ETH
Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

Modeling and Simulating Social Systems with MATLAB

Lecture 11B – Scientific Presentations

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Chair of Sociology, in particular of

Modeling and Simulation

Basic principles

- The audience wants:
  - To learn something new from you.
  - To trust your authoritativeness.
- Your talk should be self-contained.
- Do not make the audience work too hard!
- Use redundant information channels coherently.
- The audience has limited attention.
  - You have it at the beginning. Use it wisely.
  - Humor or images recall attention (but don't distract!)

Effective, well-structured slides

- Every talk should have a **single concise premise**.
- Map out the story first. Point by point, slide by slide.

General structure of the talk

1. Start with a general motivation or story.
   - Connect to the specific context of this talk.
2. Introduction
   - Connect to past work in your field.
   - Explain what new insight you are adding.
3. Results
   - Approx. three main results is sufficient.
   - Time you spent presenting a result should not be proportional to time spent working on it!

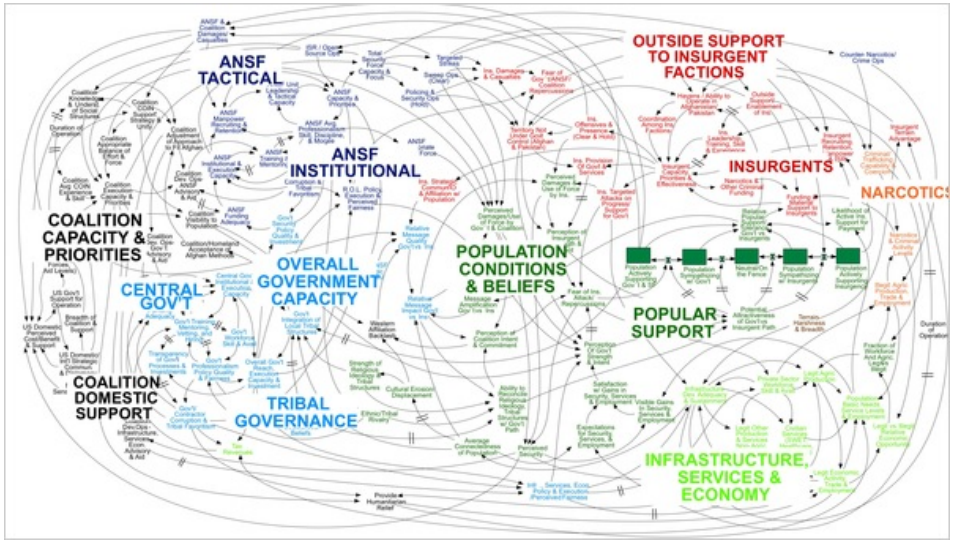
General structure of the talk

4. Conclusion
   - Recap main points made.
   - Emphasize the “take-home” message.
   - Echo of introduction as a conclusion can create closure.

Tell the audience what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them.

Crafting simple slides

- Use a slide to make one point and one point only.
- The title should capture the premise of the slide.
  - Full sentences in the title are easy to grasp.
- Slides must quickly convey information.



Source: NY Times and J.L. Dumont

General Mc Chrystal: "When we understand that slide, we'll have won the war."

Crafting simple slides

- Limit text – at most two lines per point.
  - The slides are not there to remind you of your points.
  - If the audience has to read or focus too hard on your slides they don't listen to you!
- Use animations instead of pointing.

Crafting simple slides

- Limit text – at most two lines per point.
  - The slides are not there to remind you of your points
  - If the audience has to read or focus too hard on your slides they don't listen to you!
- Use animations instead of pointing.
- Now that you have beautiful slides, **do not** just give the audience a "tour" of your slides!

Good delivery is critical

- Look at the audience. Take a confident pose.
- Practice, especially the introduction.
- Know your slides, anticipate.
- Use tone and volume:
  - Monotony makes the audience lose focus.
  - Lowering your volume can make the audience focus.

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- Use tone and volume:
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- Plan to use about two-thirds of the allotted time.
  - Slide count “x of Total” can help structure time.

Answering questions

- Focus on the content, not the tone!
- Repeat the question to yourself and take time to think.
- Repeat the question to audience and speaker.
  - More time to respond.
  - Clarify that you understood.
- Never take it personally.

References

- J.-L. Dumont.
  - "Trees, maps and theorems". *Principiae* (2009).
  - Effective slides: http://www.principiae.be/X0302.php
- Russey, Ebel, Bliefert. "How to Write a Successful Science Thesis". *Wiley* (2006).
- R. Murray. "How to Write a Thesis". *Open University Press* (2006)
- How to give a good talk: http://www.weizmann.ac.il/mcb/UriAlon/nurturing/