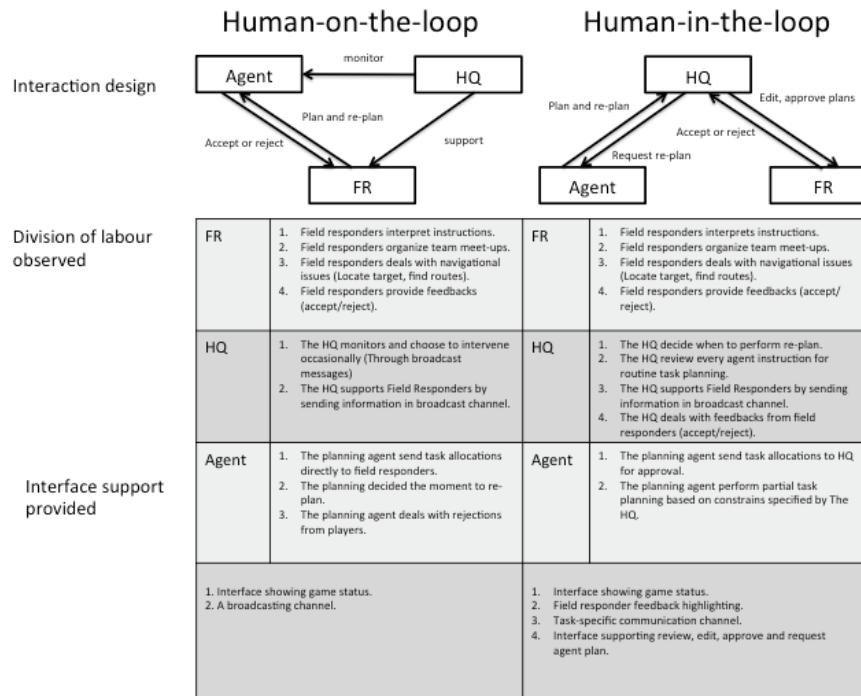


Figure 54: On-the-loop vs In-the-loop

can still lead to some implications of interaction design.

### 1. In-the-loop design as an option to reduce unnecessary task interruptions

As we have summarised in section 8.5.2, there is evidence showing that the HuOL design is more likely to cause extra re-teaming and task interruptions when compared to the In-the-loop design. In study 2, HQ has been observed to deliberately avoid unnecessary task interruptions and team reformations caused by agent planning. It can be argued that the difference is simply caused by lack of reliability of the agent. Advanced agent planner which can better model the social process involved in task changes and take into account the possible overhead. However, given the social process might be hard to be modelled, the In-the-loop design may be useful to overcome the agent's limitation and utilise its capability at the same time.

However, the In-the-loop design may also have its own cost. On one hand, it increases workload of HQ player because need to check each instruction proposed by agent. HQs sometimes failed to recognise task interruptions even with interface highlighting support, which suggest HQ can not help to eliminate all the unnecessary interruptions. Effectiveness of HQ may also depend on a balanced workload. In a multi-tasking control room environment, it is critical to balance the the workload HQ. Therefore, we need to carefully consider the trade-off between the increase of workload and the reduction of task-interruption

2. HQ's ability to intervene agent planning is required for both In-the-loop and On-the-loop design pattern.

Compared to In-the-loop study, the HQ players in On-the-loop study are found to struggle to intervene the planning process. This performance difference can not be directly linked to the distinction between In-the-loop and On-the-loop. In On-the-loop study, the only way for HQ to intervene the planning is to send unstructured text messages in broadcast channel. HQ's ability to intervene has been greatly enhanced by a set of interface support introduced in the In-the-loop study. Some of the interface support is inspired by the implications from On-the-loop study. It highlights the need of interface support for HQ intervention because both In-the-loop and On-the-loop requires HQ get involved when necessary.

3. Greater human involvement may introduce human mistakes.

Compared to On-the-loop, the In-the-loop design is more likely to introduce human mistakes as the design advocates greater human involvements. There is a case of human "death" occurred when field players were trying to follow a human generated plan in the In-the-loop trial. Although there are lots of factors contributing to the 'death' case (e.g. insufficient training for field play, communication breakdown), the task assignment is

thought to be too risky and not recommended by the agent at the first place. It is believed that the chance of human mistakes can be reduced by appropriate design interaction which help establishing the 'common ground' between human and agent. However, such a design would not be as easy task as it involves multiple design trade-offs (see section 9.4.2)[Need to expand in study section]

#### 4. Model of Accountability

To sum up, the reliability of agent could be one factor when considering interaction design[]. The improvement of reliability can reduce required human involvement, thus, allowing the HuOL design. However, in this PhD study, we assume human behaviour and disaster environment can be hard to be perfectly modelled. Therefore, In-the-loop design can be employed to overcome the (limited) reliability of the agent. Secondly, situational awareness of HQ can be important for both In-the-loop and On-the-loop design, though the study shows In-the-loop design help HQ to maintain situational awareness. Further, the interface support for HQ intervention has been proved to important in both In-the-loop and On-the-loop settings. Finally , a greater human involvement in planning (In-the-loop) are likely to introduce more human mistakes. The issue highlights the need for effective information sharing between human and agent, which help establishing the 'common ground' for coordination.

