A Distributed Agency Methodology applied to Complex Social Systems
Towards a Multi-dimensional Model of the Religious Affiliation Preference

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Abstract: The purpose of the paper is to describe a work-in-progress in the application of a distributed agency and neuro-fuzzy system methodology to a multi-dimensional model on a complex social system. This work introduces a study case focuses on decision-making modelling system on religious affiliation preferences. We use a type-2 neuro-fuzzy approach to configure cognitive rules into agent in order to built a multi-agent model for social simulation.

1 INTRODUCTION

The social systems are complex entities that represent a whole that cannot be understood by looking at its parts independently. Another characteristic is the interdependence of the parts conforming the whole: a change to one of the components in the system may potentially affect all others (Yolles, 2006).

The main goal of this part of our research is to develop a computational model of change in religious affiliation preference that incorporates available mathematical and computational theories that have not been appropriately considered in models of complex social phenomena.

Even though applications of Multi-Agent Systems (MAS) have been developed for the social sciences, MAS have been widely considered in some areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Gilbert, 2007).

1.1 Distributed Agency

The modelling of a realistic social system cannot be achieved by resorting to only one particular type of architecture or methodology. The methodology of Distributed Agency (DA) represents a research avenue with promising generalized attributes, with potentially ground-breaking applications in engineering and in the social sciences—areas in which it minimizes the natural distances between physical and sociological systems.

The methodology of DA represents a general theory of collective behaviour and structure formation, which intends to redefine agency and reflect it in multiple layers of information and interaction, as opposed to the traditional approach in which agency is only reflected in individual, atomized and isolated agents (Suarez and Castanon-Puga, 2010).

1.1.1 Modelling Complex Social System using Neuro-fuzzy and Distributed Agencies

To build the model of change of religious affiliation will follow the distributed agency methodological steps (Márquez et al., 2011):

1. Determining the levels of agency and their implicit relationships.
2. Data mining.
3. Generating a rule-set.
4. Multi-Agent Modelling (Implementation on a agent based simulation tool).
5. Validating the model.
6. A simulation and optimization experiment.
7. Analysing the outputs.

Although the methodology covers the entire lifecycle of a research process, on this paper we are describing the data mining and generating rule set steps. We are focused on the neuro-fuzzy approach in order to set up a rule set into agents.

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1.1.2 Data Mining and Neuro-fuzzy System

An Interval Type-2 Fuzzy Neural Network (IT2FNN) are used for automatically generate the necessary rules. The phase of data mining using Interval Type-2 Fuzzy Logic Systems (IT2FLS) (Castillo et al., 2010; Castro et al., 2010) becomes complicated, as there are enough rules to determine which variables one should take into account. The search method of back-propagation and hybrid learning (BP+RLS) is more efficient in other methods, such as genetic algorithms (Rantala and Koivisto, 2002; Castro et al., 2008).

Since the IT2FNN method seems to produce more accurate models with fewer rules is widely used as a numerical method to minimize an objective function in a multidimensional space, find the approximate global optimal solution to a problem with N variables, which minimize the function varies smoothly (Stefanescu, 2007).

With the application of this grouping algorithm we obtain the rules, the agent receives input data from its environment and choose an action in an autonomous and flexible way to fulfill its function (Peng et al., 2008).

1.2 Religious Affiliation

When literature talks about of religious change, usually refers to the attachment or religion affiliation (Ortiz, 2006). Although some authors have argued that the concept can not be limited to this dimension, membership is one of the most important variables to study the religious phenomena (Fortuny, 1999).

The religious field is conformed by several dynamics systems. For example, we can identify some organizational entities: institutional, socio-demographic groups and individual.

Within these multiple dimensions interrelated complex processes are occurring, such changes of allegiance, change in commitment and participation, socialization and subjectivity of standards (through doctrines, values, practices), reformulation and affirming traditions. These multiple dimensions shape the religious field, and generically is known as religious change.

1.2.1 Religious Affiliation in México

In México, religious affiliation has undergone major changes since the 1950's until today. Based on population censuses, the growth rates of the evangelical population has been higher than the total Catholic population[1](Jaimes-Martínez, 2007). Baja California has one of the percentages of highest evangelical population of Northern states[2].

