VisuaLyzer software: for visualising and analysing networks

Description

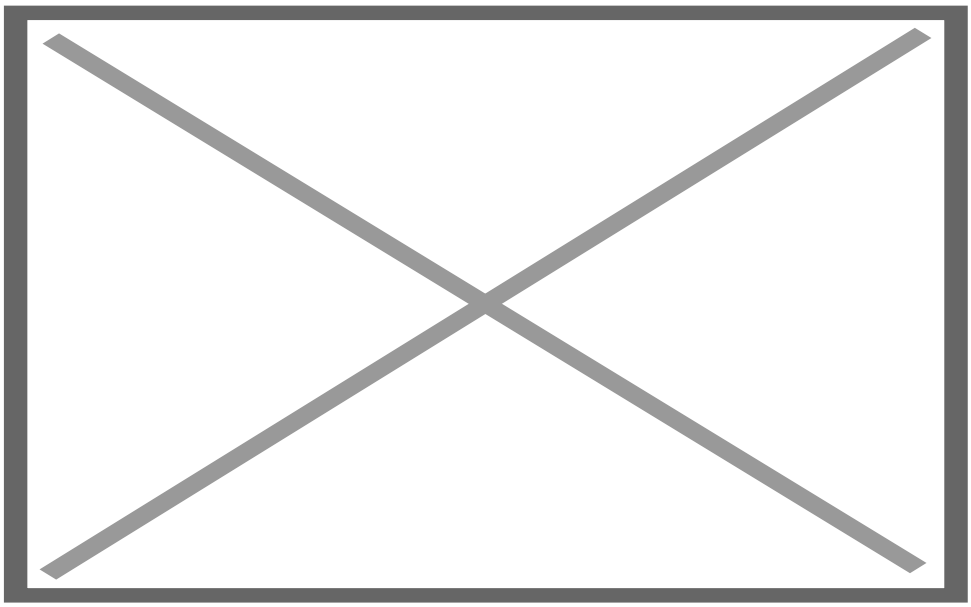
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There are now many different software packages available that can be used to visually represent networks, and to generate many different statistical measures of their structure. Unfortunately many of these involve a steep learning curve, and involve far more bells and whistles than I need. VisuaLyzer is my favourite software package because it is very user friendly, and easy to use.

VisuaLyzer is produced by mdlogix, USA. You can download a trial version or buy a copy from this part of their website. For more information contact Allen Tien <allen@mdlogix.com> at mdlogix. If you do contact him, please mention you heard about Visualyser on Rick Daviesâ??s website, MandE NEWS.

My main use of Visualyzer is to draw the organisational networks I am working with, in the course of my work as an M&E consultant on development aid programmes. These are of two types: (a) literal descriptions (*maps*) of the relationships as known, (b) simplified *models* of complex networks showing the main types of organisations and the relationships between them. Less frequently, I also import data from Excel to automatically generate network maps. This data usually comes from project documents or online surveys. I also use the combination of UCINET and Netdraw for this task.

Here is an example of a network that I drew by hand directly on screen. It represents the relationships between AMREFâ??s partners in the Katine project, Uganda. Click on the image to expand it a new window, then click again to get a focused image. You can represent different types of actors by varying the colour, size and shape of nodes. You can represent the different kinds of relationships between them by varying the kind of line used, its colour and thickness. If you click on a node you can enter detailed text or numerical data describing the actorâ??s attributes, using as many fields as needed. If you click on any link you can enter data about the attributes of that relationships. Both of these sets of data can be exported, on all actors and relationships, as an Excel file. You can also import the same kind of data, to automatically generate a network diagram.



mdlogix describe it as â??an interactive tool for entering, visualizing and analyzing network data. You can create nodes and links directly or import network data from edgelist/edgearray, Excel, or GraphML formats. Once the network is displayed, you can customize visual properties such as the colour, shape, size, and location of nodes and links to create an informative graphic representation. Images of your choice may be used to represent nodes. XY mapping of nodes as a function of node attributes is supported in layered layout. It also provides a number of analysis functions for calculating network and nodal level indices, and for finding sub-groups, partitions, communities, and roles and positions. In addition, VisuaLyzer includes powerful logic programming capabilities that allow you to investigate networks using axioms of classical set theory.â?•

This all sounds quite complex. But in practice it is the simplest features of Visualyzer which are the most useful. It does have a very good and easy to read Users Guide (5mb), which you may want to look at.

For more on the development of network models / descriptions and their use in monitoring and evaluation go to the Network Models section of this website.

POSTSCRIPT (1st December 2008): See also- ~~Overview of Common Social Network Analysis Software Platforms~~ â??This report was developed by the Philanthropy and Networks Exploration, a partnership between the Packard Foundation and Monitor Institute. The exploration is an inquiry into how networks can facilitate greater philanthropic effectiveness. For more information, please go to http://www.philanthropyandnetworks.org â?•

PS2 (16th January 2009): The link to the â??*Overview â?¦*â?• doc no longer works. I have now uploaded the doc HERE, after receiving a copy via the Pakard Foundation. They also sent a link to: â?? Working Wikily: How networks are changing social changeâ??

Category

1. Uncategorized

Tags

1. Logical Framework
2. Networks
3. Software

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