

## Evaluation framework to measure Social Media community participation.

### IDEAS BAZAAR – BENAIS IMPHD

By Robin Effing

Recent years have seen a decline in non-profit community participation such as political party membership, involvement in church activities and engagement in voluntary associations and foundations. People are increasingly isolated from each other (Surowiecki, 2004). Also, people are hesitating to make long-term commitments to organizations in memberships.

At the same time Internet use is getting more social. Today, social websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, Wikipedia, Flickr and YouTube are the number one activity on the web.

Recently, non-profit organizations have started a variety of Social Media initiatives. Pope Benedict XVI (2010), for example, encourages the embrace of Social Media in the Roman Catholic Church to reach out to contemporary society. Another example is Obama's election campaign; it was, for a large part, based on Social Media (Christakis and Fowler, 2009; Lutz, 2009; Talbot, 2008).

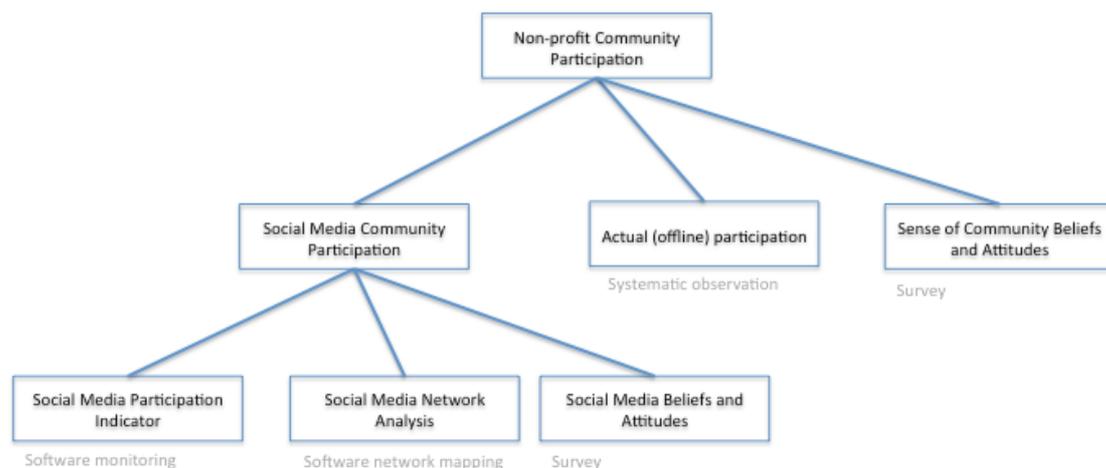
This indicates that non-profit organizations can successfully use Social Media to appeal to their audience and increase member participation. It is likely that Social Media can be used to increase participation of organizational members. But, this is still a hypothesis to be tested. There are opportunities to empower the members by using social web applications. Little empirical evidence is available about the opportunities and threats of Social Media in an organizational non-profit context. We articulate two research questions.

RQ1: How can non-profit organizations - with community structures – increase member participation by implementing Social Media?

RQ2: What are the design principles for optimal implementation of Social Media, as a participation instrument, at non-profit organizations with traditional communities like churches, trade unions and political parties?

To answer these questions multiple case studies will be examined in the near future. Therefore, we have to develop a framework to measure how increased social media participation has an effect on the overall community participation. Currently, an accepted framework for evaluating Social Media and member participation is lacking.

The following model tries to visualize the idea and concepts within such a framework.



This model helps to decide which research methods are mandatory and which variables to select and operationalize. But, it is work in progress. There are many flaws. We need discussion to improve this model.