
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 a 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 the 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.

Traditionally, communities distinguish as internally open and externally closed; one of its role was to prevent from being intruded by those from far away and those to be considered as competitors or even enemies. Web-based communities however have less a centripetal nature and are more apt to open its horizons to concurrent initiatives. Through this trend, we may expect online gatherings to contribute more to social awareness and the evolution from one cultural apprehension to a next one. In this issue, we present articles that discuss communities from different perspectives and try to understand its underlying mechanisms. Useful information for researchers, marketers, communication specialist and all those interested in knowing more about the design, influence and use of social media and web-based communities. Research from different parts of the world: Italy, Greece, Germany, The Netherlands and Indonesia give input to new progress on the developments around web-based communities and social media:

- the urban domain
- travel and tourism
- the world of young adults in China
- business community
- trust in communities.

Social media penetrate everywhere nowadays. Its role is crucial. It proves to be useful to create communities of place, for instance in the urban domain. But how does this work, and how can we design better social media specifically aimed at supporting network communities of place?

In the article ‘When the web supports communities of place: the ‘Social Street’ case in Italy’, a case study is presented. Federico Cabitza, Rosantonietta Scramaglia, Denise Cornetta and Carla Simone inform us about the results and how these results can be used to the design of functionalities that could support collaborative, conscious and responsible actions toward good and service sharing.

A well-know tool for traveller and tourists is the TripAdvisor. Androniki Kavoura and Maria Teresa Tiago Borges argue that TripAdvisor has characteristics of an imagined community. The article ‘Understanding online communities on social networks via the notion of imagined communities: the case of TripAdvisor’ examines the function of TripAdvisor from the sense of Anderson’s imagined communities and whether their characteristics also apply to TripAdvisor. The article contains relevant information for commercial companies and their marketers.

Understanding how the usage of social media affects people is of prime importance; seen from a socio-economical perspective, young people are a prioritised group, having developmental and strategic reasons to use social media. In the article ‘Understanding key factors affecting young people’s WeChat usage: an empirical study from uses and gratifications perspective’, Hua Pang informs us about the result of a study investigating young people’s motivations in the light of the well-grounded uses and gratifications framework. The results show interesting differences between young female WeChat users and young male WeChat users. The article presents relevant information about the young people in China and how they use WeChat.

Good news for all experts involved in the evaluation of the functional status of communities of practice. In the article ‘Evaluation of the functional status of learning networks based on the dimensions defining communities of practice’, Celeste Meijs, Fleur R. Prinsen and Maarten F. de Laat report about the usage and results of the ‘network barometer’. They conclude that the network barometer is a useful instrument for the evaluation of the functional status of specific networks.

An important factor for a sustainable virtual community is TRUST. The promotion of trustworthy behaviour amongst the members of a community is essential. Olivia Fachrunnisa proposes a methodology: a third party agent will supervise the

interaction between the community members, helping the administrator to take the necessary action. The article 'Towards sustainability of virtual business community through trustworthy behaviour-based mechanism' presents more advantages of the methodology and future research is outlined.