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A massively multiplayer simulation game framework to study dynamic route choice behavior

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1 ABSTRACT

In this work, we introduce a novel simulation game platform to study the route choice behaviour of 2 travellers. A unique feature of this game is that it interacts with a microscopic simulator, which is 3 in charge of reproducing the traffic conditions over real road networks, such as Lyon-Villeurbanne 4 (36km² and 3,222 nodes). Multiple OD pairs can be assigned to players during one game session. 5 The participants play trips changing their departure times and routes, and thus modifying the orig-6 inal assignment of the simulation in real-time. Thus, the simulation game permits to investigate 7 not only the determinants of player decisions (travel time, characteristics of the alternatives, traf-8 fic information), but also how concomitant decisions from multiple players impact the network. 9 The later approach is common when considering a network loading, such as a dynamic traffic 10 assignment (DTA) problem. 11 The results of a first experiment using the simulation game are presented. The main aspect 12 that we focus on is the influence that the travel time, the length, the number of intersections, and the 13 provision of traffic information have on the route behaviour of travellers. The question of whether 14 travellers are travel time minimizers is also addressed. The modelling approach that we use to 15 investigate the route decision of the travellers is the multinomial logit model, and its predictive 16 accuracy is assessed. We found that travellers do not behave as travel time minimizers when the 17 travel times between the alternatives are small, and that the length and number of intersections per 18 kilometer, did not improved the predictions of the model. A preference for peripheral route and 19 directness was found. We discuss the possible causes of the poor predictive performance of the 20

22 Keywords: route choice, travellers' behaviour, computer-based experiment, multinomial logit

²¹ model in our data.

1 INTRODUCTION

2 One of the several decisions that travellers make when travelling within a city is the route choice.

³ At an aggregated level, the individual route choices of the travellers shape the states of a network.

4 But, at the same time, the characteristics and states of the network influence the travellers decisions.

5 This mechanism is not easy to understand because of the continuous feedback between the states of

the network and the choices of travellers. Yet, understanding the route choice behaviour of travelers
 is fundamental to predict the states of a transportation network, and to forecast the behaviour of

8 travellers under hypothetical scenarios. In this work, we introduce a new framework based on a

9 simulation game to study the route choice behaviour of travellers, in particular, the motives of their

¹⁰ choices related to the characteristics and traffic conditions of the network.

The study of human choices belongs to the decision theory field. Several theories of hu-11 man choice have been proposed, being Expected Utility Theory the starting point. Proposed first 12 by Bernoulli (1) and later endowed with an axiomatic basis by Neumann and Morgenstern (2), 13 EUT allows an ordering of preferences over alternatives with uncertain outcomes. Although, from 14 an individual perspective the EUT constitutes a well defined framework for decision making, it is 15 limited when the choices are studied by an external observer. This is because neither the utilities 16 that individuals get from the outcomes, nor the subjective probabilities that they assign to them, can 17 be observed by the researcher. The impossibility of observing the utilities that individuals obtain 18 from alternatives is the assumption of Random Utility Theory (3), where the utilities are modelled 19 as random variables. Because of their ability to relate the choices with the attributes of the individ-20 uals and alternatives, as well as their flexibility in allowing different distributional assumptions on 21 the distribution of the utilities, the RUM models are broadly used in the transportation field. 22

Three methods are often found in the economic field literature to collect data on human be-23 havior: stated preference (SP), revealed preference (RP) and experimental economics (EE). In the 24 SP method, choices of individuals in hypothetical situations are collected through surveys, whereas 25 in the RP method the actual choices of individuals are observed in their natural environment (4, 5). 26 The EE method consists in laboratory controlled experiments in which the participants are faced 27 with simulated decision problems that resemble real-life situations. By resembling real-life situa-28 tions, EE exploits the advantages of the RP method. Moreover, since the researcher can control the 29 situations in which the experiment takes place, some of the limitations of the RP are overcome. In 30 this sense, EE experiments lie between the SP and the RP techniques. 31

EE experiments based in computer travel simulators have been extensively used to col-32 lect data on travellers' route choice behaviour. In these experiments, particular attention has been 33 paid to the study of learning from experience, (6, 7, 8); the impact of advanced travel information 34 systems (ATIS) (9, 10, 11, 12); and the effect of travel time variability and risk attitudes in the trav-35 ellers choices (13, 14). However, as these experiments are designed to study specific behavioural 36 traits, they are based on simple scenarios: single OD connected by two or three routes, and a basic 37 representation of the network and traffic information. Thus, the impact of other attributes that are 38 believed to influence the route choice decision (15), are not investigated in this studies. Moreover, 39 these experiments follow different methodologies. As a consequence, there is no common ground 40 to test different modelling approaches. 41

