Algorithmic Decision Theory

Who wins the election?
Choosing from multiple opinions

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Introduction

1. Uninominal election
   Uninominal elections
   Two stage uninominal elections
   Sequential pairwise elections

2. Aggregating all voters' opinion
   CONDORCET's method
   BORDA's method
   Some theoretical results

3. Voting and Complexity
   Complexity of determining winner
   Complexity of manipulation
   Other types of manipulation

Voting may be complicated

Examples (Differences and similarities)

- **UK parliament member voting**: 650 single-seat constituencies, one representative elected in each constituency, one vote per voter, simple majority of votes for being elected.

- **French parliament member voting**: A single constituency for each seat. The candidate who obtains more than 50% of the votes is elected, otherwise there will be organized a second election stage with all candidates who obtained previously more than 12.5%. Eventually elected will be the candidate with majority of votes.

- **French presidential election**: Each voter may vote for one of the running candidates. If a candidate obtains more than 50%, the person is elected. Otherwise, a second election stage is organized with both candidates who obtained most of the votes in the first stage. In the second stage, the candidate with the majority of the votes is eventually elected.

Uninominal election: definition

Principle

We suppose that each voter **ranks** all potential candidates from the best to the worst, **without ties**, and communicates this ranking without cheating.

In an uninominal election each voter votes for his **best** ranked candidate.

Example

- Let a, b, and c be three candidates at an election.

- Suppose that a voter prefers a to b and b to c. We simply denote this information as abc.

- In this case, the voter will vote for candidate a.

Uninominal election: properties

Example (Majority dictatorship)

- Let $\{a, b, c, ..., , y, z\}$ be the set of 26 candidates for a 100 voters election. Suppose that:
    - 51 voters have preferences $abc...yz$, and
    - 49 voters have preferences $zbc...ya$.
- 51 voters will vote for a and 49 for z.

Comment

- *In all uninominal election systems, candidate a will be elected. Is a really a good candidate ?*
- *No: Nearly half of the voters see candidate a as their worst choice! Whereas candidate b could be an unanimous second best candidate !*
- *Simple majority allows dictatorship of majority and does not favor consensual solutions.*

Uninominal election: properties

Example (Not respecting the majority of voters)

The voting system in the UK is plurality voting: The election is uninominal and the result is determined by a simple majority of votes.

- Let $\{a, b, c\}$ be the set of candidates for a 21 voters election. Suppose that:
    - 10 voters have preferences abc,
    - 6 voters have preferences bca, and
    - 5 voters have preferences cba.
- a obtains 10, b 6 and c 5 votes.

Comment

- *Candidate a is elected.*
- *This result differs a lot from what a majority of voters wants !*
- *An absolute majority of voters (11 out of 21) prefers indeed b and c over a !*

Introduction
○○

Uninominal election
○○○
○●○○○○○○○
○○○

Aggregating all voters' opinion
○○
○○○○
○○○○
○○○○

Voting and Complexity
○
○○○
○○
○

Two stage uninominal elections

Example

- Same setting as before, but we suppose this time a two stage election as in France.
- After the first stage, a obtains 10, b 6 and c 5 votes.
- Hence, no absolute majority ($> 50\%$) and there will be a second stage without candidate c.
- Suppose the voters do not change their preferences.
- a obtains eventually 10, and b 11 votes.

Comment

- *Candidate b will win the election with 15 out of 21 votes.*
- *Neither a, nor c, are preferred to b by a majority of voters this time.*
- *Is this two stage voting system therefore always more satisfactory ?*

Two stage uninominal elections: properties

Example (Not-respecting the majority of voters)

- Let $\{a, b, c, d\}$ be the set of candidates for a 21 voters election. Suppose that:
    - 10 voters have preferences $bacd$,
    - 6 voters have preferences $cadb$, and
    - 5 voters have preferences $adbc$.
- At the first stage: b obtains 10, c 6 and a 5 votes.
- Their will be a second stage election with candidates $\{b, c\}$.
- This time b obtains 15, and c 6 votes.
- Candidate b is consequently elected.

Two stage uninominal elections: properties

Example (Not-respecting the majority of voters – continue)

- The previous result is clearly different from what a majority of voters prefer:
- Remind that:
  - 10 voters have preferences $bacd$,
  - 6 voters have preferences $cadb$, and
  - 5 voters have preferences $adbc$.
- Indeed, an absolute majority (11 out of 21) apparently prefers a and d over b !

Two stage uninominal elections: properties

Example (Manipulation in two-stage uninominal elections)

- Same setting as before, but we suppose that the 6 voters who have previously voted in favor of c are going to cheat, and vote instead for a, their second best choice.
- In this case, a obtains 11, and b 10 votes.

