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The Role of Academic Associations in Promoting Social Action

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Abstract:

This paper debates whether the Association for Information Systems (AIS) and similar academic associations should leverage their power, resources, and collective expertise to promote the utilization of information technology for supporting social action undertaken by its members. Social action refers to activities designed to generate an impact on the well-being of society. The paper suggests that the AIS should advance cautiously by supporting and empowering members in their quest to engage in social action. The paper also explores the mechanism needed to realize this vision. We conclude that the community should hold further debates on the scope of the association's involvement and procedures in various fora of interest.

Keywords: Social Action, Stewardship, Academic Associations, AIS.

[Department statements, if appropriate, will be added by the editors. Teaching cases and panel reports will have a statement, which is also added by the editors.]

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1 Introduction

The academic field of Information Systems (IS) is changing to fit the dynamic world in which we live. Many researchers in the IS field choose to investigate phenomena and design systems that go beyond the organizational boundaries to address issues related to digital technology in communities, countries, and societies worldwide. Subsequently, our classes address societal issues and some of our journals are open nowadays to publish research outside the traditional Management of Information Systems (MIS) focus to include societal issues. This openness may be due to the growing pervasiveness of digital technology in our lives and the weakening boundaries between work and home. The pervasiveness of and dependency on digital technology increases public awareness of its importance and creates a corresponding demand for digital technology-related knowledge and skills that higher education can and should provide. Although our field has attempted to address important societal issues, it can do more to impact society.

Despite the early days' visions and expectations, the growing demand for digital technology has not reduced the digital divide on most socio-economic dimensions (e.g., Hidalgo et al., 2020). The expanded development of digital technology to address practically all aspects of life has not reached and has not benefited all people equally. Almost a quarter of the world's population cannot use the Internet. The growing wealth and variety of digital offerings have increased the uneven distribution of knowledge around the globe and contributed further to the digital divide. Potentially, however, the IS field has the opportunity to help reduce the digital divide, as part of its scholarly mission, by supporting the IS community members who utilize digital technology for the benefit of society at large and serve as agents of social innovation in underserved communities (Avital et al., 2007). Our thoughts about IS academics' possible involvement and contribution to society may be seen as part of a broader issue relating to the question of whether our role as academics is limited to gaining an understanding of the quality of life or is also to improve the world and create a better world for future generations. Furthermore, talking about our role as academics in improving well-being raises the question of whether we have the right means and capabilities to define digital technology-related improvement to well-being.

Although the motivation of this paper refers to the IS field and the Association for Information Systems (AIS), most of our community members see themselves as part of a higher-education institution, which itself is usually part of a community or city. The involvement of universities and colleges in the communities surrounding them is growing, and, in some cases, academics' involvement and contribution have come to be expected. The higher-education institutions usually contribute to the public in what they can do best, e.g., popular courses or seminar series, social activities with educational components, physical facilities, free of charge or subsidized professional clinics such as medical or law clinics, and various student projects. The broader view of our roles as academics has implications for the IS field and its association AIS (Avital et al., 2011), particularly in reference to the actions our field may take to consider more closely our impact on external stakeholders (Petter et al., 2021).

We are not alone in our concerns for social action. Several academic organizations, some with research domains that overlap with ours, have called for and are already engaged in similar actions. The primary mission of the interdisciplinary organization Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM) is to support credible and useful research in the academic field of management. Building on the premise that research is the foundation of management education and practice, it calls to strengthen the understated integrity and relevance of research (RRBM Network, 2021). In the belief that this state of affairs must change to ensure credible knowledge that can inform policy and practice. It calls for specific actions to transform management research toward achieving humanity's highest aspirations for a better world. Similar calls for expanding research foci come from the National Academy of Engineering, which encourages its field to meet the challenge in several areas that overlap with our interests such as education, artificial intelligence, healthcare, and cyberspace security (Bridge, 2023). Nevertheless, these efforts in related academic fields (e.g., Harley & Fleming, 2021), as well as in the IS field (e.g., Burton-Jones, 2021) focus on research. In this paper, we wish to go beyond research and education duties to address the academic association's support for members' direct involvement in social action.