2 CASE OF STUDY

Tijuana is a border city located in north-western of México. Belongs to the state of Baja California, and is one of the fastest growing city in the country due to high migration rates. The population is mainly composed by migrants from southern of the country. They came to the border to further job opportunities, or looking to migrate to the United States, staying in the city long time.

2.1 Tijuana's Multi-cultural and Religious Complexity

Tijuana is an example of social and religious change. Its boundary condition has been one factor that has become a city in full development and expansion, not only by the strength of the Southern California economy, but by the early efforts to boost manufacturing by the federal government.

These factors, combined with growing internal and international migration, have transformed a town of Tijuana from a town with 12,181 inhabitants in 1930 to one with 1.2 million in 2000[3] (Alegría and Ordónez, 2002). It was so from NAFTA, Tijuana was consolidated as a major call centres maquiladora industry, with an evident increase in employment and production, but not productivity or living standards and welfare (Arias, 2008).

According to some authors, the economic balance, social and cultural development of these global processes, regional and local has had complex effects on Tijuana's society, where stands the reconfiguration of identities and new forms of social and cultural reproduction.

In this sense, the religious sphere in Tijuana has a great religious diversification as a result of different waves of migration that have shaped their society.

[1]The evangelical population has experienced rates of 8.90, between 1970 and 1980, while the total population was 3.16. Although at present growth rate 2.46 points, it is still higher than that of the population is Catholic and total population.

[2]Baja California has 7.90% and evangelical population, surpassed only by one of the first entities to which the Protestant missionaries arrived in the nineteenth century, Tamaulipas, to 8.65%. Nationally, the percentage of evangelicals is 5.20%.

[3]Tito Alegría and Gerardo Ordóñez consider the growth process of Tijuana covers from 1930 to 2000, thanks mainly to the economic expansion of Southern California.

Therefore, religious affiliation is also an indicator to study these processes of reconfiguration and realignment[4] (Jaimes-Martínez, 2007).

2.2 Preference for Religious Affiliation in Tijuana

The city has a great diversity of faiths and religious traditions. Although more numerous the Christian (Catholic, Protestant, evangelical non-biblical), there are Buddhists, Muslims, Jews and a variety of groups and beliefs generically known as New Age[5].

Considering this, we can say that every group or social stratum in Tijuana has a wide range of choice, or affinity, in the religious field in the city. Each of them is not only an expression of traditions, customs and religious practices of different groups have brought to Tijuana from their places of origin, but the dynamic formulation of these beliefs in the new environment.

3 MODELLING TIJUANA CITY

The principal difference between MAS and our proposed approach is that in our methodology the space includes transformations performed by a higher level of agency.

This upper-level agent is composed of lower-level subcomponents the may enjoy agency in their own right. It is the responsibility of this intermediate agent to present its subcomponents with individual phase-spaces that are tailored to induce the desired behaviour from the lower-level agents which inhabit it, when it chooses according to its own objective function.

Therefore, for our proposed work-in-progress case study, if we consider a municipality as an agent, this upper-level agent is composed by subcomponents, which in our case study of the city of Tijuana, Mexico, will be represented by a location set and Basic Geo-Statistic Area (AGEB in Spanish) set that compose this city. Locations is the terminology used to describe wide geographic areas of the city that are composed of AGEBs. AGEB is the terminology used to describe small geographic areas of the city that are composed of blocks.

[4] Between 1990 and 2000 Tijuana just recorded a growth rate of 8.94 evangelical population, while at the national level was 2.46.

[5] Syncretic movements oriental religions such as Buddhism, introducing ideas of self-motivation, personal growth, alternative medicine, psychology, etc.

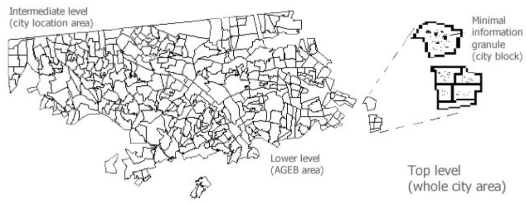

Figure 1: Levels of agents represented on the social system.

