



New Style VOC Conference, May 25 2012 at Tilburg University

Call for Papers

Scope

The Dutch/Flemish Classification Society, VOC, aims at communicating scientific principles, methods, and applications of ordination and classification. The VOC is a member of the International Federation of Classification Societies.

The VOC would like to invite you to attend its first new style conference. Contributed papers can be submitted on topics such as classification, clustering, scaling, data analysis, machine learning, pattern recognition, statistical modeling, and applications of classification and data analysis.

Fee

PhD students are encouraged to actively participate; therefore, the conference fee is kept very low (10 euro for VOC members and students, 30 euro for non-members, lunch included)

Keynote

Emmanuel Lesaffre, Department of Biostatistics, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Leuven Biostatistics and Statistical Bioinformatics Centre

Important Dates / Deadlines

March 30: deadline for abstract submission
April 15: notification of acceptance of presentation
May 11: deadline for registration of non presenters

For more information, visit the conference website:
<http://www.tilburguniversity.edu/voc-conference>

On behalf of the organizers:
Ralph Rippe, Katrijn Van Deun, Michel van de Velden,
Jeroen Vermunt, Tom Wilderjans, Berrie Zielman
VOC website (for those who want to become a member): <http://www.voc.ac/>



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VOC-home page: <http://www.voc.ac>

FIRST NEW STYLE VOC CONFERENCE

MAY 25th TILBURG

with Emmanuel Lesaffre as keynote speaker and
3 paper sessions, closing off with a reception

VOC members meeting at 9h

<http://www.tilburguniversity.edu/voc-conference>

From the President

First of all, I wish you all a happy and fruitful 2012.

Till now, the VOC board has always organized an autumn and a spring meeting for its members. These meetings focused on a specific topic with presentations by experts invited by the organizers. Actually, organizing the meetings has always been one of the main tasks of the VOC board. It involved selecting a theme, inviting speakers, finding a conference location, etc.

It has never been a problem to find an interesting theme for our members or to attract good invited speakers. Nevertheless, attendance by VOC members has decreased enormously the last years. Because we were very much concerned about this problem, we planned a special board meeting to discuss this issue and to think about possible alternatives. Our conclusion was that it is time to modify both the formatting and the scheduling of our meetings in order to make them more attractive for our members, but also for non members.

The new format of the VOC meetings will be the one of a regular scientific conference. This implies that VOC members and non members are asked to submit their scientific work for presentation at the VOC conference. There will be different sessions with submitted contributions and a plenary session with a keynote speaker. Rather than having two meetings per year, we

In this issue:

From the president	1
Publications	2
Book review	4
Personalia	6
Meetings	6

will have one meeting per year. Of course, also non-presenters are very much welcome to participate.

The first new style conference will be held the 25th of May at Tilburg University. It will be a one day meeting. To broaden its scope, also non VOC members will explicitly be invited to participate by distributing the call for papers via as many channels as possible. If this new formula turns out to be successful, we would like to expand it to annual meetings of two days.

Another initiative taken by the VOC board was to make the VOC membership free for students. I would like to ask the ones of you who supervise PhD students, to stimulate them to become a member and to present their work at our new style conference.

I invite you all to submit your recent work for presentation at our first new style VOC conference. More details can be found in the call for papers appearing in this newsletter. The VOC board would like to see many of you at the 2012 VOC conference in Tilburg, either to present your own work or to inform yourself about the work of your VOC colleagues and the other presenters. We very much hope that our recent initiatives will increase the interest in our society in the near future.

Jeroen Vermunt

Publications

Almansa, J., Vermunt J. K., Forero, C. G., Vilagut, G., De Graaf, R., de Girolamo, G., & Alonso, J. (2011). Measurement and description of underlying dimensions of comorbid mental disorders using factor mixture models: results on the ESEMeD project. *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research*, 20, 116–133.

