Preface

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1. This thematic issue

Our journal and the community related to it has traditionally emphasized physical environments, that is why this thematic issue is such a great complement to our most regular content. On the one hand virtual and mixed reality have been always considered an interesting part of our technical area and it is only fair we explicitly recognize this with an issue devoted to highlight progress made in that research community. On the other hand we hope this will attract the attention of the wider community to the potential for interaction between virtual and physical worlds and the synergy which can emerge from the confluence of these topics.

Traditionally, Smart Environments are identified with physical infrastructure (sensors, actuators, networks) and closely related software which is required for that infrastructure to run. The reality associated with that infrastructure is typically experienced in a confined environment as part of our physical world where existing technology supports the intended service. Virtual reality focuses on a different type of technology and the worlds to be experienced have to yet be built. Nontheless, it makes perfect sense to consider how each of these technologies can relate to and complement each other, and furthermore, to think of all the benefits of considering hybrid worlds where physical worlds are augmented with virtual ones and where virtual worlds can incorporate physical smart environments as part of their range of features. Understandably, scientific communities often grow fairly isolated from each other due to the depth of research involved within each discipline. Our hope is that this thematic issue may help build bridges between those technical disciplines.

Supplementing the technical material we also include summaries of graduations at the level of Ph.D.

2. Upcoming issues

With this volume we are entering a new phase in our journal's journey. From this volume the journal will be published every two months. This reflects the increase in submissions and requests from our community to have a higher frequency of publications which can better match the rapid pace of the technical landscape. The journal will keep the tradition of alternating Thematic Issues with Regular Issues. Hence, the issue to be published in March will be a regular issue whilst the issue to be published in May will be a Thematic Issue focused on *A Software Engineering Perspective on Smart Applications for AmI*.