

## Nominee: Svetlana Obraztsova

**Bio:** Svetlana Obraztsova is an Assistant Professor at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU Singapore). Her research focuses on securing social choice outcomes (“purely theoretically”, as she likes to joke). During her earlier career stages she work was already recognised with a nomination for the Best Paper Award at AAMAS-2011, and received the Pragnesh Jay Modi Best Student Paper Award at AAMAS-2012. Uncommonly, her research output supported two distinct PhD degrees: in Graph Theory from the Steklov Institute of Mathematics (St.Petersburg, Russia, 2011), and in Computational Social Choice from NTU Singapore (2012). Svetlana has expanded on these with a postdoctoral fellow appointment at the Israeli Centre of Research Excellence (I-CORE) affiliated with the Tel-Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a contract with the CoreLab of the National Technical University of Athens.

**Involvement with AAMAS and the AI Community at large:** AAMAS is Svetlana’s home community, and she has attended all conferences since 2011. From 2012 onward she promptly responding to all calls to review papers and to join Program and Senior Program Committees. Dissatisfied with this form of contribution, Svetlana has also developed a conference tutorial on “Voting and Candidacy Games”, that was presented both at AAMAS-2015 and IJCAI-2017. The latter is indicative of Svetlana’s wider contribution to the AI Community, and her continued service at AAI and IJCAI conferences, and a slew of other workshops and specialised conferences (COMSOC, ADT, GAIW, TARK, WINE, SAGT, etc.) She actively participates in shaping the future of the Computational Social Choice research, and was an invited speaker at the respective COST Action event.

### Goals and Issues of Interest:

**Support for critical career transitions:** AAMAS already provides a variety of activities and supports for PhD students, and further developments would be very welcome. One aspect of this support, however, remains sadly lacking: transitions into and from PhD student status. For instance, PhD students are well supported by Summer Schools and other similar events to assist them in establishing and broadening their knowledge base, while they seek their Thesis subject. But in many cases PhD students are forced by circumstance to fall in line with their supervisors research, and only when they start transitioning out of a PhD program that they discover the need for a wider and more global view of AI/MAS. By that time, its is too late, and these students are at the mercy of their supervisors to ensure the continuation of their career. This must change. It is Svetlana’s opinion that *independent* opportunities must be made available to those students to break-out either during or immediately *after* PhD completion. Another idea is to expand the current use of the “student first-author” marker. Senior members have a separate track at AAI, and AAMAS “BlueSky” tends to favour them as well. Why not create a student-specialised track for independent student-only papers. This will also allow for a much younger crowd (future PhD students) to get some traction within the community.

**Career growth opportunities for women is far from uniform across the globe:** While many countries, such as Singapore and Israel, enjoy stable growth opportunities for women in STEM, these are exceptions, rather than a rule. Svetlana has many connections that cross “country blocks”, and this has supplied her with ample evidence of the discrepancy in the treatment of female candidates, the effect of social and cultural pressures. As a member of the Board, Svetlana plans to use the prestige of AAMAS to establish a “recommenders” program for women scientists to boost their appeal in countries where such appearances unfortunately still matter. The fact that AAMAS travels across the globe, appropriate outreach will allow female students and young researchers easier access to such a recommender program, circumventing the dependence on potential supervisors or social constraints.