Nomination for IFAAMAS Board: Baharak Rastegari

Bio. I am Baharak (Bahar) Rastegari, a lecturer (equivalent of Assistant Professor) and a member of the Agents, Interaction and Complexity (AIC) research group in the School of Electronics and Computer Science (ECS), University of Southampton. I received my PhD from the University of British Columbia, Canada, in 2013, under the supervision of Prof Anne Condon and Prof Kevin Leyton-Brown. Before joining AIC in September 2018, I held a short-term lectureship at the University of Bristol, preceded by a 3-year postdoctoral research experience at the University of Glasgow. My research lies at the intersection of AI, theoretical computer science and microeconomics, with a focus on computational social choice, algorithmic mechanism design and matching theory. I am keen on designing and analyzing mechanisms that result in fair and socially efficient outcomes.

Service to the AAMAS and AI community. I was exhibition chair of AAMAS’21 and one of the local organizers of AAMAS’23. I am one of the two co-organizers of AAMAS’24 Doctoral Consortium. I have served as a PC member for several AI conferences including AAAI, AAMAS and IJCAI, and a reviewer for AI journals such as AIJ, AAMAS and JAIR. Due to the nature of my research, I publish in both AI-oriented and algorithmic/theory-oriented venues. I have co-authored over 10 papers published in AI venues such as AAMAS proceedings.

Key issues to address.

- Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: There have been growing efforts in recent years to make AAMAS a welcoming community for everyone. We need to strengthen and continue these efforts to attract and retain members from diverse communities and backgrounds and to enable them to be active and engaged participants of AAMAS events. This may mean (i) establishing scholarships to enable participation in AAMAS from the least developed countries and encourage participation from underrepresented groups, (ii) providing facilities to facilitate participation and active engagement of those needing assistance in some way, e.g. parents of small children (a cause close to my heart as a mum of a small boy), and (iii) improving mechanisms already in place to ensure IFAAMAS is a safe space where all participants feel welcome and included.

- Educating AAMAS core topics: The public and even students in higher education are increasingly adopting a narrow view of AI and what it means and covers. To ensure the healthy growth of AAMAS community and its output, it is important to educate the wider community about the importance of agents and multiagent systems and their role within the current and future AI systems. To this end, I am keen to be involved in developing activities, courses, online material, ... to promote core AAMAS topics.

- Ensuring quality and excellence: This could be achieved by attracting a larger qualified pool of reviewers, improving the reviewer/paper matching system, and designing mechanisms to ensure the reviews remain high quality and unbiased.