Comment

- *Thus, candidate a is elected with absolute majority right at the first stage.*
- *By cheating, these voters obtain a better result than if they were voting following their preferences.*
- *An election system which favors this kind of strategic (cheating) votings is called* manipulable.
- *This is not the only weakness of the French voting system.*

Two-stage uninominal elections: properties

Example (monotonicity violation in the two-stage voting system)

- Let $\{a, b, c\}$ be the set of candidates for a 17 voters election. Suppose that a pre-election survey reveals that:
  - 6 voters will have preferences abc,
  - 5 voters will have preferences cab,
  - 4 voters will have preferences bca, and
  - 2 voters will have preferences bac.
- After the first stage: a will obtain 6, b 6 and c 5 votes. There probably will be a second stage with running candidates $\{a, b\}$.
- This time, a will obtain 11, and b 6 votes; consequently a will be elected with a comfortable majority.

Violating monotonicity of apparent preferences

Example (Continue)

- Suppose that, following the survey, candidate a wants to increase his lead over b and strengthens his election campaign against b. Suppose that he succeeds in winning the two last voters for him (preferences bac become abc).
- After the first stage, it is now candidate b who is eliminated from the second stage.
- The 2nd stage opposes this time a and c and it will be candidate c who eventually wins this election.

Introduction	Uninominal election	Aggregating all voters' opinion	Voting and Complexity
○○	○○○	○○	○
	○○○○○○●○	○○○○	○○○
	○○○	○○○○	○○
		○○○○	○

Two-stage uninominal elections: properties

Example (Favoring strategic abstentions)

- Let $\{a, b, c\}$ be the set of candidates for a 11 voters election. Suppose that:
  - 4 voters have preferences abc,
  - 4 voters have preferences cba, and
  - 3 voters have preferences bca.

- There will be a second stage election opposing candidates $\{a, c\}$ and eventually c will be elected.

- As c is their worst candidates, 2 out of 4 voters from the first group decide not to go for voting in the first stage.

Exercise(s)

Show that this strategic abstention is profitable for these two voters.

Sequential pairwise elections: properties

Example (Influence of the agenda)

- Let $\{a, b, c\}$ be the set of candidates for a 3 voters election. Suppose that:
  - 1 voter has preferences abc,
  - 1 voter has preferences bca, and
  - 1 voter has preferences cab.

- The candidates will be considered two by two along the following agenda: a and b first, than c.

- In the first vote, a is opposed to b and wins the election (2 votes against 1).

- Then a is opposed to c and c eventually wins with 2 votes against 1.

Exercise(s)

What happens if the agenda is: a and c first ? What if b and c come first ?

Two-stage uninominal election: properties

Example (Manipulation by constituency configuration)

- Let $\{a, b, c\}$ be the set of candidates for a 26 voters election divided into two constituencies: the town (13) and the countryside (13). Suppose that the 13 voters in town have the following preferences:
  - 4 voters have preferences abc,
  - 3 voters have preferences bac,
  - 3 voters have preferences cab, and
  - 3 voters have preferences cba.

- Suppose that the 13 voters in the countryside show the following preferences:
  - 4 voters have preferences abc,
  - 3 voters have preferences cab,
  - 3 voters have preferences bca, and
  - 3 voters have preferences bac.

Exercise(s)

Show that, when joining the two constituencies into a single one, the election result will be different from the one obtained with the two constituencies.

Introduction	Uninominal election	Aggregating all voters' opinion	Voting and Complexity
○○	○○○	○○	○
	○○○○○○○○	○○○○	○○○
	○●○	○○○○	○○
		○○○○	○

Lack of neutrality in sequential elections

Comment

- *In this example, any candidate can be elected, it only depends on the agenda. A sequential election system always lacks neutrality of the candidates.*

- *Note that sequential voting is very frequent in parliaments, where the amendments to a bill are considered in a predefined sequence.*

- *The same happens often in administration and gouverning boards, which gives the presidents of these decision bodies an effective manipulation power.*

Introduction
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Uninominal election
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Aggregating all voters' opinion
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0000
0000

Voting and Complexity
0
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00
0

Sequential pairwise elections: properties

Example (Violation of unanimity)

- Let $\{a, b, c, d\}$ be the set of candidates for a 3 voters election. Suppose that:
  - 1 voter has preferences *badc*,
  - 1 voter has preferences *cbad*, and
  - 1 voter has preferences *adcb*.

- Consider the following agenda: *a* and *b* first, than *c*, and finally *d*.

- Candidate *a* is defeated by *b* in the first round. Candidate *c* wins then the second round, and *d* eventually wins the election.

- Notice that all voters unanimously prefer candidate *a* over *d* !?!.

Comment
This can evidently not happen with uninominal election systems whether two-stage or not.