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Book review

Exploratory Analysis by Example Using R, Francois Husson, Sebastien Le, and Jerome Pages, Chapman & Hall/CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, 2011, ISBN 978-1439835807, <http://factominer.free.fr/book/>

According to the authors and the title, the book aims at undergraduate-skilled readers who have an applied interest in factor models and their visualization, without (too much) focus on their mathematical backgrounds. From my own point of view, having taught PCA and related methods to Research Master students the last few years, this description sounds very promising. It covers topics ranging from (linear) Principal Component Analysis, (Multiple) Correspondence Analysis and Hierarchical and K-Means Clustering, all of which are discussed through examples in R. Throughout the book,

the authors use the dedicated package **FactoMineR**. All examples are discussed both substantially and syntactically, and they interest readers from widely different backgrounds through data on French mortality, (Loire Valley) Wines, Olympic medals, food modification, juice, tea and city temperatures and a few others. Where the SPSS Categories manual on (M)CA is a "two-faced angel", with one set of chapters addressing the theoretical and statistical background of the models, and another set that solely addresses one or two applications of the techniques, the book under review exerts itself to mix these two throughout the chapters.

The first chapter on PCA builds the foundation as well as sets the mood for later chapters. The starting point is a well-known situation where a researcher gathered - or was provided with - a set of numeric variables. In the very beginning of the chapter we find an important remark addressing the exploratory nature of the book: assuming just linear relationships between the variables may seem restrictive, but in many situations it is sufficient for at least an initial indication of structure in the data. A short theoretical section in which the idea of low-dimensional projections is very adequately illustrated by depicting fruit through different 'camera positions' quickly builds to the first application of a very accessible subject: orange juices. The results are first discussed in terms of plot interpretation, to be followed almost immediately by a discussion and translation of the accompanying numerical results. However, it is not all fun and games. Working through the three lengthy examples and discussion, questions on the decision-making process arise, but are never answered to full extent. For example, some approaches to component selection are discussed, without 1) framing them in terms of common thresholds / rules-of-thumb and 2) - although not implemented in **FactoMineR** - without mentioning statistically sound alternatives. Nevertheless, the chapter is a clear display of knowledge, insight and a large amount of teaching experience; it is a well-built sequence of concepts and results.

The second chapter addresses CA and is constructed along the same lines as the one on PCA. It introduces the concept of (two-way) contingency tables as a categorical aggregate of the type of data used in the previous chapter. In terms of model and statistical properties like dimensionality and contributions to inertia we find a strong reference to PCA, with some small adaptations. When discussing the graphical representation the interpretation is again along the lines of PCA. Given the theoretical introduction of the concepts, it may have been more efficient to present the topic as a special case of PCA. However, doing so would complicate the next chapter on MCA.

This third chapter tries to finish a very tough task: to explain multiple correspondence analysis without going beyond a short statistical recipe. In this attempt, the authors again borrow heavily from the previous two chapters, but here, they do present a fair(er) amount of mathematical steps to introduce the matter. The approach

taken using indicator matrices resembles the line of reasoning seen in the Gifi book (Nonlinear Multivariate Analysis, 1990). However, where the later examples tended towards redundancy in the previous chapters, they serve maybe their best purpose here. Details on e.g. category weights that are not immediately clear from the not-too-well-versed reader are pointed out through a detailed discussion of a survey of perception on genetic modification and a version of the well-known card sorting task. After working through them, it is not hard for the reader still new to the topic to point out new situations in which MCA proves useful.

The book concludes with a chapter on clustering. Here, we re-enter the realm of distances between individuals and grouping them accordingly using hierarchical clustering and later direct clustering through K-means. Given the vast amount of theory and literature in this area of research the authors pull off an impressive feat by discussing a large number of easily confusable concepts in a very limited space. Relevant distance measures, a subset of two available linkage methods and two clustering methods are introduced in just over 30 pages, including examples. The discussion of linkage methods is rather limited, although the authors do suggest to always use Euclidean distances, unless otherwise required by the data. How this determination is made and what alternatives are available is not covered at all. However, if the explicit goal is exploratory and (clinical) classification, the discussion is adequate.