The mobility decision game (MDG), which belongs to the EE methods, is the approach of the LICIT laboratory to investigate travellers' decisions in transportation networks at large scale. The network description in the MDG is based on the full map of a real road network, such as Lyon-Villeurbanne (36km² and 3,222 nodes) in our experiment. In the MDG, the players' decisions are

send to a microscopic traffic simulator environment, which is in charge of reproducing the traffic 1 conditions in the network. Multiple OD pairs can be assigned simultaneously to players during one 2 game session. Thus, the MDG permits to investigate not only the determinants of player decisions 3 (travel time, network characteristics), but also how concomitant decisions from multiple players 4 may impact the network, and the interactions between travellers. During the game, players may get 5 traffic information from congestion map or as travel time estimates for the different route options. 6 In this work we present the results of a first experiment using the simulation game. The 7 objective is to gain insight into the route choice behaviour of the travellers under different traffic 8 conditions and traffic information scenarios. In particular, we are interested in the role that (i) 9 the travel time, (ii) the characteristics of the alternative set, and (iii) the traffic information have 10 in explaining the decisions of the travellers. The question of whether travellers are travel time 11 minimizers is central in our investigation. This is possible because with the MDG we can define 12 routes connecting the origins and destinations of different OD pairs with distinct characteristics; 13 provide traffic information (in the form of congestion maps and travel times) during a session, and, 14 since the traffic conditions in the scenarios are generated by a microscopic simulator, it is possible 15 to study the decision of travellers in a dynamically changing scenario. The modelling approach 16 that we adopt to investigate points (i) and (ii) is the multinomial logit model, as it represents the 17 starting point in our investigation. The three exogenous variables that we consider for this model 18 are the travel time, the length of the route, and the number of intersection per kilometer. The 19 adequacy of the model is assessed by means of its prediction accuracy in subsamples of the data. 20

Section 2 presents the DMG tool and the experimental set-up. The general results of the experiment, including an statistical analysis of the impact of ATIS, travel time minimization, and relation of attributes with the route choices are presented in section 3. In section 4, we fit a multinomial logit model to our data, and its prediction accuracy is assessed. We discuss the possible causes of the poor performance of the model in our data at the end of this section. Finally, we discuss our findings and the next steps in section 5.

27 MOBILITY DECISION GAME

From the users' point of view, the MDG consists in playing *missions*, which corresponds to trips with a given purpose. When a player selects a mission, the target arrival time of the trip is displayed. Then, the player chooses the departure time and route to complete the trip. Once the trip has started, the participants can re-route at predefined points. A mission is finished when the destination is reached before the target arrival time or when the target arrival time is not accomplished. After a mission is finished, the participants may play another one. In figure 1, we show the gameplay of the DMG.

To generate the scenarios in which the missions are placed, the MDG interacts in real-time 35 with a microscopic simulator, which is in charge of generating all the trips that populate the net-36 work. The trips on predefined OD pairs are those that the participants can play as missions, chang-37 ing their departure times and routes, and thus modifying the original assignment of the simulation. 38 Since multiple players play in the same simulation, their decisions affect the others. Moreover, 39 in the MDG all the trips are clearly identified, i.e., the position of all vehicles can be known at 40 any time, thus, the correlations between the different routes at a link level can be computed. This, 41 together with the fact that the MDG can be configured so that multiple OD pairs can be played 42 simultaneously, will allow us in the future to calibrate and test different assignment models. In 43 addition to the real-time interaction with a microscopic simulator, the MDG can be configured to 44



FIGURE 1 MDG gameplay. (a) selection of a mission; (b) the objective of the mission is informed; (c) the route and travel time choice; (d) the score earned after a mission is finished; (e) re-route point; and (f) congestion map and travel time.

