Towards designing graceful degradation into trajectory based operations:

A human-machine systems integration approach

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Agenda

• Research motivation
• Literature review: Aims
• Framework of graceful degradation
• Literature review: Detailed findings
• The operational envelope?
• Conclusions & Implications
• Next steps
Research motivation

• Trajectory based operations (TBO) is an instrumental concept in the NextGen initiative

• In order for the TBO concept to be realized, there will be a “fundamental shift in ATM” (FAA, 2014):
  – Narrower tolerances (FAA, 2014)
  – More precise trajectories
  – Strategic vs tactical

• System resilience is critical
  – TBO system must be able to gracefully degrade to maintain safe operations

• Knowledge of the causes and mitigations of degradation in TBO must be understood
Literature review

• Aims:
  – Identify causes of degradation in ATC and associated solutions
  – Identify the role of ATCOs in a gracefully degrading system
  – Develop a framework of graceful degradation from the literature

• Expected outcomes
  – Identify causes of degradation and associated solutions applicable to TBO
  – Identify literature gaps and inform future research
  – Implications for ecologically valid understanding of graceful degradation of TBO systems
Framework of graceful degradation

Degradation cause
- System fault or failure
- Environment events
- Human Operator (Air traffic controller)

Identification

Prevention and mitigation of degradation:
- Preventative measures to generate graceful degradation
- Active at different stages

System design e.g.
- Fault tolerance
- Redundancy
- Automation

Environment e.g.
- Airspace design
- Traffic flows
- CONOPS
- Procedures

Human Operator e.g.
- Training
- Human-centered interface design
- Decision support tools

Post-degradation: Recovery
Predominantly human operator
Can be supported by all previous pre-degradation measures

Output
Graceful degradation
Causes: System fault/failure

- Widest range of literature
- Primarily focuses on CNS
  - Failure can be full system or partial, such as specific algorithms
- Several categorizations documented, although no consistent agreement
- Causes of hardware failure
  - Physical damage
  - Aging
  - Accidental/malicious interference
- Software failure
  - Modelling errors
  - Integration of independent ATC software
    - Legacy technology and new technology
    - Technology with competing goals
Causes: Off-nominals

- **Airspace design**
  - Number and type of conflict points
  - Size of available airspace
  - Complexity can increase ATCO demand, which may put performance at greater risk

- **Imprecision/uncertainty**

- **Off nominal events**
  - Aircraft emergencies
  - Medical emergencies
  - Unexpected pilot actions

- **Weather**
  - Widely researched
  - Leading cause of aircraft delay
  - Weather avoidance routes are pre-planned but real time updates limited
  - Consequences include manual vectoring, re-routing, delay and cancellations
  - Controllers responsible for maintaining safe operations during these demanding situations
Causes: Human operators (ATCOs)

• Least researched in graceful degradation domain
  – Human error literature in Human Factors domain
• Human performance influencing factors
  – Task demand and high workload
  – Attention and perception errors
  – Communication errors
  – Procedural error
• Human performance influencing factors resulting from use of automation (human-system interaction)
  – Underload
  – Trust
  – Design of automation – transparency and reliability
Identification

• Required prior to prevention or mitigation
• Techniques can be separated into:
  – Identifying potential causes prior to degradation
  – Identifying causes during live operations
• Techniques prior to degradation include:
  – Incident and accident analysis
  – Causal modelling
• Techniques of identification during live operations include:
  – System self-monitoring and self-identification
  – System communication to human operator
  – Human operator
Achieving graceful degradation: System-related solutions

- Well-documented in the literature
- Bertish et al. (2013) - 18 identified mitigations
  - 14/18 related to technology design and regulation
- Hardware/software solutions
  - Failure paths
  - Back up systems
  - Redundancy
- Requirements-based solutions
  - Quality standards
  - Verification and validation
- Technological solutions for environmental and human causes of degradation
  - Decision support systems
  - Automation
  - Tools to reduce uncertainty, such as enhanced weather prediction
Achieving graceful degradation: Environmental solutions

- Literature primarily focuses on reducing complexity for ATCOs
- Solutions are usually complex
- Airspace redesign
  - Standard traffic flows
  - Flight follow features
  - More efficient reroutes
  - Reduction in complexity – reduction of risk of human error
- Solutions to reduce uncertainty
  - CONOPS
  - Procedures
Achieving graceful degradation: Controller

- Contribution of ATCO to graceful degradation is under-researched
- ATCOs maintain safe operations through a high standard of performance
- Dominant contribution post-degradation – recovery
  - Role is an on-line defense between safe and unsafe operations
- Significant implications for TBO
  - System fault/failure when ATCOs are controlling more aircraft than they could without automation?
  - Framework supports breakdown of this issue
- Need for human – systems integration to support graceful degradation in TBO
  - When do ATCOs reach safe limits of performance?
The operational envelope

Normal operations: ATC is working effectively within this workload and scenario space.

At edges, due to difficulty, complexity, overload etc., performance/safety may be temporarily compromised; but situation normally recovered before loss of separation event.

Here a loss of separation will occur.
The operational envelope

Normal operations: ATC is working effectively within this workload and scenario space

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Individual envelopes that interact to determine the overall system envelope

Operational maximum

Operational optimum

Tolerance

System

Environment

ATCO
Conclusions & Implications

• Findings
  – Causes of degradation and solutions categorized by systems, environment and human operators (ATCOs)
  – Solutions to degradation can be applied pre- or post-degradation
  – Most research on systems, least on role of the ATCO
  – Research dominantly considers ATCO to be responsible for maintenance of safe operations during degradation
  – No consideration in current literature of interactions between causes and solutions
• Development of graceful degradation framework can be used to:
  – Identify research gaps
  – Identify causes of degradation and solutions
  – Identify interactions
  – Guide requirements for future research
• Human-system interaction approach essential to achieve graceful degradation in TBO
• Need to understand limits of system performance AND human performance
Next Steps

- Literature review completed
  - Paper submitted and accepted to Aviation 2017
- Aims of future work
  Identify causes of degradation in TBO
  Identify the limits of recovery for the human operator

- Cognitive walk-through
  - Down selection of assumptions
  - Selection of use cases
  - Initial understanding of recovery strategies
  - Initial understanding of limits of recovery

- Human in the loop simulations
  - Identification of human envelope ‘limits’
  - Investigation of human and system performance envelope interaction
  - Development of solutions to specific TBO issue to create graceful degradation

- Future goal
  - Propose potential re-design of the system, airspace, or human tasks/procedures
  - Monitoring the situation prior to full breakdown
  - Support the recovery phase

- Re-design of the system
Thank you!

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