Neil Yorke-Smith – IFAAMAS Board Statement

Bio.   Neil Yorke-Smith directs the Socio-Technical Algorithmic Research (STAR) Lab at TU Delft. He obtained a doctorate degree from Imperial College London, UK, and held positions at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, and SRI International, USA. He took sabbatical leave in 2012 at the Agents group of RMIT University, Australia. Yorke-Smith is a Senior Member of AAAI, a Senior Member of ACM, and a member of CLAIRE and ELLIS.

Since 2017 Yorke-Smith is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands. His current research interests are in agent-based modelling and simulation, and (multi-agent) reinforcement learning for combinatorial optimisation. Yorke-Smith has also contributed to intelligent agent theory, and led agent-based applications in personal assistance and logistics domains. His work won the Best Blue Sky Paper Award of AAMAS 2017.

Service to AAMAS and AI community.   Neil Yorke-Smith was Programme Co-Chair of AAMAS in 2020 with Bo An, and served several times as Proceedings Co-Chair of AAMAS (2023, 2018, 2015), and as Co-Chair of the AAMAS–ICAPS co-located System Demonstrations in 2010. He was a panellist at the Doctoral Consortium of AAMAS in 2019 and 2010. He also served as General Chair of the Benelux AI conference (BNAIC/BeNeLearn) in 2023, Sponsorship Co-Chair of ICAPS in 2023, Programme Chair of IAAI in 2021, and Community and Diversity Co-Chair of IJCAI in 2020, among other service roles; and currently sits on the Editorial Boards of the journals AI, Constraints, JAAMAS and JAIR.

Goals.   Since my first AAMAS conference in 2006, I have appreciated the diversity and friendliness of the AAMAS community. If elected to the Board, here are four priorities for my energy:

Industrial use of agent technology From my experience of deploying agent-based system to the real world, I am keen for us as a community to bolster the connection between research on intelligent agents and multi-agent systems, and development of systems by industry. In my view, companies and applications are systematically under-represented at AAMAS.

Accessibility for lower-income countries My experience of working at a university in a middle-income country (Lebanon) showed me the challenges that such colleagues face in producing and disseminating quality research in AI. Some other AI conferences now offer reduced registration fees, or travel bursaries, for academics from such countries and their students. Are we aware of the barriers various groups can have to attend AAMAS and feel part of our community, and how can we address these?

Outreach to students beyond the AAMAS community When masters and doctoral students are looking for a topic, is multi-agent systems on their radar? This has motivated my giving tutorials on agent-based social simulation at European AI summer schools. How can we think broadly about connecting to enthusiastic starting researchers who might not have heard of AAMAS yet?

Retaining AAMAS as a top-choice AI venue While AAMAS has an enviable history, the 'third AI summer' is seeing more attention put on huge conferences like current AAAI and NeurIPS. Personally I appreciate that AAMAS is not at such a scale. However I want people working in AI to be aware of AAMAS, and for our community not to be accidentally bypassed by current trends. I see multiple related issues here (some outside our control); one area we can influence is for instance the attractiveness of the AAMAS publications experience (timeline, review quality, respectful feedback, etc).