3.1 Levels of Agency

In this example we use three levels of agency: the upper-level agent is represented by the religion on the whole city, the intermediate level agents are represented by the locations and the lower level agents are the AGEB.

Using a recent census of the reunion sites distribution of the different religious organizations operating in the city, we know the exact places where they carry out activities of proselytizing. This information gives us hints of the influence of the presence of organizations in its environment and its impact on socio-demographic variables.

We are looking for relationships between demographic and economic factors (subtracted from AGEB) and distribution of meeting places of religious organizations. We believe that factors such as poverty, marginalization and other characteristics related to socio-demographic issues influencing the decision-making system of individuals in a complex and distributed way. Similarly, religious organizations act as agents who are influenced by other agencies distributed.

3.2 Data Sets

In the particular case of the city of Tijuana, the data set used came from the Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografia (INEGI), the Mexican governmental organization in charge of gathering data at a federal level including aspects that are geographical, socio-demographic and economical.

The data set of the city of Tijuana is divided into 363 areas, known as AGEB [6](INEGI, 2010).

The data sets for this case study were originally compiled in an information system that is intrinsically geographical. These systems helped in the generation, classification and formatting of the required data—a fact which facilitates the edition of the different thematic layers of information, in which one can

[6] The urban AGEB encompass a part or the totality of a community with a population of 2500 inhabitants or more in sets that generally are distributed in 25 to 50 blocks.

quantify the spatial structure to visualize and interpret the areas and different spatial patterns in Tijuana.

For this paper, we going to use de following variables to exemplify the proposed approach using information from 2010 population census in México (INEGI, 2010).

- P15YMAS = Population over 15 years old.
- P15YMSE = Population over 15 years old without education.
- GRAPROES = Education.
- PEA = Working population.
- PEINAC = Non working population.
- PCATOLICA = Catholic population.
- PNCATOLICA = Non catholic population.

3.3 Neuro-fuzzy Inference System

Using the neuro-fuzzy system for the automatic generation of rules, this phase of the data extraction from the data may become complicated, as the process needs to appropriately establish the number of sufficient norms and variables that the study needs to take into account.

Using this grouping algorithm, we obtain the appropriate rule-set assigned to each agent representing an location or a AGEB of it, the agent receives inputs from its geographical environment and in turn much choose an action in an autonomous and flexible fashion (Gilbert, 2007).

The purpose of this structure without central control is to garner agents that are created with the least amount of exogenous rules and to observe the behavior of the global system through the interactions of its existing interactions, such that the system, by itself, generates an intelligent behavior that is not necessarily planned in advance or defined within the agents themselves; in other words, creating a system with truly emergent behavior.

From the 2010 census information, we create a Type-2 Fuzzy Inference System as how we could represent different agencies as a decision-making system into agents.

3.3.1 City Level Type-2 Fuzzy Inference Systems

The figure 2 shows a type-2 fuzzy inference system for Tijuana city. It depicts a set of input-output variables and a rule set. Output variables are catholic and non-catholic as a response of the system. We could use the difference between both values to make decisions into an agent as a preference decision-making system.

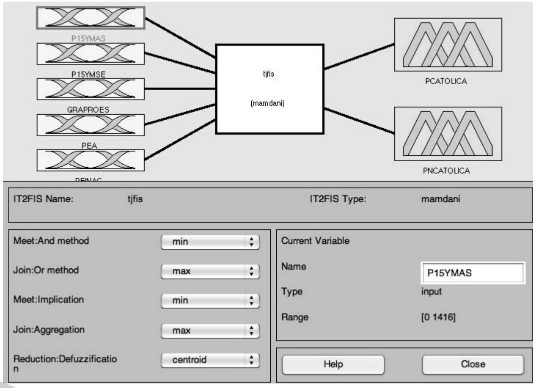

Figure 2: Fuzzy inference system for Tijuana City.

The figure 3 shows member function example for GRAPROES input variable. Type-2 fuzzy inference system allows us to introduce uncertainty into de system, that could be used to represent more dynamic changes into de Inference System because could be influenced by many real time ways.

