The Art of the Possible.
Towards a Cognitive Model for Political Action Choice

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Abstract
The consideration of political action by individuals is constrained by what those people consider possible, in terms of not only their immediate actions but also in terms of what changes in the world those individuals believe could occur because of their, or others’, actions. However, there are two major complications to this picture: (a) people are heavily influenced by others they are in social contact with in terms of both goals and assessment of possibility, and (b) since what people do is influenced by what world-changes they consider possible, and people know this, what can change is influenced also by what others think others around them think is possible. Politics thus involves complex processes at several levels, including: the spread of goals and possibility assessments throughout a local social network, and adjustments in what people think about others’ possibility judgements. An implementable cognitive model suitable for building into an agent-based model is proposed, drawing on existing cognitive structures to simulate social contact, goal-directed action choice, negotiation and social norms.