Taking an IS viewpoint, we look at the direct involvement of IS faculty members in serving the community at large through the auspices of our association, namely the AIS. Individual members have already attempted to take social action, albeit in the context of educational or academic programs in which the direct

beneficiaries are teachers or students. The Global Text Project initiated by Rick Watson (McCubbrey, Huang, Wagner, & Watson, 2006) operated for about five years before it ran out of funding. Unfortunately, the funding from an external foundation (unrelated to AIS) was not renewed. Another project facilitates visits of faculty from abroad to help supervise the research of PhD students at Addis Ababa University. This project is ongoing and its graduates contribute to the local economy as practitioners or through academic positions. Additionally, our conferences, particularly the regional conferences, often find ways to support the participation of individual academics that potentially can go back to take social action in their local community. Nevertheless, these actions are restricted to academia and academics. We wish to consider here direct involvement in social action that is not necessarily targeted to academic audiences and that may reach the community at large directly.

We know, as stated above that some members of AIS are already utilizing their expertise to benefit the well-being of people around the world. However, these efforts undertaken by individual members could be more effective and widespread if they were orchestrated and supported by AIS. We wish to address the dilemmas AIS may face as an organization when promoting coordination and collaboration of voluntary social action, keeping politics outside its activities. In particular, we wish to ask:

How and to what extent should the AIS leverage its power and resources to support social action undertaken by its members?

We examine the role of AIS as an association of educators and researchers who understand the potential of digital technology to facilitate coordination and collaboration of social action across social, cultural and economic boundaries. We wish to examine the feasibility and impact of social action, supported by the AIS, on normal days and in days of crisis, including natural disasters as well as human-inflicted crises. For the purpose of this discussion, we regard social action as purposive and collective action designed to help improve the well-being of people situated in the social actors' immediate community or in a remote community. We believe that AIS members can have a unique impact through their efforts to enable and empower people in diverse contexts by promoting the use of digital technology to benefit people's well-being.

AIS is in a prime position to orchestrate humanitarian projects undertaken by its members. For example, AIS could support and amplify the actions of the several IS community members who used digital technology to support Syrian refugees in Germany (AbuJarour, 2019). There is no question that AIS utilizes its resources regularly to disseminate its members' research. Indeed, the case study of using digital technology for refugees was disseminated through AIS publications and panels. Originally, the researchers studied how the Syrian refugees leverage digital technology to support their journey, settlement, and life in Germany once settled. Naturally, the authors' next step was to generalize to other cases of refugees that could benefit from digital technology. The role of AIS in disseminating such lessons learned in order to help others seems straightforward and part of its mission. At ICIS 2022, a panel, which included a director of a local agency supporting the refugees, discussed the refugee case and, more generally, the importance of engaging in social action and the possibilities of promoting and publishing it. The panelists hoped that the knowledge gained and disseminated would affect the practice of individuals and agencies using digital technology to improve the well-being of refugees around the world. Publication in academic outlets, however, may not be sufficient for effectively transferring knowledge to practitioners who need to implement technologies in specific situations governed by local regulations and norms. We should explore further means of sharing knowledge with practice (Te'eni, Seidel, & Vom Brocke, 2017).

This paper reports on the discussion of an intercontinental panel in ECIS 2022 (Te'eni et al., 2022) that comprised the following: Michel Avital (currently Scandinavia and previously North America), Tilo Böhmann (Europe), Emma Coleman (South Africa), and Monideepa Tarafdar (currently North America and formerly Europe and Asia), and Dov Te'eni (Middle East and formerly North America), who chaired the panel.

The panel progressed in five stages to tackle the feasibility and desirability of the AIS support of its members to engage in social action, as follows: 1) an introduction, 2) the four panelists' opening statements on the feasibility of utilizing AIS resources as enablers or promoters of coordination and collaboration in times of calm and crisis, 3) an open discussion from the audience on feasibility, 4) the panelists' thoughts about the desirability of engaging in altruistic efforts that go beyond the support of IS research and IS education and the support of its members' well-being, and 5) an open discussion from the audience on desirability. Open

discussions included an online poll of opinions using Slido. The audience represented the views of AIS members as well as the views of AIS leaders.

Building on our panel discussion, we wish to deal with the question of what further actions the AIS can take, beyond research dissemination through its current channels, to leverage the use of digital technology for the well-being of people in need of support around the world.

