
Editorial

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This is the tenth volume of this journal's life. At its tenth anniversary, we look back how the 'community' scope has developed and how it might work out the coming decade. The term web-based community (WBC) was coined after the term 'online community' had settled in the early nineties when 'Usenet', 'Muds', 'MOOs' and 'online community college' evolved. Blogging and the early notion of virtual 'presence' on the web triggered the idea that being a member of a web-based community is not essential; someone's 'sense of community' is more decisive. Notions like trust, folklore, fandom and later the value of sharing and informal learning; they began to emerge and gradually took over the metaphor of dungeons and exotic arcades. The idea for this journal started when it became clear that the entire spectrum from face-to-face until mediated communication would be affected by web-based social participation. Like many 'new' media, also web-based communities caused the euphoria that a substantial part of the f2f and broadcasting media would be supplanted. This idea has been refuted by many publications in this journal since 2004. Its main message is that just like the TV, the newspaper and the telephone, web-based communities fulfil one of the many aspects of cooperation and togetherness. In order to zoom out and see the larger trend in interest for

web-based communities I will go stepwise through the more dominant themes that evolved in the last ten years:

- 1 2004, in the inaugural issue the article 'Designing and evaluating online communities: research speaks to emerging practice', Jenny Preece et al. questioned: What makes online communities successful? And concluded that there are many indicators of success. Some are easily observed and measured, such as the number of people registered in the community, or the number who participate, or the number of messages posted, replied to or read over a certain period. They proposed 'community-centred development'; an approach that relies heavily on iterative evaluation focusing on sociability rather than usability. Their article concludes that ethnography and heuristic evaluation are the main ingredients for evaluation WBCs; reconciling practical- and robust needs.
- 2 2005, in the article 'The rationale of online learning communities', Carlén and Jobring assert that online learning communities facilitate communication between people who share common interests and learn collaboratively using networked technologies. A similar conclusion to the prior one by Preece came out: researchers and designers have to understand social practices in order to explore and develop technological tools for such collaboration and communication.
- 3 2006, in their article 'SIOC: an approach to connect web-based communities', John Breslin et al. take a rather stout stand as they claim that web-based communities are islands of people that not necessarily related in terms of the topics they share. They introduce how a 'semantically interlinked online community' (SIOC) can enable efficient information dissemination across communities by creating an ontology that will model concepts identified in discussion methods. Data instances can be accessed from community sites using this ontology, enabling connections between local and remote concept instances, and allowing queries on, or transfer of, the data. By searching on one forum, the ontology and interface will allow users to find information on other forums that use an SIOC-based system architecture. At this point Breslin and his co-authors have anticipated to the next step of web-communities that not only offer the bridging of identity; also semantic validation of topics under collaborative will be related and transferrable seamlessly.
- 4 2007, in 'Identifying communities in blogs: roles for social network analysis and survey instruments', Alvin Chin and Mark Chignell examine the problem of identifying, measuring and evaluating communities in blogs. Based upon McMillan and Chavis (1986), they explore the link between WBC and 'sense of community' and add the notion of 'centrality measures' derived from social network analysis. They describe a method for identifying communities in blogs using both sense of community measurement and social network analysis (SNA) and apply it on a blog on Canadian independent music.
- 5 2008, in 'Learning relations and networks in web-based communities', Caroline Haythornthwaite regards the broader functions and actors around the learning process. Ultimately she formulates "learning is predicated on interaction between individuals, interactions that build into communities that share common knowledge and practice". The remaining question is what types of relations are

relevant in respect to learning partnerships and how established learning networks can be interconnected.