Introduction
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Uninominal election
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Aggregating all voters' opinion
○●
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0000
0000

Voting and Complexity
0
000
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Finding the winner by aggregating marginal rankings

1. Each voter ranks again without ties the potential candidates from his best to his worst candidate and communicates without cheating this ranking.
2. The election result is computed by aggregating directly these marginal rankings into a global consensual one.

Comment
Two seminal aggregation methods, quite different in their spirit, have been proposed in the 18th century by two French scientists:

Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, marquis de CONDORCET *(17 Septembre 1743 – 28 March 1794) mathematician, philosopher and politologist.*

Jean-Charles Chevalier de BORDA *(4 May 1733 – 19 February 1799) marine engineer, mathematician, physicist and politologist.*

Introduction
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Uninominal election
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000

Aggregating all voters' opinion
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●000
0000
0000

Voting and Complexity
0
000
00
0

CONDORCET's method

Principle (CONDORCET 18th century)

- In 1785, CONDORCET suggests to compare pairwise all the potential candidates.

- Candidate *a* is preferred to candidate *b* when the number of voters who rank *a* before *b* is higher than the number of voters who ranks *b* before *a*.

- A candidate, who is thus preferred to all the others, wins the election and is called CONDORCET winner.

CONDORCET's method

Comment

- *The CONDORCET winner is always preferred by a majority of voters to all the other candidates.*
- *He always defeats all the other candidates in a sequential election.*
- *A CONDORCET winner is always unique (why ?).*

CONDORCET's method –continue

Example (The CONDORCET winner)

- Let $\{a, b, c, d, e, f, g, x, y\}$ be the set of candidates for a 101 voters election. Suppose that:
    - 19 voters have preferences *yabcdefgx*,
    - 21 voters have preferences *efgxyabcd*,
    - 10 voters have preferences *exyabcdfg*,
    - 10 voters have preferences *fxyabcdeg*,
    - 10 voters have preferences *gxyabcdef*, and
    - 31 voters have preferences *yabcdxefg*.
- Candidate x is here the CONDORCET winner.

Exercise(s)

Write a Python program for computing the CONDORCET winner when given the results of an n voters election with p candidates.

Weaknesses of CONDORCET's method

Comment

- *Let us compare the election results for candidates x and y by counting the voters who have ranked these candidates at rank $k = 1$ to 9.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
x	0	30	0	21	0	31	0	0	19
y	50	0	30	0	21	0	0	0	0

k

1. *Candidate y seams to be globally much better appreciated than the CONDORCET winner x !*
2. *There may not exist a CONDORCET winner !*

Exercise(s)

Find an example of election where there is no CONDORCET winner.

BORDA's method

Contemporary with CONDORCET, BORDA invented his nowadays famous scoring method for computing the winner of an election:

Principle (BORDA, 18th century)

In the marginal ordering of each voter, every candidate appears at a certain rank: 1 fort the first, 2 for second, etc.

The sum of marginal ranks obtained by each candidate is called its Borda score.

A candidate showing the smallest BORDA score wins the election and is called Borda winner.

Borda's method –continue

Comment

- *A Borda winner might not be unique. In this case all Borda winners are considered equally preferred.*
- *Borda's methods, besides determining the Borda winner(s), renders by the way a weak ranking –a ranking with possible ties– of the candidates.*

Exercise(s)

Write a Python program for computing the Borda winner and ranking the candidates when given the results of an n voters election with p candidates. See https://digraph3.readthedocs.io/en/latest/

Comparing Condorcet's with Borda's method

Example

- Let $\{a, b, c, d\}$ be the set of candidates for a 3 voters election. Suppose that:
    - 2 voters have preferences *bacd*, and
    - 1 voter has preferences *acdb*.
- The Borda score of a is $2 \times 2 + 1 \times 1 = 5$
- The Borda score of b est $2 \times 1 + 1 \times 4 = 6$
- The Borda score of c est $2 \times 3 + 1 \times 2 = 8$
- The Borda score of d est $2 \times 4 + 1 \times 3 = 11$

Comment

- Borda winner is a.
- Condorcet winner is b.

Comparing Condorcet's with Borda's method

Example (Independance of irrelevant alternatives (IIA))

- Let $\{a, b, c\}$ be the set of candidates for a 2 voters election. Suppose that:
    - 1 voter has preferences *acb*, and
    - 1 voter has preferences *bac*.
- The Borda winner is *a*.
- Consider now a different appreciation of candidate *c*:
    - 1 voter has preferences *abc*, and
    - 1 voter has preferences *bca*.
- Now, the Borda winner is *b*.

Comment

Condorcet's method, being pairwise, naturally verifies this property!

Some theoretical results

Definition (Useful properties of election systems)

- universality: The election system must be applicable to all possible voting outcomes.
- unanimity: If all voters rank candidate *a* before candidate *b* then *a* must also be ranked before *b* in the global consensus.
- transitivity: The global consensus gives a transitive ordering, possibly with ties.
- independence (IIA): – The difference in the global ranks of two candidates only depends on their respective marginal ranks.
- non-dictatorship: No voter may systematically impose his ordering as the global one.