This report is organized slightly differently. In the panel, we began with concrete efforts to demonstrate the feasibility and only then discussed the desirability of AIS interventions in such actions. Here, we start with opinions about whether AIS should go beyond its current mission to support members who engage in social action and only then follow with concrete ideas about what and how AIS can do in this regard.

Accordingly, the next two sections ask, respectively, whether we should engage in social action and, if so, how. As it becomes apparent, the panel's answer to the first question is consensually cautious while the second question's answers are quite diverse.

2 Should AIS Support Social Action for Society?

Most academics are evaluated mainly for their work as researchers and educators, and also for their professional service to their academic field or institution. In addition to these duties, some academics wish to leverage their own knowledge and expertise but also the collective expertise of their professional community to benefit individuals and communities. Unfortunately, however, they lack the ability or resources to do so on their own. Should academic associations of members in a certain academic discipline, such as IS, support their members' endeavors to help people in need? For instance, should the association go beyond the provision of the customary channels of research-oriented publication and engage in a more effective transfer of knowledge that primarily benefits the target recipients rather than the researchers involved? Moreover, should the association take responsibility for disseminating the lessons learned from specific social-action projects undertaken by its members, e.g., by curating the relevant materials using the association's resources for easy access by future similar social-action projects that can benefit from such experiences?

Let's take for example an ICT clinic organized in the early nineties by faculty at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland Ohio (Te'eni, 1994). The ICT clinic was linked to a university course on Systems Development that involved students with systems development projects in not-for-profit organizations. The ICT clinic would match a team of students to an organization in need. The organizations ranged from very small, e.g., a local children's museum, to very large, e.g., the world-renowned Cleveland Orchestra. Some of the organizations had the means to pay for the services; others did not. Most probably, there are quite a few similar initiatives in other cities, in other countries, that had a certain local impact but no bearing on one another.

More generally, we ask whether AIS, as a global association of researchers, should leverage its resources to support social-action endeavors led by individual AIS members, what should be the criteria for supporting social action, and what are the advantages of doing so? The overall reaction of the panelists was "yes, but..." we should proceed with caution, beginning with what seems to be easy to implement. It is easier therefore to structure the report of the panel discussion around the reservations and cautionary notes.

3 Start with Non-Controversial Low Hanging Fruits

The panel discussion about the AIS involvement in social action underlined the distinction between the individual and the association levels. It brought to the surface the possibility of different rules and constraints for each level and the possibility of an empowerment relationship. The association can empower individuals or a community of individuals to act. The panelists and audience members used the word 'empowering' repeatedly, but they differed on the scope of empowerment.

One suggestion was to concentrate on empowering individuals and communities to *learn* from each other's experiences. The key resources needed are those enabling easy transfer of knowledge, easy access to know-how based on experiences once available, and structured and repeatable processes of organized

lessons learned by individual members and communities. Empowering individuals to learn from each case how to engage in social action will most likely increase the efficiency and effectiveness of social action undertaken by members of the association. We believe however that the dissemination of knowledge on social action by the community amongst our members will also empower them to become better educators and researchers by increasing their awareness and sensitivity to social action.

A different form of empowerment is empowering individual members to implement social action by providing them with resources, e.g., by providing them with resources to supply digital services to people in need of the services but without the ability to purchase them. Part of the panel thought that such action on behalf of the association may be going too far. Even if feasible, which is doubtful, creating the platforms to achieve social impact has never been part of the association's mission and may require a rethinking of the community's professional identity. One direction that seemed feasible is to collaborate with non-academic organizations that donate or subsidize resources such as access to internet-based public workspaces in Ukraine. Overall, direct involvement in social action may be appropriate for associations of practitioners, in which voluntary action may be aligned more easily with the members' personal goals compared to the typical academics who concentrate on teaching and research.

There was a general agreement in the panel that empowering individuals to share their social action experiences and to collaborate with one another may be a feasible and worthy role for AIS, but any such action should start with an affirmative framing (Avital et al., 2006) to avoid controversy and foster cross-boundary collaboration as much as possible. There are two elements to empowerment—one has to do with organizing social action and the other with providing content to support social action. The association can assume the role of a convener, orchestrator, or matchmaker that empowers collaboration by linking individuals and groups around the world that have a shared interest in promoting a certain social action agenda. The other element of empowerment is content.