- 6 2009, in 'Enhancing the understanding of genres of web-based communities: the role of the ecological cognition framework', Jonathan Bishop links our attention to the phenomenon of lurking and the genre of weblogs. Political blog and the mommy blog are compared with the significant differences that are found between them that make them solid sub genres.
- 7 2009, in 'Supporting a virtual community of tutors in experience capitalising', Élise Garrot warns us against the fact that students learn differently from decades before. But ICT also involves changes in teachers' roles, which are not yet well-defined particularly for online tutors. They present new ways for tutors to define their own 'professional identity', their functions and 'good practices'. They aim at giving them the possibility to share knowledge and experiences and to refer to those in their day-to-day practice.
- 8 2010, in 'Bridging and bonding in social network sites – investigating family-based capital', Petter Bae Brandtzaeg et al. explore the relationship between three distinct dimensions of social capital (bridging, peer-bonding and family-bonding capital) in social network sites (SNSs). They ask what kinds of social relations are sought by SNS users and whether the usage of new SNSs contributes to family bonding. They show that typically 25% of the Norwegian internet population communicates with family members once a week or more often, but peer bonding occurs even more frequently. They find that male users are significantly less interested in future family contacts in SNSs than females. The results of the study indicate that the majority of the respondents experience SNSs as a part of their daily communication routines, both to bridge new online contacts and to strengthen bonds with their existing offline ties.
- 9 2010, in 'A cross-cultural analysis of Flickr users from Peru, Israel, Iran, Taiwan and the UK' by Amir Dotan et al. describe differences as well as similarities regarding tagging patterns and use of language to annotate content between the five chosen national cultures. These insights could inform the future localisation and internationalisation of user-generated content driven sites like Flickr and You Tube.
- 10 2011, in 'Twitter for crisis communication: lessons learned from Japan's tsunami disaster', Adam Acar and Yuya Muraki reported on how two weeks after the Great Tohoku earthquake followed by the devastating tsunami, they sent open-ended questionnaires to a randomly selected sample of Twitter users. They found out that people in directly-affected areas tend to tweet about their unsafe and uncertain situation while people in remote areas post messages to let their followers know that they are safe. Their analysis of the open-ended answers revealed that unreliable re-tweets (RTs) on Twitter was the biggest problem the users faced during the disaster. Some of the solutions offered by the respondents included introducing official hash tags, limiting the number of RTs for each hash tag and adding features that allow users to trace information by maintaining anonymity.

In retrospect, we can say that the first decade of the community metaphor has caused a long ripple in the various application sectors on how to envisage its essential benefits and pitfalls. Its first benefit is the awareness that through the high frequency and flexibility,

gathering on the web should not stay behind in social and societal terms. ‘Sense of community’ became the ambition when it became clear that presence via the web was only a small part of one’s daily concern. Also it proved that intense life on the web was only realistic for a small part of the population.

The next step after the growing ambition of web communities to manifest as real social gathering is to see if web communities can really help traditional sectors like care, education and industry to evolve quicker in their own agendas. ‘Catalyst’ is the term to indicate this endogenic evolution where in fact no one has predictive power; the combination of ICT potentials work like noise; unfocussed opportunities that bring the traditional application fields out of balance. Good example is social media. While its fits connotation was photo-book (Facebook) and announcing one’s cv (LinkedIn) it offered enthusiast users to go beyond the planned scope and finally lifted its initial functionality finally up to the level of day-by-day or even minute-by-minute correspondence via chat and photo documentary.

What is the best prediction for directions that application sectors will be stimulated under the influence of social media the coming time?

- 1 *Education*: up to now, the fields of schooling and education regard social networking as distraction and digression. At the same time we see that social media have an enormous impact on young learners to extend their social skills and ambitions. The consolidation of learning progress traditionally works via certification. However, we have recently seen that ‘communities of practice’ have developed in professional fields, not only for synchronising the last state of best practice; also for the cross fertilisation of several fields of expertise where new situations demand solutions that have never emerged before. In other words: Social networks stimulate practitioners to develop new understanding rather than just pretend to transfer expertise between professionals. It is the question now if this paradigm will also enter the field of schooling and education?
- 2 *Medical and care*: indeed, the first step towards a more integrated medical and well-being perspective is the dimension of ‘care’. Web-based presence and participation is vital for this transition; it needs the intersection of mural and family help. Social robots are going to help bridging these two worlds. Patient organisations, but also the more delicate mix of family concerns while patients in mental care hospitals is a field that still needs growing understanding how to make the best of two worlds all the time. Quite obvious, the peer consult among medical doctors during diagnosis and planning surgical interventions is a growing field. Finally, we face already the typical situation that patients orient in success-/pitfall reports that were recently reported on the web. One of the questions is too what extent the parameter of ‘sense of community’ will help medical stakeholders to gain more trust and confidence.
- 3 *Justice and governance*: Its main phenomenon is the community’s help in fact finding at the moment. Political revolts seem to benefit from social media. However, the same comfort of social media in tracing criminals can be used to trace political opponents by regimes. So the vital question is whether the emancipatory role of social media will continue. Legislation on privacy and the specific rights of governments to trace personal communication on the web.

