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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Heredina Fernández Betancort is a Professor at the Tourism Studies and PhD in Psychology. She is a member of research groups: 'Responsible Tourism and Cultural Identity: Memory and Migration (ULPGC)' and 'Heritage Interpretation Laboratory (UAM)'. She has participated in national and regional projects about informal learning, communication, heritage sites and museums, tourism and ICT. He is a Project Coordinator about Cultural Tourism and Museums (2008 to 2009). Book publishing (2008) *Tourism, Heritage and Informal Learning: Museums as e-Labs (Emotions and Education)*.

Mikel Asensio Brouard is a Professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Director of national research projects, DGICYT, CIDE and Plan Regional, and he participated on European projects, SOCRATES, SENECA, LEONARDO; 'APPEAR' (Accessibility Projects. Sustainable Preservation and Enhancement of Urban Subsoil Archaeological Remains); 'PICTURE' (Pro-Active Management of the Impact of Cultural Tourism upon Urban Resources and Economies) from the 6th Framework Program; and the V-Must.Net (Virtual Reality Museums Network) from the 7th Framework Program. He has published more than 100 books, chapters and articles on Museology, Education and Psychology issues, The last one about 'Museums and Technologies 1, 2 & 3.0'. Also, he develop consulting, planning and museum and exhibit projects, like the National Library Museum, the Wine Museum, the Hidalgo History Museum, the National Energy Museum, the Human Evolution Museum, the National Transportation and Civil Engineering Museum, the National Health Museum, The Córdoba Fine Arts Museum, etc.

Piet Kommers is an Associate Professor at the University of Twente, The Netherlands. His work targets media, communication and education. He was the Scientific Director of the NATO advanced research workshop on learning technologies and received the UNESCO Honorary Professorship on Education Technologies in Eastern Europe and the Honorary Doctorship in Capital Normal University in Beijing. Being the Chair of the IADIS Multi Conferences and the Executive Editor of the *Inderscience* journal on web-based communities, he is a frequented speaker in conferences around the world. As becoming a Research Fellow on social media and its societal effects at Curtin University in Perth, he undertakes challenging international agendas for articulating the growing need for reorienting education in its social-/economical role.

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Cultural heritage gradually develops a more rich social embedding in which the intellectual-, the emotional- and the lifestyle aspects meet. In this way it brings an additional precursor to web-based communities. Cultural tourism works as a system in which individual elements are subsumed to the whole. One of the key features of cultural tourism compared to mass tourism is that the latter is uni-purpose, while in cultural tourism we act as multi-purpose, i.e., multi (it is more effective when there is a group of proposals relatively coordinated in the chronotopos than isolated elements, which does not affect mass tourism), and it is proactive, that is to say, it is usually associated with a more active role from the participants, with a wider range of search strategies, structure and activities in destination. Therefore, the 'agenda' of the potential visitor operates in a multi-objective and proactive way. The handling of the agenda must be done before reaching the place, and probably even before arriving at destination area. The use of internet and social networks perfectly fits in this behaviour 'type' since they are substantially proactive and perfectly adapt to target diversification given its diversification potential. For institutions and markets, both cultural and tourist, it is essential to handle the agenda in advance and this addressing must be done at an acceptable cost. Destinations can use multiple penetration strategies, from the most classic one as advertising, to the more sophisticated ones such as loyalty that seeks indirect induction through mediators (friends and acquaintances). In the first article, Fernández and Asensio seek to examine the effects of interaction between heritage sites, tourism and internet.

In our opinion, studies on the use of the web and social networks are still unreliable; in fact, they have very dissonant results. The virtuality of the digital platforms means that users of these resources become true 'invisible audiences'. In the next coming years, we will need to 'study how to study' these phenomena in a more reliable way. Related to this there are two interesting contributions: Santana Talavera, Rodríguez Darías, Díaz Rodríguez and Aguilera Ávila study the relevance of heritage in the image shared in the social network Facebook and Owens explores how to use the social web Tripadvisor to unpack the public meanings of a cultural heritage site.

In several articles, we can find how the web and the communication technologies can make heritage more accessible to current and potential audiences in tourism, more communicative through the ability to create and share resources, and more attractive by catering to the preferences of different audiences. In the third article, Etxeberria, Asensio, Vicent and Cuenca explore the used of mobile devises in archeological sites and Rabaneda reviews the current role and trend of new media in the promotion and development of cultural heritage. The following two articles focus how the change

promoted by the web-based communities has moved from the content driven to user driven websites need the development specific tools whether in the case of applications for developing portals for cultural institutions (Báscones and Carreras) and in destinations marketing organisations (Betancor, Ocón and Rubio).