Consider the following experience in which one of the panelists served as PI. "We were writing a grant for the UK's ESRC, which was ultimately successful. It was a £1 million grant. A four-page impact statement was an essential part of the application, which would be evaluated with the same level of importance as the theoretical contribution statement. Both statements were of equal length. While looking for resources that would help with the impact statement, we realized that the AIS has excellent resources on research and teaching but no content on impact." The AIS library could be an effective repository of knowledge on the impact of digital technology-related social action. This is an example of a risk-free organizing service to help members engage in social action by providing the knowledge from which members can pull the needed materials.

Content creation is therefore the other part of empowerment. We can start small and we can create relatively risk free. To begin with, the AIS can develop a repository of books, papers, and websites related to the policy and practice pertaining to the impact of IS research. For example, both JAIS and *Information and Organization* have sections on policy-oriented papers. Such papers can be included in the repository. Further, policy organizations such as the Brookings Institution have resources such as white papers that can point readers to problems deemed important by government departments and funding agencies. Once such a repository is at play; interested AIS members can take on the task of managing and updating it, similarly to how they maintain any other professional repositories of knowledge. Content creation is also relatively risk free and while it can facilitate AIS members' access to resources, it does not direct members to engage in social action.

4 Association's Processes for Deliberating on Social Action

The audience and panelists voiced concerns about how to scope the association's involvement in social action through effective and just organizational processes when going beyond its current mission. One point raised was the need to explain the shifting focus from the traditional marketplace impact that dominates the work of many IS scholars to include also social impact. Dealing with social action is likely to be seen as a first step to expand our work with industry to promote social welfare together. Moreover, association forums, town hall discussions, council meetings, conference panels, and senior scholar meetings should deliberate on how the association can support its members who generate value for society in order to establish a clear direction for the association's leadership. At one point, we believe some form of institutional leadership is needed to implement the emerging policies, probably at the level of a dedicated vice president role in AIS or a dedicated committee.

Any allocation of resources to social action must raise the question of what ‘good’ social action is worthy of support. Again, the distinction between individuals and the association is critical. Academics cherish their academic freedom in deciding what to research, and, *a fortiori*, wish to self-select their involvement in social action according to their personal value system. In contrast, the association may need to set some broad borderlines to prohibit the dissemination of questionable materials on social action through the association’s networks, just as we have a committee that oversees the ethical conduct of our members. It is an entirely different case when the association is called upon to decide which social cause deserves support and which does not, or putting it more bluntly, what is considered good and what is bad. The panelists emphatically opposed the idea that the association would engage in such deliberations, and believed that, currently, it does not have the capacity to do so.

Having heard the discussions in the room, the audience was asked to respond to an online questionnaire. Figure 1 summarizes their answers.

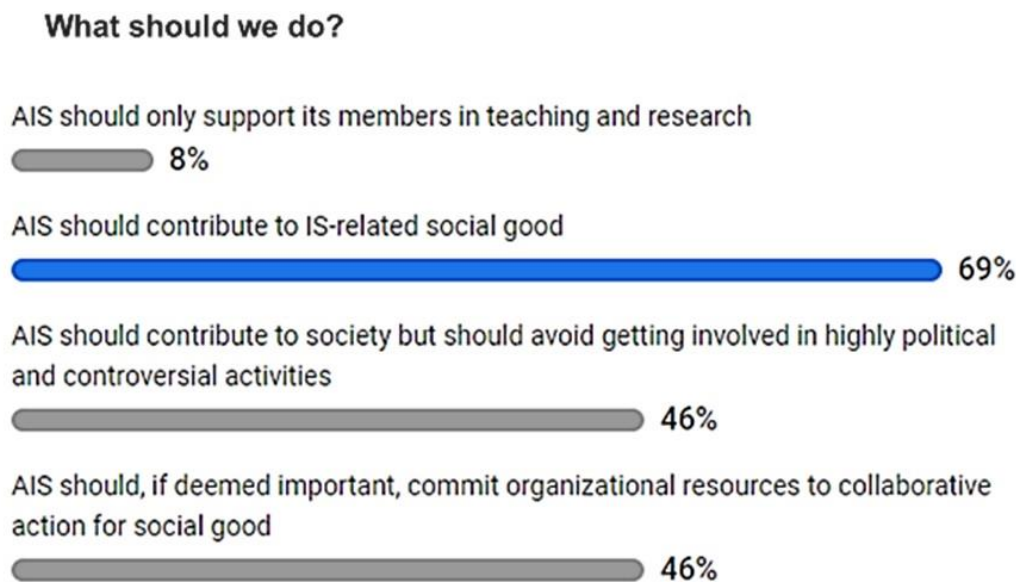


Figure 1. Audience Responses to "Should we"

