SOCM2013 Workshop Chairs' Welcome

This Workshop on the Theory and Practice of Social Machines, *SOCM2013,* represents the first gathering of researchers interested in integrated methods of studying Web-based socio-technical systems as "Social Machines" - systems characterised by emergent, collective problem solving, in which we see problems solved by very large scale human participation via the Web.

Developing our understanding of such systems will lead the way to better methods to support purposeful human interaction on the World Wide Web, of the kind exemplified by phenomena such as Wikipedia and Galaxy Zoo. These collaborations are empowering, as communities are able to autonomously identify and solve problems, harnessing their commitment, local knowledge and embedded skills, without having to rely on remote experts or governments.

"Machines" used to be programmed by programmers and used by users. The Web, and the massive participation in it, has dissolved this boundary: we now see configurations of people interacting with content and each other, typified by social web sites. Rather than dividing between the human and machine parts of the collaboration (as computer science has traditionally done), we should draw a line around them and treat each such assembly as a machine in its own right comprising digital and human components - a Social Machine. This crucial transition in thinking acknowledges the reality of today's socio-technical systems. This view is of an ecosystem not of humans and computers but of co-evolving Social Machines.

The ambition of an integrated research agenda around Social Machines is to enable an understanding of the ways that systems that currently exist have evolved to their current states, and to identify patterns and ways that the next generations of social machines may be built; understanding the attributes of the current generation of successful social machines will help us build the next. It is with the goal of gathering broad expertise and insight by connecting across related research endeavours from the greater World Wide Web, social science and Human Computer Interaction communities that we have called this workshop together. We hope that this workshop will allow us to identify core challenges and research approaches that may drive and guide our collective research efforts pertaining to Social Machines as a research area.

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