The key question might be how the cost/benefit ratio of web-based community metaphor may turn out the coming years. The benefit of the community envisioning has already shown as it raised the criterion of social conformism (sense of community); Social participation on the web needs to be isomorphic to real face-to-face conditions to a certain extent. This notion has vitalised social reality on the web. The back site could be seen as the imbalance when social media reach very high numbers of visitors in the real-life conditions. In other words: the critical size of physical meetings may be hampered when social media and mass media are combined. Web-based communities need to develop a certain intuition on how to balance the power of crowd (sourcing) and the meetings in real spaces, more important than we thought on before. These are questions that were not overthought by the designers of Facebook, Twitter, etc.

In summary, we can say that web-based communities have developed through the opportunism of media richness and the sensation of large-scale 'meetings'. We may expect more conflicts to happen between the private and the public sector, the coming years. It is hard to imagine experiments that predict more precise effects than we can extrapolate from recent events like the Arabic 'Spring'.

What do we offer you in this issue? 14 authors from six countries (Australia, Belgium, Greece, Malaysia, Taiwan and The Netherlands) inform us about the latest developments in Facebook, blogging, mass media, education and training and e-shopping addiction.

John Bishop discusses in his article 'Representations of 'trolls' in mass media communication: a review of media-texts and moral panics relating to 'internet trolling'' a typical way of provoking a reaction. Bishop reviews the usages in the mass media and makes suggestions for the usage in online communities. Classical trolling, as it is called in this paper, is the posting of electronic messages in order to provoke a reaction for humorous effect. This type of trolling held online communities together and acted as rituals to quickly introduce newer members to the community's norms.

Demetrios G. Sampson and Panagiotis Zervas are addressing an aspect that is relevant to web-based educational communities and communities of best teaching practices. In the article: 'A hierarchical framework for open access to education and learning', the author presents a new hierarchical open access framework that considers different hierarchical elements for supporting the main stages of a typical e-learning chain.

Addiction to the internet, is a serious issue. Han-Jen Niu and Chun-Tao Chang present a study based on a specific situation in Taiwan entitled 'Addiction in cyberspace: flow experience on e-shopping'. The mental state of flow is a key factor. Han-Jen Niu and Chun-Tao Chang conclude that by using online community environments, e-commerce operators could detect and induce consumers' nerd behaviour.

Facebook is a most intriguing topic for research. In the article 'Impact of different conceptualisations of system use on Facebook continuance', Muhammad Z.I. Lallmahomed, Nor Zairah Ab. Rahim, Roliana Ibrahim and Azizah Abdul Rahman explore the motivation of Facebook users to continue the usage. Recommendations and future research is outlined. Innovation is the key to overcome the economic slowdown. How can online communities be part of this process?

Mercedes Paulini, Mary Lou Maher and Paul Murty present the results of a survey of participants in such a community. The paper presents eight categories of motivation for participants and proposes design principles to retain long-time engagement. But perhaps some people are more likely to participate in social networking than others.

Social networking: a matter of character? Marius N. Vieth and Piet Kommers address this issue. In the article 'Social networking: a matter of character?', their research strived to pursue a new approach through investigating new personality dimensions. Loneliness is analysed as factor and turns out to be contra productive. Shy persons are also 'shy' on Facebook and a new factor is introduced: fear of intimacy.

We wish you a great further reading and planning research on new aspects of web-community development

References

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