- 1 simulate traffic conditions with different demand levels, and to show traffic information in the form
- ² of congestion maps and/or travel time estimates.
- 3 Case study
- 4 A first experiment with the MDG consisted in 202 participants that were divided in four groups of
- 5 approximately 50 people. Two sessions, one with 2 OD pairs and one with 3 OD pairs, were as-
- ⁶ signed to each group and the participants were assigned into three different information treatments.
- 7 In total, 8 sessions, each lasting 20 minutes were played. The sessions were placed in a simulated
- 8 environment of the city of Lyon-Villeurbanne (36km² and 3,222 nodes), between 7:00 and 8:00 in

- 1 the morning. The purpose of all the missions in the game was commuting to work, and the objec-
- 2 tive was to complete the trip before a given time. After a mission is selected, participants choose
- ³ among three alternative routes to complete the trip, and once the trip has started, participants were
- ⁴ be able to re-route at predefined points (see figure 1). The demand levels, the OD pairs, and the ⁵ information that the participants received are detailed in the rest of this section. A total number of
- 6 724 choices from the participants were recorded.
- 7 Demand level
- 8 Two demand scenarios were considered for the simulation game sessions, D_1 and D_2 . In D_1 , the
- 9 global demand in the network is maintained constant, $d_1 = 5770 veh/h$, during the first part of the
- experiment; then, at 7:20am, it rises its level to d2 = 6950veh/h. In D_2 the demand starts at level
- 11 d2 = 6950veh/h and then decreases to $d_1 = 5770veh/h$ at 7:20am. Note that when the global
- demand level is increased (or decreased) during a simulation, a transition period is needed for the network to reach its new traffic state. These transition period allow us to investigate the travellers
- 14 choices under different traffic conditions.
- 15 *OD pairs and routes*
- 16 Each group of participants plays two sessions that differ in the number of OD pairs where missions
- ¹⁷ are assigned. Two OD pairs considered in the first session of each group have the same destination,
- 18 but have a slightly different origin. Paths from this origins to this destination share most of their
- ¹⁹ links. We denote these two OD pairs as OD_1 and OD'_1 (see figure 2). In the second session played
- ²⁰ by each group a third OD is added, denoted by OD_2 . The corresponding number of missions for
- each of the three OD pairs, OD_1 , OD'_1 and OD_2 , was 260, 258, and 206, respectively. The three
- 22 OD pairs, as well as the routes connecting them are shown in figure 2. Their characteristics are
- shown in table 1.

| OD | Route | Length | No. intersections / km |
|-----------------|-----------|--------|------------------------|
| OD_1 | R_test1_2 | 5,562 | 12.40 |
| | R_test1 | 7,589 | 5.54 |
| | R_test1_3 | 6,160 | 12.01 |
| OD'_1 | R_test2_2 | 8,110 | 6.41 |
| | R_test2_3 | 5,140 | 12.26 |
| | R_test2 | 5,398 | 11.86 |
| OD ₂ | R_N1 | 3,237 | 13.60 |
| | R_N2 | 3,123 | 14.09 |
| | R_N3 | 3,248 | 14.47 |

TABLE 1 Attributes of the routes in the OD pairs.

- 24 Information treatments
- ²⁵ The participants in the experiment are divided into treatment groups according to the travel time
- ²⁶ information that they can consult. Three information treatments are considered in the experiment:
- 27 not informed (NI), congestion map information (CMI) and travel time information (TTI). The num-
- ²⁸ ber of missions played in each treatment was 211 in the NI treatment, 188 in the CMI treatment,
- ²⁹ and 325 in the TTI treatment. A description of the treatment groups is presented below.



FIGURE 2 OD pairs and routes considered for players in the experiment.

• Not informed treatment (NI). These participants don't receive any kind of information 1 regarding the traffic conditions. This group acts as a control group. 2 • Congestion map information (CMI). The congestion map information is provided as 3 printed maps with colors depicting the congestion in the network roads for periods of 30 4 minutes. No travel time information is provided. The congestion maps in this treatment 5 are obtained from a prior simulation of the network. Therefore, the traffic information 6 depicted in the maps is not exact. 7 • Travel time information (TTI). This treatment receives real-time information, computed 8 in the last 15 minutes of the current game. The information provided consists in a con-9 gestion map and the travel time estimation, both accessed through the interface of the 10 game. 11

12 GLOBAL ANALYSIS OF THE MDG RESULTS

In this section, we analyze the results of a first route choice experiment using the MDG. First, we show the route choice distributions and provide a qualitative analysis of the results. Second, we study the impact of the traffic information by comparing the choice distributions between the three

- 1 information treatments. Third, we investigate if participants behave as travel time minimizers, and
- 2 if traffic information help them to minimize their travel times.