##### 9.4.2 *Establishing Common Ground*

Establishing a common ground between human and agent has emerged as a common topic in discussions of both study 2 and study 3. The section will summaries the implications on establishing "Common Ground" from the two agent studies. The "common ground" could be improved from 2 aspects: 1) Appropriate interaction design which enable human operators to understand and influence the agent. 2) tech-

nical advancement in terms of algorithm and modelling techniques which enable agents to model human behaviours and process human feedbacks (e.g. agent being able to consider social cost of team reformation). The latter concerns about technical aspect of agent design which is beyond the scope of this PhD work. Therefore, this section will focus on building "Common ground" from the the perspective of interaction design.

In both study 2 and 3, the agent behaves like a "black box" which gives the results (task allocation). The interface only exposes the results of agent for HQ to monitoring. Through our observations in chapter 7, 8, we find there could be some extra information shared between human and agent to improve planning.

The HQ players is found (section ??) to occasionally make some forward planning for field players. Because the forward planning is also performed by the agent to derive current plan, the information could be shared so that the HQ players can be provided with the agent suggestion when doing forward planning.

The reasoning behind current task allocation would also be useful for sharing. In chapter 8 , HQ is found overriding agent plans, which leads to undesirable results. The HQ is also found being confused when agent stop assigning tasks to players with low health. Exposing internal reasoning of the agent can help the HQ to make informed decisions.

Misunderstanding between agent and human is also observed in the feedback loop in study 7. Firstly, human respond do not know how agent is going to handle the rejection. The try to use rejection to reverse back to previous tasks, while the agent will give them more new instructions. Secondly, it is unknown to field responders that their rejection will cause replanning for the whole team which can lead to lots of costly task interruptions. Therefore, information indicating consequence of interface interactions should be also made

available to human to facilitate accountability and ensure informed decisions.

Although, we have identified a range of information which is missing for establishing "Common Ground", presenting the information could be also challenging. The information should be delivered in right form (e.g. text, visualisation, dialogs) and in right time (e.g. pop up or on HQ request?)[] Especially in the multi-tasking, time-critical settings like AtomicOrchid, multiple sources of information can compete for attention of the human operator. Information overload could be a real danger of interaction design in this setting. Therefore, the way for exposing agent's information and its human performance consequence may need to be further studied.

#### *9.4.3 Facilitating Accountability*

The observation shows that both the spatial divide and the planner agents can be the factors that affects natural accountability of member's activities.

In the 1st study, players heavily rely on local coordination for task planning. In a co-located setting, players can naturally make their actions observable and accountable to each other through conversations, body languages, gestures et al. In the distributed work setting, the spatial divide make accountability of member's activities opaque to each other. The technology support may need to play the role in supporting member's accountabilities. However, the reliance on local coordination indicates the lack of remote coordination support in the AtomicOrchid system. A set of functionalities including GPS/map sharing, broadcasting has been provided. We have observed players utilise the functionalities to make sense of other team members' actions (see section 6.4.3) and act accordingly. However, coordination with remote players is still overall problematic which can be evidenced by frustrations related to remote communication. There-

fore, we suggest remote coordination support should be built in a way that facilitate accountability across the distributed team, by making player's activities observable and reportable.

In the 2ed study, The issues of members' accountability are further complicated by the existence of agents. Individual player's interactions with the planner agent (reject/accept plans) have impact on the planning of the whole team. However, while the rules of social conduct ensured accountability of action among co-located teammates, we found the impact of rejections on remote players was not properly appreciated; nor did the interaction design support making these individual human-agent interactions accountable to the whole team. We believe the interaction design shall reveal the hidden cost of certain actions (e.g., rejections) to facilitate local decision making accountable to remote team members, ensuring consequences of local decisions for the welfare of all teams are understood.

## 9.5 LIMITATION

This section will outline some of the limitations of this PhD work.

By following a serious mixed reality game approach, the game AtomicOrchid is used to simulate some key factors of the distributed, time-critical task setting. The fictitious game scenario can not completely mirror the setting of disaster operations. Firstly, the time-scale of planing is match longer in a rescue and reconnaissance mission (from hours up to days), while the AtomicOrchid only have 30 mins time-scale. Secondly, the disaster response teams always priorities critical tasks according to code of conduct (e.g. task with human injuries will always be prioritised. see section of RG interview). Therefore, the game objective of maximising targets saved may not match real goal of DR team.

Further, the seriousness of the simulation can also be a limitation of game approach. Participants are frequently observed to laugh and make jokes about their health values (life), which indicates they take the trials as a recreational experience. Therefore, the participants maybe less concerned about risk and life threats, when compared to real disaster setting.

