Distributed Asynchronous Focus Group Interviews

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Research Question

- Can focus group interview technique be adapted to asynchronous online environments?

Traditional Focus Group Interviews

- Group interview technique used for requirements elicitation, among others.
- Objective:
  - elicit requirements from different stakeholders at the same time.
- Strength:
  - reveal hidden information through group interaction in addition to face to face interviews.
  - face expression, body language, chats, jokes, tensions,…

Interview Setting

http://www.1888typeitup.com/focus-group-transcription-services/

- **Size:** Small groups (up to 12 persons) in a room.
- **Duration:** Restricted time frame.
- **Roles:** usually two roles: moderator and participant.
- **Methodology**: free discussion guided (focussed) by a questionnaire

Challenges in modern Requirements Elicitation

- Project team is globally distributed (Offshoring).
- Stakeholders for the projects may be globally distributed as well.
- Requirements need to be gathered from the stakeholders with adequate elicitation techniques.

Online Focus Group Interviews

Synchronous OFGI:

- Similar to traditional focus group interviews.
- Small groups using an online meeting room.
- Fixed time frame.
- Discussion guided by moderator based on a questionnaire
- Some non verbal information might get lost.

Asynchronous OFGI:

- Group management and motivation is difficult.

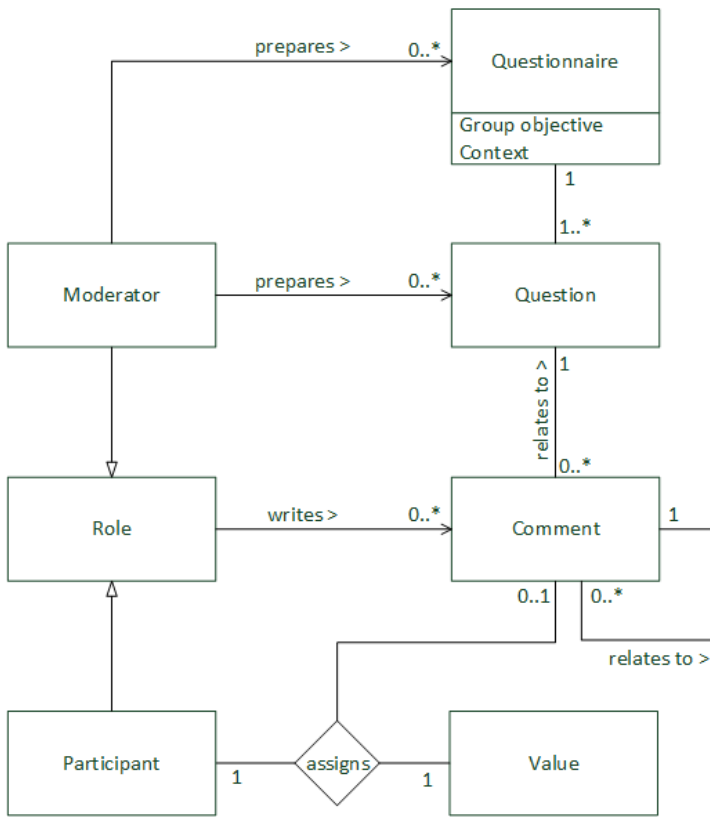# Asynchronous Online Focus Group Interviews - Challenges

- Setting completely based on asynchronous online technologies.
- Participants cannot see each other.
- Participant might not know each other.
- Participants might live in different time zones.
- Participants might have different cultural backgrounds.
- Participants might not feel the same responsibility.
- „No group feeling.“

Online Discussion Model - Requirements

- Enable guided online discussions based on questions.
- Engage people to enter an online focus group discussion and participate actively.
- Engage participants to stay in discussion or come back until finalized by the moderator.
- Support visualization of non verbal behaviour as far as possible.
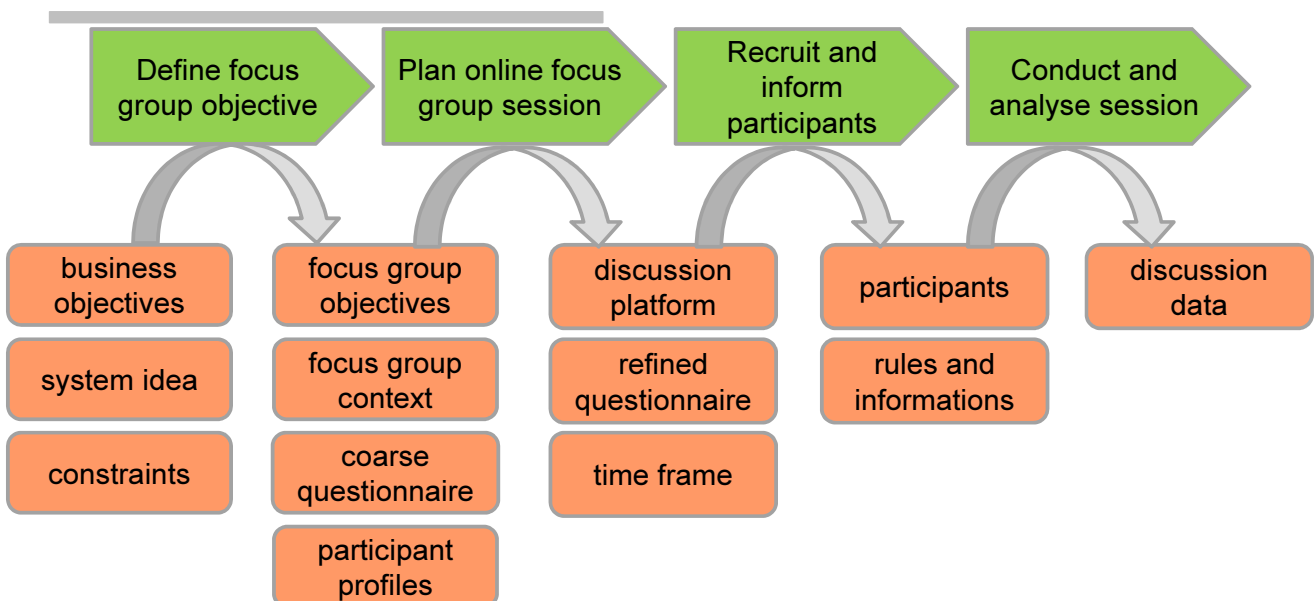- Enable data analysis after online discussion.

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Rationale:
- Two role model.
- „Whatsapp-like" discussion model.
- Two discussion artefacts: question and comment.
- Voting mechanism for comments to model agreement.

OFGI Interview Process Model

Research Questions

- What is a good group size for asynchronous online focus groups to achieve best results?
- How can participants be motivated and engaged to stay and participate in the discussion?
- What is a good discussion model do adapt traditional focus group interview models to online environments?
- What is a good role model for online focus groups?
- What are other application areas for asynchronous online focus groups?

Summary

- Focus group interviews are a powerful method to elicit requirements from stakeholders.
- Current and future project settings might prevent the use of traditional focus group interviews.
- Synchronous online focus group interviews are difficult to conduct with globally distributed participants in different time zones.
- Asynchronous online focus group interviews can be a solution but require careful preparation and suitable tool support.

Next Steps

- Implement and evaluate platform to support online focus group interviews based on the model.
- Define and implement a gamification model to improve long term engagement.
- Define and implement new discussion models to improve outcome.
- Analyse platform application in crowd software engineering environments.

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Thank you for your attention!