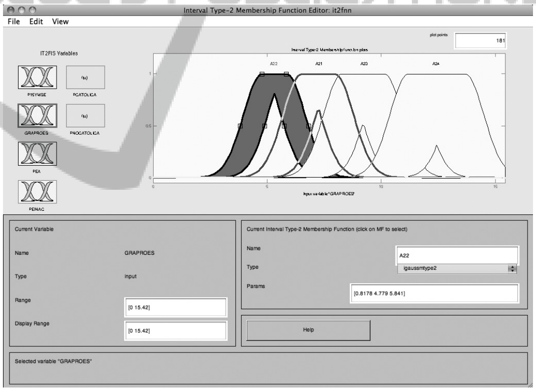

Figure 3: Fuzzy inference system input and output members function configuration for Tijuana City.

The Figure 4 depicts the resolution example of the rules by the fuzzy inference system. Different quantitative input values could be introduced and the system resolve creating different responses. Depending of the combination of inputs, we can expect different responses of the system. An agent will use this inference system as a decision-making system to show different behaviours depending of the situation.

The Figure 5 represents the response of the system to catholic preference, and the Figure 6 for non-catholic preference. We can see that there are response differences, so we can use it to make decisions.

Distributed agents do not necessarily define agents in lower-levels of description, but rather consider all levels of agency that are interconnected in a type of

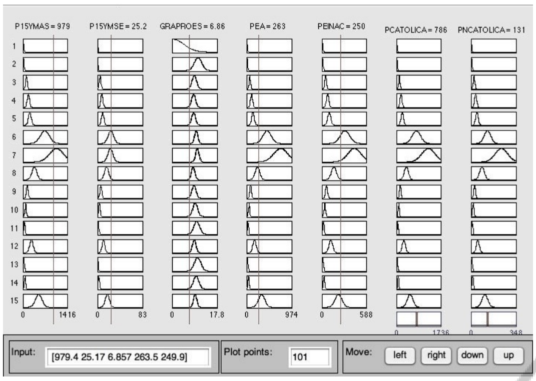

Figure 4: Fuzzy inference system rule set evaluation for Tijuana City.

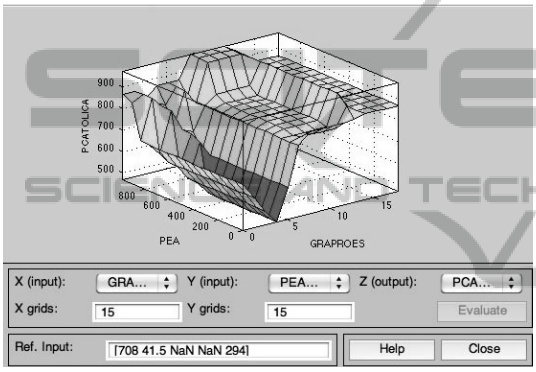

Figure 5: PEA vs. GRAPROES type-reduced surface view for Tijuana City PCATOLICA output.

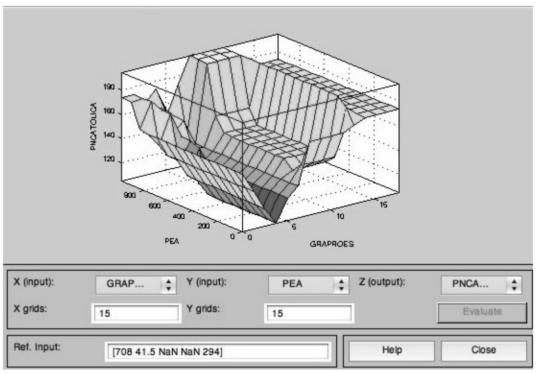

Figure 6: PEA vs. GRAPROES type-reduced surface view for Tijuana City PNCATOLICA output.

organism that spreads throughout the system.

3.3.2 Location Level Type-2 Fuzzy Inference Systems

On location layer, we can build fuzzy inference systems for agents that represents locations. Figure 7 and Figure 8 depicts the FIS response for different locations into the city. As we can see, there are differences between AGEB agents. At this level, we could be representing locations agents into a city context.