The untrained participants are recruited for the field trials. We anticipate that the behaviours of players in the game may change with their training experience. Further, the professional responders can also behave differently because they have high level of training, real experience of DR operations, different code of conduct and organisation structure.

Overall, the PhD work employed a game approach, which has a number limitations in terms of game scenario, participants' altitude, and participants' selection. We can not claim the observations of human behaviours would be exactly the same as what happens in the real disasters. However, we argue that the game-based approach managed to introduce some critical factors of DR operations, including time pressure, distributed team setting, and the mental/physical stress. Compared to computational simulation, the field trials can reveal rich human-system interactions under time and spatially constrained task environment. Therefore, we argue the observations from game trials are still valid and can be used to generate design implications for future HACs systems.

## 9.6 FUTURE WORK

Following the limitations and contributions of the thesis, its impact can be extended into future work in several possible ways. Firstly, the planning agent itself might be improved with various AI technologies. For example, the agent in this study does not consider the social cost of re-teaming and task interruption. Some user modelling technologies such as [] have potential to be used predict human be-

haviour, which in turn, helps to model the social cost of re-teaming and task interruption [ ] . However, when agent is enhanced by new AI technologies, it is unknown whether the new capabilities would hinder or improve team coordination and how the interaction design should be adapted to support the new capabilities. Therefore, one future direction of this PhD study is to incrementally enhance agent capabilities and conduct observational studies to gain insight into the implications of the new enhancement on the interaction design.

Secondly, the game can be re-engineered so that the game setting can be better grounded in the real practices of disaster operation team. In order to do that, the close collaboration with disaster response teams may be required. The collaboration with Global Rescue happened in the late stage of this this PhD work, which help us to identify some potential improvement of the game setting. Firstly, the targets are not always equally important. For example, humna injury will typically be prioritised. Considering different weighting on targets can make the game setting more realistic. Secondly, radio rather then text messages is the communication modality used by operation teams, which may have impact on our behaviour observations. Thirdly, the AtomicOrchid assume constant connectivity between HQ and field responders, but the disaster operations are often characterised by intermittent communication. Therefore, it would also be useful to simulate the intermittent communication in AtomicOrchid.

In a similar vein, the subjects of study might be changed to professional responders in order to better elucidate human behaviour in real disaster operation. As we believe that the trained professional responders may behave differently with the general public. It would be desirable to recruit professionals in the future work to validate the findings of this PhD study.

In terms of the methodology, more field trials might be conducted in order to carry out statistically robust quantitative analysis. If there

are more field trials, quantitative analysis can compliment the qualitative interaction analysis in some aspects. For example, the statistical difference in terms of games results (including players death, targets saved) can be used to imply effectiveness of interaction designs. Also the social cost and workload of HQ may also be quantified (?) to give insight into the impact of interaction designs on the team performance. (more?)

The studies have highlighted the trade-off between establishing common ground and information overload (see section x). It is believed that further studies may be needed to unpack how the trade-off affects team coordination and develop systematic approach for system designer to balance trade-off.

Moreover, the interaction designs are not limited to the On-the-loop and In-the-loop. Contribution of this PhD work can be extended by exploring some middle-ground designs. For example, the agent can be given the responsibility to decide when to perform a re-plan (as it is in the On-the-loop design), but also send the instructions to HQ for approval (as it is in the In-the-loop design).

It should also be noted that the centralised planning support is only one kind of agent planning support technology among many. For example, the planning support can also be decentralised. The planning agents can be built into personal assistant devices for every field responders. The change of agent technologies certainly have implications on interaction design. New interaction design pattern can be devised and adopted with the change of agent technologies. Therefore, this PhD work can potentially be extended with exploration of different agent technologies.

Further, this work contributes to the research paradigm of HACs system (see section x) by studying the interaction between one centralized planning agent and a disaster response team. However, the HACs researchers envision a scenario in which large amount of com-

putational entities (including both software agents and embodied agents such as rescue robots) and human teams collaborate at large scale. For future work, there is a potential to extend AtomicOrchid to incorporate multiple agents and human teams to study multi-agents and human interaction.

Part V

APPENDIX

# A

## APPENDIX TO ATOMICORCHID IMPLEMENTATION

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A.1 SYSTEM LOG FORMAT

A.2 AGENT-SERVER PROTOCOL

# B

## APPENDIX TO STUDY 1

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**B.1 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC**

**B.2 MESSAGE LOGS**

**B.3 GAME EVENT VISUALISATION**

**B.4 GAME AREA AND SET-UP**

# C

## APPENDIX TO STUDY 2

---

C.1 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC

C.2 MESSAGE LOGS

C.3 GAME EVENT VISUALISATION

C.4 GAME AREA AND SET-UP

# D

## APPENDIX TO STUDY 3

---

D.1 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC

D.2 MESSAGE LOGS

D.3 GAME EVENT VISUALISATION

D.4 GAME AREA AND SET-UP

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## DECLARATION

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Put your declaration here.

*Nottingham, August 2012*

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Wenchao Jiang