3 Route choice distributions

- 4 In figure 3, it can be seen that for OD_1 and treatment NI, the participants have a strong preference
- ⁵ for the R_test1_2 route; which is the peripheral route and also the longest in distance. Apparently,
- ⁶ travellers perceive the peripheral routes, which are often longer in distance, to be faster; avoiding
- ⁷ the inter-urban routes. However, this preference for the peripheral route is less evident for the OD'_1 , ⁸ where R_test2_2 is similar to R_test1_2, except in the initial part. The change in preference, due
- 8 where R_test2_2 is similar to R_test1_2, except in the initial part. The change in preference, due
- 9 to a small change in the origin, might be explained because in R_test2_2 one must move away
 10 from the destination in order to take the peripheral route, making it less preferable (see figure 2).
- The same conduct can also explain the low preference for the R_N3 route in OD_2 , which is only
- ¹² 12 meters longer than the most preferred one, R_N1. This behaviour can be observed in the three information treatments.



FIGURE 3 Route choice distribution for each OD pair disaggregated by treatment.

14 Influence of traffic information in route choice

Since the traffic information received by the participants in the experiment differs across the treat-15 ments, we expect the choices to be different as well. To corroborate this hypothesis, we performed 16 chi-square tests to the choice distributions of the treatments NI vs CMI, NI vs TTI, and CMI vs 17 TTI, reporting p-values of 0.0057, 0.0178, and 0.0148, respectively. From these results we can 18 conclude that there is strong evidence that points towards the expected result: the choice distribu-19 tions are different across treatments. Furthermore, the fact that the choice distributions are not the 20 same for the informed treatments, CMI and TTI, implies that the manner in which traffic infor-21 mation is presented leads to different route choices. This is evident in the case of the R_test1_2 22 route, which is the preferred in both NI and TTI treatments, but that in treatment CMI is not more 23 preferred to the rest of the alternatives: the choice distribution of OD_1 in the CMI treatment is 24 not significantly different from a uniform distribution (chi-squared test with p-value of 0.7676). 25 This can be explained because in the congestion maps a large contiguous section of the peripheral 26 route is shown as congested; however, the congested sections in the rest of the alternatives, while 27

representing a larger portion of the total length, are not contiguous. This may be perceived by 1

participants as *bad* traffic conditions on the route and, thus, they tend to avoid it. 2

Travel time minimization 3

- To see if the information leads to better choices, in terms of travel time, we investigate the travel 4
- time minimization rate of participants, i.e., the proportion of times in which the fastest route was 5
- chosen. Since the experiment is dynamic, the travel time on each route depends on the demand 6
- level, as well as on the decisions of other participants. Thus, the fastest alternative (in mean travel 7
- time) is not always the same during a session. Therefore, we restrict the computation of the mean 8
- travel time for the alternative j at the moment in which decision i was made. If we let t_i be the 9 moment at which decision *i* was made, then the mean travel time of *j* is the mean travel time of all
- 10 trips in j that started in the time interval $[t_i - h, t_i)$. We denote the mean travel time obtained in this 11
- 12
- manner as $t\bar{t}_j^i$. For each decision *i*, we can now order the three alternatives according to $t\bar{t}_j^i$, and obtain the proportion of times that the fastest, second fastest and slow alternatives were chosen. 13 The results are presented in table 2.

| OD | Treat | No. Total | Perc. Fast | Perc. Med | Perc. Slow |
|-----------------|-------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| OD ₁ | NI | 76 | 0.539 | 0.316 | 0.145 |
| | CMI | 72 | 0.417 | 0.292 | 0.292 |
| | TTI | 112 | 0.607 | 0.277 | 0.116 |
| OD'_1 | NI | 67 | 0.284 | 0.493 | 0.224 |
| | CMI | 69 | 0.319 | 0.319 | 0.362 |
| | TTI | 122 | 0.352 | 0.361 | 0.287 |
| OD ₂ | NI | 68 | 0.368 | 0.324 | 0.309 |
| | CMI | 47 | 0.404 | 0.468 | 0.128 |
| | TTI | 91 | 0.418 | 0.462 | 0.121 |

TABLE 2 Proportion of times that the fastest, medium and slowest routes were chosen.

