Editorial

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Biographical notes: Piet Kommers is an Associate Professor at the University of Twente, The Netherlands. His specialty is social media for communication and organisation. As conference co-Chair of the IADIS multi-conference, he initiated the conferences of web-based communities and social media, e-society, mobile learning and international higher education. He is a Professor at the UNESCO Institute for Eastern European Studies in Educational Technology and Adjunct Professor at Curtin University in Perth, Australia.

Margriet Simmerling is a Peer Consultant/Senior Manager for R&D projects in the area of e-society and web-based communities. She participated in the advisory board for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and is active as a reviewer for the European Commission. She designs and moderates e-learning modules and workshops e-learning modules and workshops in the domain of education technology and psychology at the PhD level.

The term 'community' suggests full commitment and trust among its members. This special issue illustrates that a community is not that communal as the term suggests. Private relations will always be stronger than the sense of collective membership. This special issue targets the junction between the social and the individual. However, it is clear to read from trends like 'sharing', 'open source', 'creative commons' and 'crowd-sourcing/funding' that the internet inherently stimulates to lower the borders between territories. Its effect is that web-citizens meet a large variety of options, tastes, cultures and diversity in mentality as well. The question in this special issue is whether this contextual given also affects human sentiments like tolerance in learning, respect for privacy, gender, ethnic background, etc.? Intuitively, the authors in this field, they expect that similar to the transition for rural to urban communities, the internet infrastructure will promote new aspects of mentality and sentiment. We may say that 'life on the web' is still in its infancy; we still live in the digital country-side. But now and then we take a modernised train and after one hour trip stare into cosmopolitan boulevards, without understanding how citizens can live and survive there. We see the fluorescent commercials on top of the buildings, but have no idea what they refer to. We see the

extravaganza of exquisite shops and supermarkets, we feel the hot air escaping from its gaping doors, not understanding what to get from it other than frightening high prices. This is the psychology of us visiting web gatherings nowadays: as villager we see the city as decadent and obsolete. At the same time, back in our village we see that already the local grocery transformed into a convenient store….. In other words: yes, web communities may seem to be redundant compared to face-to-face communication. However, looking back from before the radio and telephone arrived, the same parallel can be seen: no societal need for tele-communication was felt before Marconi and Bell opened the technical option. Once the radios and telephones arrived, they did not just conquer its added value; it also transformed humans and societies to make use of it. Similar with social media and web communities; it will be very hard to imagine how we managed to live without them quite soon.

Last year we celebrated the tenth volume of this journal's life. In this first issue of the 11th volume, we present you articles addressing community research in various domains: trust, education, knowledge exchange, culture and gender, analysis of social media, social tribe culture and the twitter usage of municipalities. Nine authors from seven countries (USA, Poland, Ukraine, Spain, Italy, Finland and Saudi Arabia) inform us about the latest research and developments.

The first article 'An empirical analysis evaluating trust in social networking' focuses on the need to distinguish two types of 'trust' operant in social networking sites (SNS). Aaron M. French argues these two types need to be taken into account by academics and website administrators; trust among all members of the community and trust among contact made within the community. The work is well presented and the usage of various tests is included. Future research is recommended.

In the next article, Natalia Victorivna Morze, Lilia Olexandrivna Varchenko and Eugenia Smyrnova-Trybulska provide a solid background in the area of collaborative working and the use of new technologies. They conclude that teachers need to change the educational formats. Methods and examples are provided and explained further.

The article 'Use of social networking sites for knowledge exchange' presents a proposition of a model so to use social networking sites for knowledge exchange. The author Oriol Miralbell claims that the success of social networks for the exchange of knowledge depends on the availability for any individual to contact other members and other information outside their usual circles. Professional users however, use the SNS for bonding, rather than for generating new knowledge.

The following article is an experience report were Guendalina Graffigna and Giuseppe Riva show how they have combined existing methods and tools for the analysis of relations and discourses in social media. They describe a mixed-methods research approach aimed at interlacing different qualitative and quantitative analytical strategies in order to provide a more grounded and complete understanding of dialogical and interactive dynamics of social media. In the article 'Social media monitoring and understanding: an integrated mixed methods approach for the analysis of social media', the authors conclude that IMiMe is particularly useful to gain better understanding how users operate in culturally-grounded contexts.

The next article is a contribution from Arwa Yousuf Al-Aama. He addresses the situation in Saudi Arabia: Twitter communication between government and citizens. The article 'The use of Twitter to promote e-participation: connecting government and people' describes how Saudi municipalities use Twitter. Recommendations to improve the communication are provided.

In the world of playing games, the role of web-based communities is recognised. In this journal already articles around this topic are published. The geocaching games are played worldwide, and the participants in the study 'Social tribe culture case study: geocaching game' came from eight different countries. Pirita Ihamäki describes the social tribes geocachers profile classification. The study demonstrates that some geocaching tribe culture practices are intimately bound up together and that the online geocaching web-based community can be a significant influence on associated location-based experiences and vice versa.

It is a pleasure to present these interesting articles. We hope it will inspire you in contributing to new research and initiatives in the domain of web-based communities and real 'social media' the coming time.