SODA+TuCSoN
Situated Process Engineering for Integrating Processes from Methodologies to Infrastructures

Ambra Molesini   Elena Nardini   Enrico Denti   Andrea Omicini

Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna
{ambra.molesini, elena.nardini, enrico.denti, andrea.omicini}@unibo.it

AOSE TFG Meeting
Bath, UK, December 17th, 2008
1 Foreword

2 Background
   ● SODA
   ● TuCSoN

3 Integration

4 Conclusions and Future Works

5 Bibliography
Scenario

- The creation of a single universally-applicable development process is a recognised chimera
  - Software designers tend to define their own problem-specific process by means of the Method engineering technique
  - New process can be created starting from existing process parts (method fragments)
- A unified meta-model and a specific AO Method Engineering technique are needed, allowing existing methodologies/processes to be represented and integrated in a uniform way
- The Software Process Engineering Metamodel (SPEM) 2.0 [Object Management Group, 2008] and the Agent-Oriented Situational Method Engineering [Cossentino et al., 2008] seem to be the natural candidates
Objectives

→ Understanding the semantics of the infrastructures’ processes
→ Exploring SPEM 2.0 applicability to the AOSE methodologies and infrastructures
→ Exploring the applicability of Agent-Oriented Situational Method Engineering for composing methodologies and infrastructures
→ A simple case study:
  ▶ methodology: SODA
  ▶ infrastructure: TuCSoN
AOSE Methodologies & MAS Infrastructures: The Gap

**AOSE methodologies: top-down evolution**

- Most AOSE methodologies have mostly followed a **top-down evolution path**, where abstractions and metaphors (models and structures) from human organisations have been used to analyse, model and design software systems.
- This is the case of methodologies like Gaia, Tropos, PASSI and SODA.
AOSE Methodologies & MAS Infrastructures: The Gap

AOSE methodologies: top-down evolution
- Most AOSE methodologies have mostly followed a top-down evolution path, where abstractions and metaphors (models and structures) from human organisations have been used to analyse, model and design software systems.
- This is the case of methodologies like Gaia, Tropos, PASSI and SODA.

MAS infrastructure: bottom-up evolution
- Many MAS infrastructures have mostly followed a bottom-up evolution path, evolving out of necessity from existing programming languages and development environments, “stretching” the agent paradigm on top of more traditional paradigms and technologies.
- Despite JADE, TuCSoN, TOTA, among the many others, introduce specific agent-oriented abstractions, yet, the imprint of the object-oriented paradigm is still visible—for instance, in agents taking the form of Java threads.
Previous works

- [Cabri et al., 2008] and [Molesini et al., 2008] explore a mapping between methodologies’ meta-models and infrastructures’ meta-models.

- Such investigations have paved the way towards a more precise mapping between the concepts supported by methodologies and infrastructures leading to the definition of infrastructures’ meta-models.

- However, this is still not enough for a software development process aimed at covering all the stages of the software lifecycle.

- In fact, this approach provides only guidelines on abstractions’ mapping...

- ...but says nothing about the process resulting from such an integration and how to use it.
Infrastructures’ Process

• The presence of a specific infrastructure clearly affects the engineering process [Molesini et al., 2009]
  → There would be no need to design a function if it is already provided by the services/functionalities of the selected infrastructure

• The methodologies processes could be influenced by the adoption of an infrastructure instead of another

• Infrastructures represent a key piece of the software development process
  → Infrastructures do have a process behind them
    ▶ it is usually ‘silent’ and unspecified

→ To define a complete software development process, we believe that such an infrastructure process needs to come ‘out of the water’, so as to be first explicitly detailed, and then clearly integrated with the methodologies’ process
We mean to re-use

- Agent-Oriented Situational Method Engineering (AO-SME) technique [Cossentino et al., 2008, Cossentino et al., 2007]
- Software Process Engineering Meta-model (SPEM) [Object Management Group, 2008]

For integrating methodologies and infrastructures

→ We consider methodology and infrastructure as two fragments to be integrated in order to obtain a new software process
→ We use the integration between SODA and TuCSoN as a case study
Outline

1. Foreword

2. Background
   • SODA
   • TuCSoN

3. Integration

4. Conclusions and Future Works

5. Bibliography
The SODA meta-model
The SODA Process

Requirements Analysis

Analysis

Is the problem well specified?