5 What Support from AIS is Feasible?

The above discussion clearly indicates the panel's inclination to limit the involvement of the association in direct social action and to concentrate, at least initially, on empowerment. Given this inclination, this section explores the ideas that emerged in the panel for specific activities to empower, such as knowledge sharing, and for governing and managing the empowerment of members to engage in social action.

5.1 Facilitating Knowledge Sharing

The association currently supports knowledge dissemination through written publications, conference discussions published as proceedings, and other forms of interactive knowledge sharing, such as developmental workshops and tutorials. These knowledge-sharing channels are designed primarily for researchers and teachers. The association supports a few channels designed to disseminate knowledge generated by its members to practitioners. But these channels are less popular and some are still under development, e.g., the AIS InPractice initiative (see <https://ais-inpractice.org/>). The panel concentrated on sharing relevant knowledge designed to reach the academics and practitioners engaging in social action.

We used the ‘bridge’ metaphor to argue that the association should build bridges for knowledge sharing within and across the IS field to reach the individual members engaged in social action.

The first issue raised is the identification of the target audiences for knowledge sharing. One obvious starting point is the local community of the particular IS member, such as the local not-for-profit organization that

can benefit from a university-based ICT clinic (as reported earlier). Another is to seek large companies; directly or indirectly when we work with them on consulting. For example, we can build bridges with various industrial associations like the Chartered Institute in the UK or a similar institute elsewhere. We can also build bridges with legislative bodies, ministries and working groups; we can provide calls for action. We have done that quite often in the UK.

One of the panelists highlighted that point and said “When we build bridges, what we are saying is that as a higher-education scholar, I do not just have one role: I am a teacher, I am a researcher, and I am an *impact generator*. And somehow these roles as a teacher and scholar are combining together to enable me to generate some impact which is then enacted by talking to the different bodies, industry associations, local organizations and legislative bodies.”

All this begs the question of how we build bridges. Much of what the association currently supports resides in the AIS library, which is a rich repository of digital technology-related knowledge. This is not to criticize anyone but just to show where we are and how the knowledge we create is disseminated. So far, the AIS resources for research include curations (the E-library), AIS pages on research methods, and AIS conference websites. These are the available AIS resources for research. We also have a few AIS resources for teaching. In contrast, when one looks for AIS resources on practice, not much is available. As described above, when one of the panelists searched for such resources, she could not find any meaningful content.

The general sentiment of the panel was that there is no institutional support for those who want to engage in impact generation and that we must talk to others in our networks in search of relevant information and knowledge. The outcome often amounts to much anecdotal evidence from seniors or peers sharing their experience, but not anything structured from the AIS. To reiterate, we can build bridges with many entities despite not having enough support now and it is understandable given that the AIS resources are currently focused only on research and teaching.

Another way to apply the ‘bridge’ metaphor would be in the context of reverse innovation when social action knowledge passes from less technologically developed countries to more developed countries that struggle with similar social situations. For example, mobile payment services started in developing countries because there was a large population of people that did not have a bank account; and today mobile payment services also benefit people in more developed countries. In general, the innovation that was developed to mitigate extreme situations in a developing country may be helpful to address problems of certain sectors in developed countries. Similarly, since the COVID virus pandemic, many innovations that have emerged out of necessity have continued to benefit individuals.

As researchers, we have a role in innovation re-contextualization—we identify and capture innovations in one context and transfer or adapt them to another context. At the very least, we can play a role in identifying and tracking innovation. How far our role goes, what bridges we should build to connect the different countries, and what impact we ought to have on the world are the questions we should debate.

