Editorial

Technology-supported social networks are now penetrating many aspects of our daily lives and have been established for a diverse range of purposes from e-dating to multimedia sharing, and from friendship/blogging sites to virtual gaming and virtual worlds. Individuals in their role as employees and, more recently, their companies have also started to adopt the concept of social networks both intra- and inter-organizationally. Examples include technology-supported Communities of Practice and the emerging professional support networks such as LinkedIn.com. The technology to support such social networking is diverse ranging from the standard desktop to mobile and ubiquitous technologies to immersive virtual environments, and other applications and services.

Consequently, social networking has received considerable attention among information systems (IS) researchers. Following a number of IS conferences and workshops that have already focused on this interesting topic, this Special Issue explores the emerging technology-supported social networking phenomenon and how it may influence the management, development and use of IS in the networked world. From more than 30 submissions that were received, after a careful reviewing process 11 papers have been selected for this Special Issue. The papers can be divided into three categories: Social and behavioural, Organizational, and Political.

networks. Perhaps, cultural differences might come into play in explaining such differences.

Although relationships are maintained online, people still come together in social events. Khan and Jarvenpaa's paper researches to what extent current social network tools are capable of supporting the temporal coordination of such social events. Based on their findings, the authors derive implications for the design of social event management functionality into online social networks. The organization of social events using social networking tools is an example of collective intention, joint action towards a common intent. Our fourth paper by Shen *et al.* explores such joint action in instant messaging environments and specifically focuses on whether gender plays a part. It concludes with a series of recommendations for organizations that wish to use instant messaging for business purposes.

In real-life networks, gift giving is an important aspect of maintaining relationships. From sociology there is a broad body of knowledge around this concept. However, the question is whether this theory is still applicable in digital networks. Therefore, the final paper in the 'social and behavioural' category is by Skågeby and studies gift giving in digital networks. Instead of focusing on the digital gift itself, this paper focuses on the characteristics and dimensions that distinguish the practice of gifting in digital networks.

Social and behavioural

The widespread use of social networks raises the question as to why people so easily disclose their personal information not only to their friends, but also to the outside world, so that it is there for everybody to (ab)use. In total, five papers are presented that broadly fall into the social category. Two papers present the results of studies that consider the factors that are behind this type of behaviour. The advantage of the social network is the joy in being able to maintain these relationships online but also the easiness of doing so. However, there are obviously a number of risks with respect to privacy and identity theft. So Krasnova *et al.*'s paper based on research conducted in Germany, particularly highlights the importance of perceived control for online social network users, while our second paper by Tow *et al.* which is based on an Australian study suggests that people's perception of the risks associated with online disclosure changes over time. It is interesting to see that the two papers come to different conclusions regarding disclosure behaviour in online social

Organizational

The disclosure behaviour of individuals in online social networks is also an opportunity for companies to learn about the opinions and emotions of people with respect to their products and services. The paper by García-Crespo *et al.* studies customer relations in the context of online networks and presents a framework based on semantics and emotion mining for analyzing emotions within customer based social networks. The paper discusses the evaluation of a prototype and its feasibility from a technical perspective. Building on this theme of disclosure Škerlavaj *et al.*'s paper uses cognitive theories to explore how informal social networks play an important role in organizations when it comes to knowledge sharing and learning. In particular, the paper provides valuable insight into how learning takes place in intra-organizational learning networks. The paper studies how hierarchy and proximity influence learning networks and interestingly suggests that learning relationships do not need to be reciprocal in intra-organizational learning networks.

The next two papers in the 'organizational' category are more technical in nature. Van de Hoof *et al.*'s paper explores Networks of Practice and how the social and conceptual structure of such networks may also be used as an indicator for instability in projects. This concept is also demonstrated in Amrit and van Hillegersberg's paper, which is interesting in that it conceptualizes open source software development communities as a form of social network and looks for so-called Social-Technical patterns within open source communities that may be indicators of instability within open source projects. The empirical work takes the Core-Periphery concept from the field of Social Networks and, based on empirical data from open source projects, concludes that major shifts in software development effort from or to the core of a project are an indicator of project instability.

Political

Our final category of papers focuses on online social networks that provide a platform for political discussions that can initiate political change or democratization. Research in this area is also referred to as e-liberalization. Our first paper in this category is by Gonzalez-Bailo *et al.* and studies the structure of political discussion in online networks as compared with other types of discussions by studying the width and depth of these discussions. A framework is proposed that allows the analysis and comparison of different internet technologies for the promotion of e-deliberation.

While Gonzalez-Bailo *et al.*'s paper is a proponent of e-liberalization our final paper by Ameripour *et al.* is more critical about the conviviality of online social networks. Although, the presented study recognizes the potential power of online social networks, it uses the case of the Iran elections to show that instant access to these networks is not universal and that the adoption of these networks is tempered by emotional and occasionally nonsensical contributions, and by the surveillance and censorship of these networks by the government. Hence, the research shows that important conditions need to be fulfilled for e-liberation finally to take place.

We owe a special thanks to the Associate Editors listed below and the anonymous reviewers who assisted us in the task to process the many interesting research papers we received.

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