14

The results show that the travel time minimization rate depends on both the OD pair and 15 the information that the participants received. Between treatments, we observe that the participants 16 in the TTI treatment were better in identifying the fastest alternative; behaviour expected from 17 the most informed treatment. However, within the TTI treatment, we observe that for the OD'_1 18 and OD_2 , the second fastest route was chosen more. This result is not in agreement with the 19 expected behaviour that travellers are travel time minimizers. To further investigate this unexpected 20 behaviour, we compute the difference $tt_{(1)}^{\bar{i}} - tt_{(2)}^{\bar{i}}$ and $tt_{(2)}^{\bar{i}} - tt_{(3)}^{\bar{i}}$, i.e., the difference of the mean 21 travel times between the fastest and the second fastest alternatives, and the difference of mean 22 travel times between the second fastest and the slow alternatives (see figure 4). We observe that in 23 the case of the OD'_1 and OD_2 , the mean travel time difference is small compared to that of OD_1 : 24 62 and 67 seconds for OD'_1 and OD_2 , and 160 seconds for OD_1 . A similar result can be found for 25 the difference in mean travel times of the second fastest and the slow alternatives in OD'_1 , which 26 explains the more uniform choices of fastest, second fastest and slow routes in the TTI treatment 27 group. This is not the case in OD_2 , where the difference between the second fastest and the slow 28 routes is not as small as for the fastest and second fastest routes and, thus, the slow route is chosen 29 less. We conjecture that the travellers are indifferent between alternatives with similar travel times, 30

- and thus other route attributes weight more in the route choice. We will investigate this conjecture
- ² in section 4, where a multinomial logit model is fitted considering not only the travel time, but also the length of the route and the number of intersections per kilometer.



FIGURE 4 Difference in mean travel times between the fastest and second fastest alternatives (left), and the second fastest and slow alternatives (right).

3

4 MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODELLING

- 5 In this section, we expand the analysis of Section 3.3 by fitting two multinomial logit models
- 6 to each of the OD pairs. First, we investigate the route choice as a response to the mean travel
- 7 time and the information treatment, formalizing the analysis in the previous section. Then, in a
- 8 tentative to investigate if other route attributes can explain that the participants are not travel time
- ⁹ minimizers, we include the length and the number of intersections per kilometer in our analysis.

10 Route choice as a response to the mean travel time and information treatments

¹¹ We fit a multinomial logit model to each of the OD pairs. The specification of the model is

MODEL 1:
$$V_{ij} = \sum_{T \in \{NI, CMI, TTI\}} \left[\alpha_j^T + \beta^T t \bar{t}_j \right] \mathbb{I}_T (TREAT_i),$$
 (1)

- where $t\bar{t}_{j}^{i}$ is the mean travel time in route *j* at the moment of the decision *i* (obtained as in section
- 13 3.3), $TREAT_i$ is the treatment to which the decision maker *i* belongs, and \mathbb{I}_T is the indicator function 14 that takes the value 1 when $TREAT_i = T$.

The estimated coefficients of this model are shown in the Table 3. In the case of the OD_1 , 15 the estimated coefficient $\hat{\beta}^T$ is significant only for the TTI treatment. This result is expected, 16 because the participants in the TTI treatment were the only ones with information about the travel 17 time. Moreover, $\hat{\beta}^{TTI} < 0$, which means that the higher the travel time, the less desirable the route 18 is. For the NI treatment $\hat{\alpha}_{j}^{NI}$ is significant only for $j = R_{test1_2}$, which is the peripheral route. 19 The fact that $\hat{\alpha}_{i}^{NI}$ is significant for this route, and that the coefficient for the travel time is not, 20 implies that the preference for the peripheral route in this treatment is not related to the travel time. Moreover, $\hat{\alpha}_j^{TTI}$ for the same route, R_test1_2, is significant and has the same magnitude, but with 21 22 contrary sign (-0.8532), meaning that in the TTI treatment the preference for the peripheral route 23 comes from the travel times estimates that the participants received. In the case of the OD'_1 , 24 the estimated coefficient $\hat{\beta}^T$ is significant only for the NI treatment. This result is contradictory, as 25 these participants received no information regarding the travel time; we regard it as an artefact in 26

the experiment. The peripheral route in this case has estimated coefficients that are not significant. 1

2

Finally, in the case of the OD_2 , none of the estimated coefficients of the travel time are significant. The estimated constant terms $\hat{\alpha}_j^{NI}$ and $\hat{\alpha}_j^{TTI}$ of the R_N3 route are significant and negative, which 3

shows a dislike for this route. 4

Route choice as a response to the mean travel time, the length of the route and the number 5

of intersections per kilometer 6

The specification of the multinomial logit model that we use in this section is 7

MODEL 2:
$$V_{ij} = \beta_1 LEN_j + \beta_2 INTER_j + \beta_3 tt_i^i$$
, (2)

where LEN_i and $INTER_i$ are the length and the number of intersections per kilometer, and tt_i^i is 8 the mean travel time in route i at the moment of the decision i (see section 3.3). 9

