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What do hyperlinks mean: the value of hyperlink-networks as indicators of knowledge production

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Heimeriks and van den Besselaar problematise how to interpret the hyperlink structure of the World Wide Web. They identify two dimensions that contribute to their interpretive framework. The first is the conceptualisation of "website" or the aggregation of individual Web-pages into clusters of pages and consideration of the scope of the Web that provides a unit of analysis. In using this dimension they follow the more pragmatic work by Thelwall as well as that of Bharat et al (2001). The second and the more important dimension of their framework is their perspective from which they construct meaning, that is cultural, geographical or cognitive. This more explicit constructivist dimension that attempts to recognise the role of the actors involved chimes well with the other contributions. It also provides a bridge between those works and the more usual mathematically based quantitative analysis of the Web's hyperlink structure.

The authors argue in favour of both a strong and a weak Europeanization of knowledge production as evidenced by their carefully crafted interpretation of hyperlink structures. On the way they are able to point to cultural and geographical influences in knowledge sharing. However these influences are not uniform in that they seem to depend upon the unit of analysis. The authors also identify that size, for example of a country, appears to matter. This observation may well repay further investigation.

This paper illustrates an interpretive framework and provides some lines of enquiry that appear promising for the future. In particular do we expect (or find) that the Web's hyperlink structure shares similarities with 'real world' communication networks or does the communication network mediated by the Web's virtual hyperlinks offer a novel distinctiveness?

Literature cited:

Krishna Bharat, Bay-Wei Chang, Monika Rauch Henzinger, & Matthias Ruhl. (2001). Who links to whom: mining linkages between websites. In **Proceedings of 1st International Conference on Data Mining (ICDM)**, San Jose, November 29- December 2, pp. 51-58.

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MAIN PAPER	DISCUSSION
<u>Analyzing hyperlinks networks: The meaning of</u>	<u>What do hyperlinks mean: the value</u>

hyperlink based indicators of
knowledge production
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Besselaar

of hyperlink-networks as indicators
of knowledge production
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