

Editorial

Doctoral Symposium on DIGITALISATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY [†]

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Before the end of the XX century, the inhabitants of this little Planet Earth could meet each other, in general, only after a big effort. Communication was slow and the geographical and cultural barriers were enormous. The advent of the Internet and the fast Digitalisation of Society have accelerated communication in such a way that today we all feel (and definitely are) much more connected. We see that computation is pervasive and is fostering individual, economic and social changes that are unpredictable. In parallel, many barriers are fading away, notably in research and science. The thick walls that once separated the classical research areas became thinner, started to break apart and in every crack a new research field seems to flourish. The sacrosanct division between Academia and Industry is also trembling.

Researchers starting now their doctoral journey will certainly face difficulties and ethical dilemmas caused by these changes. They will probably encounter conflicts between disciplines, between private and public interests, between individual and societal concerns. They will also have the opportunity to impact society more profoundly, since the virtualization of technology makes it possible to create change faster, farther, cheaper and involving more people. However, formal education has been slightly oblivious of these circumstances, and little seems to be discussed about all of this in regular PhD training; where technicalities are still the main focus of attention. The goal of the IS4SI Doctoral Symposium is to detach from this medieval tradition of education and, based on newly acquired knowledge and communication possibilities, bring such complex issues to the surface and discuss them openly.

The contributors to the Doctoral Symposium on DIGITALISATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY presented novel research that covered many different applications, such as smart cities, autonomous driving, cloud computing, healthcare IT systems and transportation. During the symposium, each student was allowed to (1) Present her research project and receive constructive feedback and mentoring from senior experts and peers; (2) Interact with other students and with participants at the main conference, expanding her contact network and fostering a sense of community; (3) Gain new understanding about her own research by exposure to a vast diversity of perspectives; (4) Reflect on future trends and how her research can shape the future of digitalisation for a sustainable society. Two aspects that were highlighted in most presentations were the need for a transdisciplinary approach to research and the need to reflect on ethical issues arising from the use of IT technology.

The symposium included a welcome address by Prof. Mats Viberg (Chalmers) and a keynote speech by Prof. Elena Fersman (KTH and Ericsson Research).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.



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