Another role the association can play is the facilitation of social collaboration geared towards social action. Of course, platforms for social collaboration exist in many associations to matchmake and encourage group development, e.g., form groups for digital innovation. Combining social collaboration platforms with the association’s resources, such as membership data on contact information and interests or knowledge repositories in the e-library, may lead to more effective formation of social-action teams and more intimate transfer of relevant knowledge from one member to another, e.g., by facilitating interactive guidance.

5.2 Governing and Managing the Association’s Social Action

The first step for the governance of social action would be to *recognize* research that has impact on society. We should extend recognition actions we have already initiated. In a sense, the AIS has already decided to recognize individuals or groups that engage with impactful research and do so formally with the *AIS impact reward*¹. The AIS Impact Award is given to individuals and teams of researchers that have created an impact on practice in business and society through their work. The award follows a broad

¹ see <https://aisnet.org/general/custom.asp?page=AISSImpactAward>

understanding of impact by considering the impact visible in thought leadership outside academia, broad usage, or positive effects on businesses, organizations, and society. The awardees are a testament to this broad understanding. For example, information systems researchers created educational programs reaching out to remote rural communities in Asia. Others helped create global standards or regulations for consumer privacy, Blockchain governance, or novel forms of mobility. This shows that impactful research is already happening in our community and AIS can help make this research visible and recognized, with the awardees inspiring many colleagues to pursue similarly impactful work².

The road to establishing institutional support for social action has several *challenges* that determine what we can do and to what extent. Firstly, what are the *values* that we can point to and can we say whether we have done well to make society better? Do we have the same set of values that we all use when it comes to that? Secondly, can we demonstrate the upsides as well as the downsides of particular social actions? And to what extent should we pursue social action? Figuratively, how much is the social action building bridges or ripping them apart? To reiterate, we should begin by recognizing formally as a community those individuals or groups of researchers for their social action for a better society.

Once, we agree on what social action we consider to be worthy of the association's support, we should consider the mechanisms of governing and managing it we can put in place. One form of governance may be to appoint a vice president for social action to coordinate the processes of deliberation and implementation. This role may differ from or extend the existing role of associate vice president of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Another operational mechanism for empowering members and communities of the association to collaborate efficiently is to build the necessary organizational infrastructure in the form of *Special Collaboration Groups* (SCGs), much like the existing special interest groups (SIGs). We can build platforms to create special collaboration groups which will be a platform for likeminded people who wish to do something that has nothing to do with IS or research proper but to perform some other activities to create networks among each other that bring value. That is the basic idea in terms of a special collaboration group as an infrastructure. This can lead to collaborative action by allowing people to bridge between different universities, countries, continents, and to bridge into other industries and fields. This can be done in a decentralized way where no central entity is in control and everyone works together to get the job done.

5.3 Reactions from the Audience

The audience raised several important reasons for but also caveats to the involvement of AIS in social action. One commentator raised the generally important caution for any organization, especially not-for-profit organizations, namely that any new initiative should be considered in light of its mission. The AIS mission has been traditionally to operate in the context of the business world. Secondly, extending the AIS mission to include social action will require much deliberation, so it is crucial to set in place mechanisms for discussion and decisions about it. Generally, we should have open discussions about all pertinent issues, e.g., whether we should hold hybrid conferences or allow the use of Generative AI for paper writing. There are already many ongoing discussions the association must manage to keep up with the services it provides to the members. Can we add more topics of discussion to an already busy agenda? The exact mechanisms for effective debate are yet to be determined, ranging from town hall discussions to council deliberations.

Members suggested using existing structures, in addition to or in combination with the proposed Special Collaboration Groups, under some form of coordination such as a vice president that sees all structures. AIS structures already in place that can help are the SIGs and the country chapters. There are two types of possible initiatives. One is more micro, local initiatives to inspire a specific community that we work with. And that's something the AIS doesn't get involved in because it requires the association's control over a specific researcher or groups of researchers. And the other, the second part, is more of a business or macro initiative, which can be orchestrated by AIS.

² The AIS maintains an overview of awardees: <https://ishistory.aisnet.org/awards/ais-impact-award/>

The infrastructure for the micro initiatives is already in place. The chapters and, particularly, the SIGs are excellent platforms on which bridges across countries and communities can be built. The SIGs, as international groups of researchers who are focused on specific research interests can be an excellent infrastructure for addressing specific international challenges. The macro initiative will have to be facilitated by the association.

