

Gamifying Causal Mapping: What Are the Benefits for Hybrid Settings?

A paper for OR63: Soft OR and Problem Structuring Methods stream

Causal Mapping has been established as a powerful Problem Structuring Method (PSM) that finds its roots in soft OR. One of its main application areas is in strategizing, using the Strategic Option Development and Analysis (SODA) method, which has seen a strong foothold in helping top management teams (TMT) build a shared understanding of the problems they face. With such an understanding, TMT has better chances of agreeing on priorities and successfully implementing solutions that tackle them. Achieving this understanding is an intricate social process built on the participants' ownership of the process and of the outcome. An element that is crucial to achieving the shared ownership and understanding is Procedural Justice. Face to face as well as online workshops supported with Group Support Systems (GSS), whether computerized or not, have been conducive to achieving procedural justice. Hybrid forums with a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings are a different story. They have become more common in the Covid era and face a challenge to achieve social justice due to the varying affordance of various media. A pilot study of the potential positive impact of Gamification on SODA has uncovered an understanding of participants about the difficulties resulting from having a hybrid model. We expect that Gamification, if implemented adequately, can help address these difficulties and hopefully derive additional benefits over the original SODA version in achieving procedural justice and beyond. The first phase of the empirical study is complete; this entailed a hybrid workshop and a series of interviews with the workshop participants. The second phase aimed at creating and testing the gamified approach will have progressed well by September, allowing us to report on it at the conference.