



6th Conference on Applications of Social Network Analysis

Introduction: Applications of Social Network Analysis

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Abstract

Social Network Analysis (SNA) has gained importance over the last two decades, both as a research program and toolbox for network analytical applications in various settings. The international conference on Applications of Social Network Analysis (ASNA) brings together network scholars from different interdisciplinary backgrounds and provides a forum to discuss latest research results and new applications. The contributions included in these proceedings are a selection of the papers from the 6th ASNA conference, which took place in Zurich, Switzerland, from 26-28 August 2009, and reflect the wide array of SNA applications presented and discussed every year at ASNA.

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Social Network Analysis (SNA) has gained importance over the last two decades, both as a research program and toolbox for network analytical applications in various settings. As a research stream, SNA has established a new paradigm in the social and behavioral sciences that focuses both conceptually and methodologically on relational characteristics of social phenomena and behavioral patterns. It distinguishes itself from traditional scientific approaches that typically analyze – at least methodologically – the different objects of investigation as independent from each other. In practical applications of network analytical tools and techniques, SNA has established itself as a useful approach to study the interconnectivity of individual or collective actors in social processes such as communication flows or decision-making situations. Due to the practical usefulness of its rather easily accessible basic concepts and techniques, SNA has also attracted an increasing interest from practitioners, either as contractors or sponsors of network studies or as users of network analytical tools and applications.

The international conference on Applications of Social Network Analysis (ASNA) provides a yearly forum for academics and practitioners that do research on SNA-related concepts and methods and/or apply SNA techniques and tools in their academic or practical work. With a shared interest in network analytical concepts and techniques, ASNA brings together scholars and practitioners with different disciplinary backgrounds and fields of activity. Well-positioned particularly in the social sciences (sociology, political science, communication and media science), ASNA has also attracted growing interest among natural and computer scientists. Therefore, ASNA has made an important contribution to the promotion and advancement of SNA-related research in Switzerland and neighboring countries over the last years. Today, ASNA is an internationally recognized conference with participants from all over the world. Leading scholars have been enlisted as keynote speakers and workshop directors.

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The contributions included in these proceedings of the 6th ASNA conference (which took place from 26-28 August 2009) reflect the broad disciplinary and methodological approaches presented at ASNA. The first three contributions have a strong methodological focus. Ulrik Brandes, Jürgen Lerner, Miranda Lubbers, Christopher McCarty, José Luis Molina and Uwe Nagel analyze personal networks of migrants, applying a new method for classification in so-called network ensembles based on latent roles. The papers of Lukas Zenk and Christoph Stadtfeld and of Michael Bommarito, Daniel Katz and Jonathan Zelner analyze dynamics in networks. Zenk and Stadtfeld investigate organizational changes in a student experiment using email communication flows over time as data and demonstrate how different approaches can be useful to analyze the evolution and change of organizations. Bommarito and his colleagues, using simulated citation data, discuss available analytical techniques to study longitudinal citation data and develop a novel analytical and computational model particularly suitable for directed and acyclic network data typical for citation networks.

The remaining contributions show how network analytic approaches can be applied to a wide array of topics and research questions. Matthias Kowald, Andreas Frei, Jeremy Hackney, J. Illenberger and Kay Axhausen report on first results of a survey that investigates the links between leisure contacts and leisure activities of individuals in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland. Simona Gozzo and Rosario D'Agata analyze social interactions in a Sicilian town and their effect on individual political engagement and demonstrate the importance of different ego-network characteristics. Akima Cornell's paper describes the behavior of Least Developed Countries in international climate policy negotiations based on interactions of representatives of these countries with other delegates. Network analytical techniques allow for displaying different patterns in the whole network and relevant sub-networks that result from these interactions. Vladimir Gonzalez Gamboa, Jan Barkmann and Rainer Marggraf present a case study from Southern Ecuador and investigate how social networks can explain farmers' adoption of agroforestry species in two communities. Micheal von Kutzschenbach and Carl Brønn adopt a network approach to theories of organizational learning and develop a conceptual framework that links structural attributes with characteristics of learning in organizations. Bethany Cutts, Tischa Muñoz-Erickson, Kate Darby, Mark Neff, Elisabeth Larson, Bob Bolin and Amber Wutich examine the ego-networks of members in a natural resource management partnership to explain the initiative's rather unsuccessful outcome.