The model was estimated for the three OD pairs considering only participants in the TTI 10 treatment. We focus only on participants in the TTI treatment, assuming that theay are the most 11 responsive to travel times. The estimated coefficients are exhibited in the table 3. The results 12 show that for OD_1 the tt_i^i is the only significant variable, with estimated coefficient $\hat{\beta}_3 < 0$, which 13 implies that the more the mean travel time, the less desirable the route is. For the rest of the 14 OD pairs, OD'_1 and OD_2 , the opposite is found: $t\bar{t}^i_j$ is not significant, whereas LEN_j and $INTER_j$ 15 are. This result points in the same direction of our previous conjecture, that when the differences in 16 mean travel time are small, the route choices of the travellers are driven by other factors, rather than 17 the travel time. The estimated coefficient for the *INTER*_i variable, $\hat{\beta}_2$, is negative for both OD'_1 18 and OD_2 , which implies that attractiveness for a route decreases with the number of intersections 19 per kilometer. However, the estimated coefficient of the length of the route, $\hat{\beta}_1$ is negative in the 20 case of the OD'_1 , but positive in the case of OD_2 . 21

The prediction accuracy of the models, removing the not significant explanatory variables, 22 was assessed by means of bootstrapping, leaving out at each iteration 20% of the data in the fitting 23 process. In each iteration, the choice probabilities of the held out sample were predicted, and their 24 mean compared, using the chi-square distance, to the actual choice distribution. This distance is a 25 measure of the prediction error and it is a measure of how well the model generalizes to scenarios 26 that have not been seen. In this work, the bootstrapping was iterated 1,000 times and the mean of 27 the predicted errors reported and compared to that of the null model. For the OD_1 , the prediction 28 mean error of the null model is 0.1233, while the mean error including the tt_i^i variable is 0.1001. 29 This represents an improvement of 18.8%. In the case of the OD'_1 and OD_2 , both the null model 30 and the model including the LEN_i and $INTER_i$ variables have the same prediction errors: 0.1220 31 for OD'_1 and 0.1581 for OD_2 . Meaning no improvement. 32

We investigate the possible causes of the failure of the multinomial logit model to predict 33 the behaviour of the participants in the case of the OD'_1 and OD_2 . In section 3.3 we conjectured 34 that the travellers are indifferent between alternatives with similar travel times and, thus, other 35 route attributes weight more in the route choice. However, in the results of the above analysis, 36 the length of the route and the number of intersections are not explaining the choice of travellers 37 either. This result suggests that there may be other variables, that we are not observing, but that 38 participants rely on when making their decisions. If this is the case, a violation of the IIA as-39 sumption could explain the poor performance of the above models. To show this, note that if two 40 alternatives, j and k have similar attributes, then their systematic part of the utility will be similar, 41

- i.e., $V(X_j, \theta_i) \approx V(X_k, \theta_i)$. Because of the IIA assumption in the multinomial logit models, this implies that the probability of individual *i* choosing either of the alternatives, *j* or *k*, will also be similar: $P_i(C = j|X_j, \theta_i) \approx P_i(C = k|X_k, \theta_i)$. Therefore, the aggregated observations will also be $\mathbb{E}_{\Theta}[P_i(C = j|X_j, \theta_i)] \approx \mathbb{E}_{\Theta}[P_i(C = k|X_k, \theta_i)]$. However, this is not the case for the *OD*₂, in which
- 5 the alternatives R_N1 and R_N3 have similar length, number of intersections per kilometer, and
- ⁶ travel time, but still a strong preference towards the route R_N1 is observed. The aggregated prob-
- 7 ability for the former being equal to 0.7473 and for the later 0.1319 (see figure 3). In the case of
- s the OD'_1 , the travel time, the length and the number of intersections are similar for the R_test2 and
- 9 R_test2_3 routes. Their aggregated probabilities are, respectively, 0.2458 and 0.3814. The result
- is not as extreme as for the case of OD_2 , but may have the same explanation.