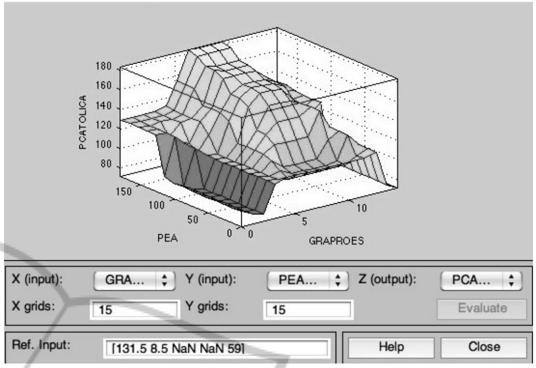

Figure 7: PEA vs. GRAPROES type-reduced surface view for location 187 PCATOLICA output.

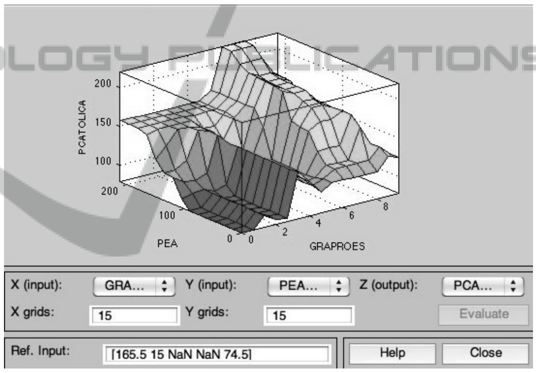

Figure 8: PEA vs. GRAPROES type-reduced surface view for location 283 PCATOLICA output.

3.3.3 AGEB Level Type-2 Fuzzy Inference Systems

On AGEB layer, we can build fuzzy inference systems for agents that represents locations. Figure 9 and Figure 10 depicts the FIS response for different AGEB into the same location. As we can see, there are differences between AGEB agents. At this level, we could be representing AGEB agents into a location context.

4 CONCLUSIONS

We use a distributed agency and neural-fuzzy system approach to develop a computational model of the decision-making system of agents in order to build a multi-agent system. We represent different levels of agency with different cognitive agents. Each agent in

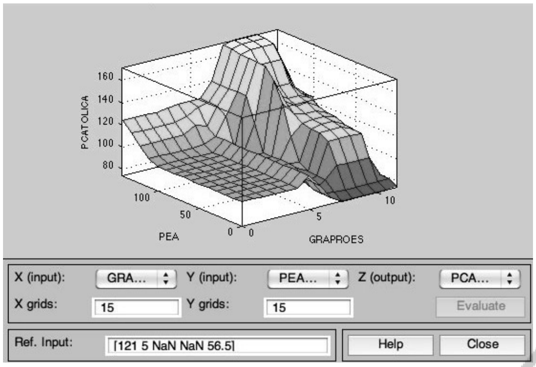

Figure 9: PEA vs. GRAPROES type-reduced surface view for AGEB 32 PCATOLICA output.

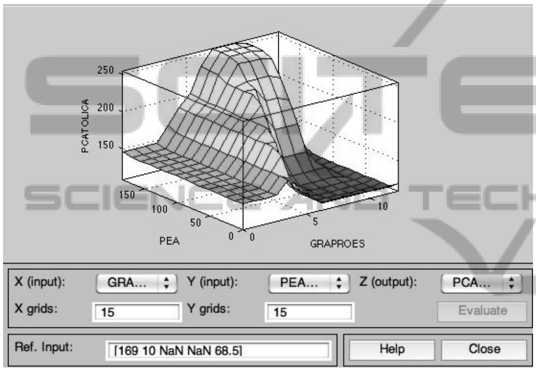

Figure 10: PEA vs. GRAPROES type-reduced surface view for AGEB 51 PCATOLICA output.

the system are a fuzzy cognitive agent that can choose religion options based on preferences.

We use the case study of the city of Tijuana, as it has an updated census of the distribution of meeting places of religious organizations in the city and their respective socio-demographic information.

The religious affiliation can be modelled with distributed agency. Establishing different layers of interaction between agents and analysing their influence on decision-making system of agents in each level, we can represent the complexity of the phenomenon of individual preference to a religious affiliation.

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