Though tourism and cultural heritage inherently rests upon social processes and shared values like collective memory and admiration, it has not been clarified enough whether and why web-based communities may contribute to this sector in the near future. This is the reason for this special issue. Before, discussing the more specific ingredients in the subsequent articles, it seems more appropriate to sketch the landscape of the tourism industry and cultural heritage.

The first essential is that tourism worldwide is migrating from travelling and residing comfortably to experiential, intellectual and existentially challenging. It implies that because of the normal high intensity lifestyle of westerners, it is not sufficient for most of the tourists anymore to relax and recover through emptiness, consumerism and being entertained. In a bit transcendental mood we might say that the more advanced tourist wants to excavate a dormant element in his-/herself, via the meeting with a culture that one was completely unaware of. In terms of food or fashion, it is the unknown that is the potential ingredient that revitalises a person before being confronted with non-trivial problems once back in his own habitat. In terms of the evolution of the tourist sector it has been recognised that there is an enormous opportunity for areas where there is not yet a formula for mass tourism yet; the more subtle attractors like natural phenomena as geology and witnessing remainders from aboriginal cultures have an immediate attraction to those who are educated. However, it is not sufficient just to open the landscape and let visitors encounter historical beauties. Shortly, the tourist sector met the need to embed seductive intellectual and ambiance atmosphere islands in an unobtrusive way. Both the authentic and the instructional should stay intact without overwhelming the visitor with patronising directives how to behave. In this sense, we foresee a large need for the tourist sector to make a new balance between the highly individual sensation and the guidance in terms of local explanations via concise displays and message via the (smart) mobile devices that typically tend to have a GPS receiver nowadays, for instance. Web-based communities for mutual learning and increasing awareness between tourist organisations are needed the coming years. This special issue pretends to demonstrate how first-order urgent problems and solutions can be seen worldwide.

The second essential is that tourist sites will benefit from a social and altruistic atmosphere, rather than a harsh and competitive battle for the visitors' attention. This challenge can only be met when local stakeholders in a tourist area admit the super ordinate goal of sustainability and make guest feel comfortable throughout their stay. In other words: tourist enterprises need to establish a community so that the visitor will feel as a member of the local family. For this sake, pre-departure, on-site and post-travel communication is needed in order to find the visitor coming back in the future. Social media are tuned to extend persons' affection and positive experiences. Similar to good conference organisers; they facilitate and even promote cross-visitors contacts and stimulate an open review on the pro- and cons of certain events and facilities. Though nowadays it is systems like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, we foresee a growing role for web-based communities that are needed to preserve high-quality personal acquaintances even years after a certain encountering, or even make persons finding each other who never actually met in a certain location of cultural heritage.

The third urgent role for web-based communities is the evolving new roles for cultural heritage in itself. Though corporations and societal communities acknowledge the need for diversity, it is only still a premature notion in the fields of education and tourism; too often the traditional marketing method of ‘target group analysis’ is practiced: Attracting and keeping attention and persuade suspect customers to decide to ‘buy’. How can we expect potential visitors to be fascinated by artefacts witnessing past cultures if we have not prepared the relational perspective from a particular visitor’s own history in relation to the particular ‘cultural heritage’ on display here and now. In other words, as it comes to build a relationship between a cultural site and a visitor, we need to anticipate to the fact that intrinsically a cultural heritage has been in conflict with concurrent other cultures even not too long ago. If, one step further, we want visitors to undergo a certain mutual empathy while standing amidst a historic site, it is inevitable to anticipate to multi perspectiveness in the labelling and formulation of the historic phenomena in situ. This third role for web-based communities is the most delicate, but at the same time also the most vital factor in making cultural heritage to survive once tourists have seen more sites before. In terms of contributing to tolerance and mutual understanding it becomes more and more clear that second/third-generation migrants may ‘drop-in’ a certain monument without knowing that not too long ago their ancestors have struggled from another perspective. Web-based communities may help to mitigate through articulating what was the root of the conflict in the past, without suggesting that there is a solution in ‘knowing about’ a certain historic epoch. It is no longer a rare phenomenon that visitors with a completely different background meet on a historic site and help each other to reconstruct the historic background and discover that both have been restrained to national propagandas their (grand) parents were exposed to during and after the conflict.

In this way, we see that social media have both an awareness- and an executive role. Cultural heritage as centre of dialogue between people: the last article could be an inspiration for future developments around cultural heritage in combination with language learning. We present a research article from Nanyang University from Singapore. In the article ‘Crossing the borders in language learning through the use of web-conferencing as an e-learning tool’, two user groups from Thailand and Vietnam were followed. In the article, Bee Bee and Gardner discuss with you the result of this interesting experiment. Will it be a natural development that in future, museums and learning institutes will join forces and explore communities around the language-learning domain? Even we might say that ‘cultural tourism’ becomes a metaphor for exploring web-based communities in general. We are convinced that this special issue helps to have a closer idea on the mutual catalyst role of tourism and social networking.