| Model | OD | Coefficients | Estimate | Std. Error | t-value | Pr(> t) | |
|---------|-----------------|--|-------------------|------------|---------|---------------|--|
| | | α_i^{NI} , j = R_test1_2 (intercept) | 0.8602 | 0.4054 | 2.1216 | 0.0339 * | |
| | | α_i^{NI} , j = R_test1_3 (intercept) | -0.3686 | 0.5728 | -0.6435 | 0.5199 | |
| | | $\alpha_i^{CMI}, j = R_{test1_2}$ | -0.5470 (+0.8602) | 0.5428 | -1.0078 | 0.3135 | |
| | | $\alpha_i^{CMI}, j = R_{test1_3}$ | 0.1145 (-0.3686) | 0.7224 | 0.1585 | 0.8741 | |
| | OD_1 | $\alpha_i^{TTI}, j = \text{R}_{\text{test1}_2}$ | -0.8532 (+0.8602) | 0.5095 | -1.6744 | 0.0940 . | |
| | | α_i^{TTI} , j = R_test1_3 | 0.1537 (-0.3686) | 0.7278 | 0.2113 | 0.8327 | |
| | | $\hat{oldsymbol{eta}}^{NI}$ | -0.0441 | 0.1132 | -0.3893 | 0.6971 | |
| | | $\hat{\beta}^{CMI}$ | 0.0509 | 0.0990 | 0.5143 | 0.6070 | |
| | | $\hat{\beta}^{TTI}$ | -0.2839 | 0.0960 | -2.9571 | 0.0031 ** | |
| | | Log-Likelihood: -239.59 | | | | | |
| | | $\alpha_{j,i}^{NI}, j = R_{test1_2} (intercept)$ | -0.0373 | 0.3264 | -0.1143 | 0.9090 | |
| | | α_j^{NI} , $j = R_{test1_3}$ (intercept) | -0.4640 | 0.3550 | -1.3071 | 0.1912 | |
| MODEL 1 | | $\alpha_j^{CMI}, j = \mathbb{R}_{\text{test1}_2}$ | 0.1062 (-0.0373) | 0.4807 | 0.2209 | 0.8252 | |
| | 00/ | α_{j}^{CMI} , $j = R_{test1_3}$ | 1.1834 (-0.4640) | 0.4762 | 2.4850 | 0.0130 * | |
| | DD_1 | $\alpha_{j\}^{TTI}, j = \mathbb{R}_{\text{test1}_2}$ | 0.4615 (-0.0373) | 0.4051 | 1.1394 | 0.2545 | |
| | | $\alpha_j^{TTI}, j = \text{R_test1_3}$ | 0.8686 (-0.4640) | 0.4300 | 2.0199 | 0.0434 * | |
| | | \hat{eta}^{NI} | -0.2893 | 0.1152 | -2.5115 | 0.0120 * | |
| | | $\hat{\beta}^{CMI}$ | 0.0984 | 0.1030 | 0.9554 | 0.3394 | |
| | | $\hat{oldsymbol{eta}}^{TTI}$ | -0.0609 | 0.0855 | -0.7121 | 0.4764 | |
| | | Log-Likelihood: -257.16 | | | | | |
| | | $\alpha_{j_{M}}^{NI}$, j = R_N2 (intercept) | 0.2814 | 0.6411 | 0.4389 | 0.6607 | |
| | OD ₂ | α_j^{NI} , $j = R_N3$ (intercept) | -0.8416 | 0.3207 | -2.6246 | 0.0087 ** | |
| | | $\alpha_{j}^{CMI}, j = R_N2$ | -2.1969 (0.2814) | 1.0642 | -2.0644 | 0.0390 * | |
| | | $\alpha_{j_{TTI}}^{CMI}, j = R_N3$ | -0.1828 (-0.8416) | 0.4805 | -0.3805 | 0.7036 | |
| | | $\alpha_{j_{TTI}}^{III}, j = R_N2$ | -2.3707 (0.2814) | 0.9236 | -2.5669 | 0.0103 * | |
| | | $\alpha_j^{III}, j = \mathbb{R}_N3$ | -0.9149 (-0.8416) | 0.4519 | -2.0246 | 0.0430 * | |
| | | β^{NI} | -0.2172 | 0.1728 | -1.2564 | 0.2090 | |
| | | $\beta_{\hat{\mu}}^{CMI}$ | 0.0963 | 0.2251 | 0.4277 | 0.6688 | |
| | | β^{TTI} | 0.0780 | 0.1670 | 0.4672 | 0.6404 | |
| | | Log-Likelihood: -178.81 | | | | | |
| | OD ₁ | $\hat{eta_1}$ | -0.0005 | 0.0010 | -0.4751 | 0.6347 | |
| | | $\hat{\beta}_2$ | -0.1327 | 0.2922 | -0.4542 | 0.6497 | |
| | | $\hat{\beta}_3$ | -0.2839 | 0.0960 | -2.9571 | 0.0031** | |
| | | Log-Likelihood: -95.804 | | | | | |
| | OD'_1 | $\hat{\beta_1}$ | -0.0075 | 0.0043 | -1.7199 | 0.0855 . | |
| MODEL 2 | | β_2 | -3.7883 | 2.1853 | -1.7335 | 0.0830 . | |
| | | β_3 | -0.0609 | 0.0855 | -0.7121 | 0.4764 | |
| | | Log-Likelihood: -127.23 | | | | | |
| | | β_1 | 0.0092 | 0.0054 | 1.6970 | 0.0897 . | |
| | OD_2 | β_2 | -2.1247 | 0.3670 | -5.7897 | 7.049e-09 *** | |
| | - | β_3 | 0.0780 | 0.1670 | 0.4672 | 0.6404 | |
| ļ | 0 | Log-Likelihood: -6/.2583 | | | | | |
| | Signifi | Significance codes: 0 **** 0.001 *** 0.01 ** 0.05 *. 0.1 * 1 | | | | | |