Layering

yes

no

Architectural Design

Is the system well specified?

yes

no

Detailed Design

Are there problems in the system?

no

yes
Layering in SODA as a Capability Pattern

Diagram:
- New layer? (yes/no)
  - Yes: Increases detail
  - No: Increases abstraction
    - Select Layer
      - In-zoom
      - Out-zoom
      - Projection
Detailed Design Process

- Carving
- Mapping
- Agent design
- Environment design
- Workspace design
- Interactions design

Is the system well specified?

- Yes
- No

Molesini/Nardini/Denti/Omicini (UniBo)
Outline

1. Foreword

2. Background
   - SODA
   - TuCSoN

3. Integration

4. Conclusions and Future Works

5. Bibliography
Events can be both internally generated and perceived from the tuple centre.
Organisation Definition Process

1. Society Class Definition
2. Society Instance Definition
3. Topology Definition
4. Agent Behaviour Definition
5. TC Behaviour Definition
6. Organisation Test Definition
7. New Iteration?
   - Yes
   - No
Our approach is based on the composition process approach by Cossentino et al. [Cossentino et al., 2008]

- **process analysis** → kind of process & a set of MAS Meta-model elements (MMMEs)
- **process design** → method fragments selection and assembly
- **process deployment** → process instantiation
Analysis outcome

- Since both SODA process and TuCSoN process are iterative and incremental
  - SODA+TuCSoN will be iterative and incremental
- MMMEs mapping:
Key questions

- The integration between a methodology process and an infrastructure process raises a new peculiar problem:
  - the impact of the infrastructure process onto the software engineering process

- So, a process designer should be prepared to answer several key questions before facing the process integration:
  - Where does the infrastructure process intervene?
  - Does the integration change the methodology or infrastructure – and if so, how – and the format of their Workproducts?
  - ...
The SODA+TuCSoN integrated process

- The TuCSoN process can be naturally located at the end of the SODA process
  - SODA is neutral with respect to the implementation technologies
  - The MMMEs involved in the assembly are just either SODA abstractions that belong to the Design phase, or TuCSoN abstractions belonging to the Organisation Definition phase
  - Since neither SODA nor TuCSoN make any assumption on the nature of agents, TuCSoN does not influence the SODA process in its early stages, nor does SODA influence the TuCSoN process’ late stages
- SODA does not change its nature in the integration
  - SODA Workproducts could change
The SODA+TuCSoN integrated process

SODA

Requirements Analysis

Analysis

The problem is well specified

No

Layering

Yes

Architectural Design

Is the system well designed?

No

Organisation Design

Is the Organisation designed well?

No

TuCSoN

New Iteration?

No

Organisation Test

Yes

Organisation Implementation
Organisation Design Process

- Carving
- Mapping
- Agent design
- Environment design
- Workspace design
- Interactions design
- Society Class Definition
- Society Instance Definition
- TC Behaviour Definition
- Topology Definition
- Agent Behaviour Definition
- Organisation Test Definition

Is the system well designed?

- yes
- no
Organisation Design Process

Is the system well designed?

yes

no

Carving

Mapping

Agent design

Environment design

Workspace design

Interactions design

Agent Behaviour Definition

TC Behaviour Definition

Topology Definition

Society Class Definition

Society Instance Definition

Organisation Test Definition
Conclusions

- Since this research is still in its early stage, we are well aware that our current approach opens many questions, which are only partially addressed
  - the role and the impact of the MAS infrastructures in the software engineering process
  - the meaning of a process of an infrastructure

Future works

- a generalisation of our study about of the methodologies and infrastructure integration
- the improvement of the description of the TuCSoN process
- a better understanding of the adequacy of the SME technique and of the prioritisation algorithm to evaluate whether they could cover “as they are” also the integration among methodologies and infrastructures fragments that present the new issues highlighted or they need some extension
- we also plan to make the same experiments with other methodologies and infrastructures
Bibliography I


A MAS metamodel-driven approach to process composition.
In Luck, M. and Gómez-Sanz, J., editors, 9th International Workshop on Agent Oriented Software Engineering (AOSE’08), AAMAS 2009, Estoril, Portugal.

From AO methodologies to MAS infrastructures: The SODA case study.
8th International Workshop (ESAW’07), 22–24 October 2007, Athens, Greece.

SODA+TuCSon
Situated Process Engineering for Integrating Processes from Methodologies to Infrastructures

Ambra Molesini      Elena Nardini      Enrico Denti      Andrea Omicini

Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna
{ambra.molesini, elena.nardini, enrico.denti, andrea.omicini}@unibo.it

AOSE TFG Meeting
Bath, UK, December 17th, 2008