Some theoretical results

Theorem (K. Arrow, 1963)

When the number of candidates is at least three, there is *no* *aggregation method of marginal rankings that can satisfy at the same time:* **universality, unanimity, transitivity, independence and non-dictatorship.**

Comment

- BORDA*'s method verifies: universality, unanimity,* *transitivity**, and non-dictatorship.*
- CONDORCET*'s method, verifies: universality, unanimity,* *independence**, and non-dictatorship.*

Some theoretical results

Theorem (Gibbard & Satterthwaite, 1973 et 1975)

When the number of candidates in an election is at least two, there is no marginal rankings aggregation method that can verify at the same time: universality, non-dictatorship, and *non-manipulability**.*

Comment

- *The French and British election systems verify universality and non-dictatorship.*
- *Therefore they are* *inevitably* *manipulable.*

Who wins the elections?

Exercise(s) (Computing CONDORCET and BORDA winner(s))

Suppose that four candidates $\{a, b, c, d\}$ run for a position and five voters show the following preferences:

     dabc

     bcda

     cdab

     dacb

     abdc

Who among the candidates is the CONDORCET, *respectively the* BORDA, *winner ?*

Introduction
○○

Uninominal election
○○○
○○○○○○○○
○○○

Aggregating all voters' opinion
○○
○○○○
○○○○
○○○○

Voting and Complexity
○
●○○
○○
○

Introduction
○○

Uninominal election
○○○
○○○○○○○○
○○○

Aggregating all voters' opinion
○○
○○○○
○○○○
○○○○

Voting and Complexity
○
○●○
○○
○

Complexity of determining winner

- How quickly can we determine the result under a certain voting rule?
  - n candidates; v voters.
  - Plurality: $O(n)$
  - CONDORCET and BORDA winners: $O(nv)$
- Even low order polynomials would be a problem in real elections: U.S. presidential elections with an $O(v^3)$ algorithm?
- Can it get worse ?

Complexity of determining winner – continue

- **Dodgson's (Lewis Caroll) rule**: The winner of an election is the candidate who requires the fewest preference switches (adjacent) to become the CONDORCET winner.
- **Theorem** (Bartholdi, Tovey, and Trick, BTT 1989):

  It is NP-hard to determine the winner of an election under Dodgson's Method.
- **Kemeny's Rule:** Find an ordering that is "closest" to the voters' preferences (so if a beats b by 3 votes, then it costs 3 to reverse this).

  Kemeny's rule is also NP-hard.

Introduction
○○

Uninominal election
○○○
○○○○○○○○
○○○

Aggregating all voters' opinion
○○
○○○○
○○○○
○○○○

Voting and Complexity
○
○○●
○○
○

Introduction
○○

Uninominal election
○○○
○○○○○○○○
○○○

Aggregating all voters' opinion
○○
○○○○
○○○○
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Voting and Complexity
○
○○○
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Complexity of determining winner – continue

- **Definition.** A voting system satisfies neutrality if it is symmetric in its treatment of the candidates.
- **Definition.** A voting system satisfies consistency if, when two disjoint sets of voters agree on a candidate c, the union of voters will also choose c.
- **Impracticality Theorem (BTT, 1989).**

  For any voting system that satisfies
  - (a) neutrality
  - (b) consistency
  - (c) CONDORCET winner

  it is NP-Hard to determine the winner.

Electing the Doge of Venice

1. Thirty members of the Great Council, chosen by lot, were reduced by lot to nine.
2. The nine chose forty and the forty were reduced by lot to twelve, who chose twenty-five.
3. The twenty-five were reduced by lot to nine and the nine elected forty-five.
4. Then the forty- five were once more reduced by lot to eleven.
5. And the eleven finally chose the forty-one,
6. who actually elected the doge.

Complexity of manipulation

- Can it ever be hard to manipulate?

  Yes

- **Definition.** The Copeland score of a candidate is the number of pairwise contests won minus the number lost.

- **Definition.** The Second order Copeland score of a candidate is the sum of the Copeland scores of each defeated candidate.

- **Theorem** (BTT 1989).

  It is NP-complete for a voter to determine how to manipulate an election under second order Copeland score.

- There are others.

  Single Transferable Vote –Instant Runoff Voting– is the most natural system (Bartholdi and Orlin).

Manipulation by Chairs

- Chairs of committees may have a number of powers:
- Changing the Candidates
  1. Adding Candidates
  2. Deleting Candidates
  3. Partitioning Candidates
- Changing the Voters
  1. Adding Voters
  2. Deleting Voters
  3. Partitioning Voters
- Many "*fairness conditions*" address the question of whether a voting rule is vulnerable to these sort of manipulations.