A few – perhaps deliberate – omissions in this text are mentions of related techniques and implementations, which gives the book more of an advertisement feel rather than an independent teaching text. For example, strongly related to the approach taken in the clustering chapter is Multidimensional Scaling (Gifi), in which subgroups of individuals are derived from their spatial representation of inter-individual distances, as opposed to (P/M)CA where the space of individuals is implicitly derived from relations between either variables or categories. Obviously, there are great similarities between PCA, clustering and MDS, but stating these explicitly in an instructional book would certainly add to its effect. Furthermore, a highly appropriate implementation of component models is BiplotGUI, which is 1) used solely through a very extensive graphical interface that contains controls, graphical and numerical output, which 2) are all independently exportable. The first property makes it useful to get students acquainted with the matter, while the latter also supports more advanced use. Another, slightly more fundamental, lack of information is a forward reference to the comprehensive, similarly structured, work on three-mode analysis (Kroonenberg, 2008), which can be seen as a large-scale extension of the models discussed in the current book to a third mode.

Finally, as was previously stated by others (a review of Gary Evans in the Journal of Statistical Software, april 2011), the book could strongly benefit from exercises, at both the level of interpretation as well

as computation. In a targeted area of teaching, this would add to students' autonomy.

To conclude, the book provides a substantial contribution to exploratory data analysis through its applied focus with pointers towards the mathematical backgrounds. It is written in such a way that lecturers can easily supplement it with recent advances from the literature. It is also nice to see that since the review of Evans the authors have worked on their materials, since the inaccessibility of one dataset as well as the software crash in MCA have been corrected. This kind of active maintenance adds to a solid foundation and a bright future for the book.

Ralph Rippe
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Leiden

Personalia

Tom Snijders (University of Oxford) received at december 16th 2011 a honorary doctorate from the Université Paris-Dauphine.

In deep sorrow, we inform you that Chad Gundy and Jan Engel, two prominent and loyal members of our society, passed away.

Meetings

The Center for Quantitative Methods of the Biostatistics Department of the Erasmus Medical Center (Rotterdam) invites you to their spring symposium at March 9, 2012. The topic of the symposium concerns variable selection. More information can be found at <http://www.erasmusmc.nl/biostatistiek/Symposium/FutureSymposia/Symposium2012/>

This year, the annual *Onderwijs Research Dagen (ORD)* will take place at Wageningen University from June 20 till 22. The central theme of the ORD will be ecological learning. Keynote speakers include Wolff-Michael Roth (University of Victoria, Canada), Arjen Wals (Wageningen University), Sigrid Blömeke (Humboldt-Universität, Berlin), and Gert Biesta (University of Stirling, UK). More information is available at www.ord2012.nl

From May 17 till 19, the conference on methods and models for latent variables (MMLV2012) will be organized at the University of Naples Federico II. The main topic of the conference is latent structure analysis with particular reference to new proposals in statistical methods and models. Invited speakers include Gilles

Celeux (University of Paris-Sud, France), Narayanaswamy Balakrishnan (McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada), Jiahua Chen (University of Columbia, Vancouver, Canada), Elvezio Ronchetti (University of Geneva, Switzerland), and Yuedong Wang (University of California, Santa Barbara, USA). The conference is the final meeting of the PRIN 2008 project jointly organized by the Universities of Bologna, Florence, Naples Federico II, and Padua. For all information, please go to <http://www2.stat.unibo.it/MMLV/default.asp>

The Interuniversity Graduate School of Psychometrics and Sociometrics (IOPS) offers the following courses:

‘what is psychometrics’ (March 7-9, Leiden) and survey-design (April 12-13, Leiden). More information at <http://www.iops.nl/category/agenda>

The next meeting of the working group Structural Equation Modeling will take place on March 22-23 in Amsterdam. More information at <http://www.iops.nl/category/agenda> and <http://www.vvs-or.nl/>

The 2012 Classification Society Annual Meeting is being planned for June 14-16, 2012, at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh. More information at <http://cs2012.stat.cmu.edu/>