Country chapters may be especially effective in capturing and applying the requisite knowledge of social action because social action is almost always sensitive to the recipients of the social action living in a particular social, economic and cultural context, which may be harder for a foreigner to understand and to decontextualize so that knowledge sharing with colleagues operating in different contexts becomes more effective.

What can the AIS do?



Figure 2. Priorities for Social Action by AIS (Audience Responses to "Can we")

Much like the experiences reported earlier by the panelist that was involved in seeking funding for a social action proposal, we heard from the audience a convincing argument for the need to support members' social action. In Madrid, Spain, the IS faculty at the IE university wished to help local small businesses suffering from the economic impact of Covid. One challenge for these small organizations, shops, and restaurants, for example, was the lack of means to communicate with clients. The university's IS faculty joined forces with Amazon to provide accessibility and platforms for webpages that could be designed to promote the business. The university then sought guidance on how to train business owners or managers. AIS had no online resources and no person to turn to. Ironically, eventually, after struggling to solve the problem from scratch on their own, the Spanish group found out that colleagues at Temple University, USA, had undergone a similar experience. At a minimum, the association can ensure that members engaged in social action have access to the knowledge of others in the community in organized repositories. Moreover, the association can have a mechanism or functionary in place to support the matchmaking between such parties. One such mechanism would be the Special Collaboration Groups.

The audience's responses to the poll about preferences or priorities of the various types of social action are shown in Figure 2. In addition, the free form suggestions and comments are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Free Form Comments on Social Action

The practitioner sections in journals and journals dedicated to practice (e.g., MISQ executive) sound good to me. No need to overstep the boundaries of AIS. We had better use the existing "infrastructure".
Engage senior and junior members in joint action.
Increase inclusion of IS researchers in AIS from developing countries and increase capacities for IS research in developing countries through knowledge transfer.
AIS could leverage its resources and network to allow initiatives to scale, either by matching additional resources/skills or by providing blueprints of initiatives that can be replicated in or customized to other places. Reducing the ramp up costs may already help a lot.
Collaboration with other associations, e.g., IEEE, ACM, IFIP.
Leverage chapters and local groups. Involve industry, and companies helping or sponsoring activities from the association.
Leverage visibility of impactful activities and collaboration at chapter/regional levels.
Leverage global consensus on what impact is in IS.
Please do good in the world.

6 Conclusion

The panel aimed to explore how and to what extent the AIS should leverage its power and resources to support social action undertaken by its members. The general sentiment in the panel discussion and the audience response was that AIS should support and nurture individuals and communities that wish to engage in social action for the benefit of society. There was an overall agreement in the panel that AIS can assume the role of a convener, orchestrator, or matchmaker that empowers collaboration and facilitates knowledge sharing by linking individuals and groups around the world that have a shared interest in promoting a certain social action.

Furthermore, AIS should get involved in social action cautiously and gradually while considering and setting the institutional boundaries and perhaps priorities on the types of support to be provided. Association forums, town hall discussions, council meetings, conference panels, and senior scholar meetings should deliberate on how the association can support its members in generating value for society in order to establish a clear direction for the association's leadership. The panel also suggested that some form of institutional leadership is needed to implement the emerging policies, probably at the level of a dedicated vice president role in AIS or a dedicated committee. Regardless, the first step would be for AIS to recognize social action as a worthy cause to support and to recognize individuals for their social-action efforts.

A few cautionary comments and suggestions may serve as food for thought about how to proceed with specific action items. One is to find the appropriate mechanisms for supporting knowledge sharing effectively. Forming Special Collaboration Groups (SCGs), much like the SIGs, would probably represent the closest and most applicable form of knowledge sharing. Leveraging other forms of meetings and collaboration such as country chapters and the SIGs are also called for. The country chapters are effective in capturing the particular context, social and cultural, in which the requisite knowledge transforms into action. SIGs are effective in bringing topical knowledge and expert networks to develop tailored and localized social action. Put together, these forms of collaboration and knowledge sharing can enable overlapping *circles of impact*, which expand on the different dimensions. Finally, it has become evident through the panel discussion that we should reach an agreement on what social action we consider to be worthy of the association's support before moving forward to establish institutional support for those who want to engage in impact generation and the mechanisms of governing and managing it.

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