TABLE 3 Estimated coefficients for the multinomial logit models MODEL 1 and MODEL2.

1 DISCUSSION AND FUTURE WORK

In this paper, we introduced the mobility decision game platform that is being developed in the LICIT laboratory to study the behaviour of travellers at a network level. The platform was used in a first case study about route choice behaviour, and the relevance of the multinomial logit model to predict the observed route choices was assessed. In the results of the experiment, we found that participants are not travel time minimizers. In the two OD pairs in which participants were not travel time minimizeres, OD'_1 and OD_2 , the difference in mean travel time between the fastest and second fastest route was small. We conjectured that, when travel times are close, other route attributes weight more in the route decision. Two route attributes, the length and the number of

2 However, adding this two attributes in the model did not produce significantly better results. We

- ³ found that the reason of the poor performance of the multinomial logit model in predicting the route
- 4 choices is that the IIA property is not satisfied: in our data we observe routes with similar measured
- attributes having different choice probabilities. This implies that there are other attributes that we
 have not yet identified, but that participants took into account when making their decisions. We

have not yet identified, but that participants took into account when making their decisions. We
 speculate that the directness of the route may be one of the attributes responsible of this behaviour.

8 Nonetheless, we also found that travellers preferred the peripheral route. This observation is in

9 line with the results in Lotan (10), where travellers that are unfamiliar with the network showed

a preference for the freeway, which is a peripheral route. A preference for the peripheral route, which resulted to be amongst the least reliable, is also found in a RP experiment in Ramos (16),

¹² but in the later, the travellers were familiar with the network. As peripheral routes are often longer

13 and less direct, they may not be comparable with the inter-city alternatives. This suggests that

14 peripheral routes should be treated as a different category in the modelling. A nested logit model

15 is suitable for this kind of data.

In this paper we focused on the individual route choices of travellers one OD pair at a 16 time. Thus, path flow estimation is done using a partially myopic vision of the interaction between 17 players at the network level. Interactions are considered through the consequences of travellers' 18 decisions in terms of travel time over the different alternatives, but not as a joint process over all 19 OD pairs. The later approach is common when considering a network loading, such as a dynamic 20 traffic assignment (DTA) problem. A promising property of the MDG platform is that it allows to 21 study the impact of individual decisions at the network level. This can be done because in the MDG 22 the position of all trips at a certain time are known, thus the relation between the travel times and 23 the flows, as well as the correlations between the flows in different routes can be computed. The 24 MDG can thus be used to calibrate or design new DTA models based on behavioural observations 25 and not an equilibrium statement. Figure 5 shows a premise of what can be observed with the 26

27 DMG in this sense.

Figure 5 depicts the aggregated flows and travel time distributions on the played routes in 28 one of the experiment sessions. The path flows and travel times of the played session are compared 29 with a base scenario, which is a simulation without players. Compared to the base scenario, the 30 route choices of the participants changed the flow and, as a consequence, the travel times. If 31 analysis were done at an OD level, we would expect an increase (decrease) in the flow path on one 32 route to cause an increase (decrease) in the travel times in that route. However, this is not what we 33 observe in the figure 5, where the routes R_N1 and R_test1_2 increased their flow in the played 34 session, but have smaller travel times. The reason of this behaviour is because the interactions with 35 the routes in other OD pairs are not being considered. This shows how the MDG can be used for 36 the research on the global analysis of a transportation network. 37

Although the findings on travellers route choices in this paper are not new, they reinforce our confidence in the MDG as a reliable tool for data collection on travellers behaviour. Moreover, the findings provide a path for the design of forthcoming experiments. Future plans include new experiments to investigate other route attributes that may influence the decisions of travellers; the comparison between different choice models in predicting the route decisions; and the study of the relevance of different DTA models to reproduce the flow patterns obtained with the MDG.



FIGURE 5 Path flows (top), and travel time distributions (bottom) in the played routes.

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