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**VOLUME 10 (2006): ISSUE 1. DISCUSSION PAPER 2****Studying the Scholarly web: How disciplinary****culture shapes online representations****Eleftheria Vasileiadou * , * ***

* Social Sciences Department, NIWI, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science,

** Amsterdam School of Communications Research, ASCOR, University of Amsterdam

E-mail: E.Vasileiadou@uva.nl

The paper presented here explores the possibility of using Whitley's theory of intellectual and social organization of sciences, in order to understand different ways of web production by research groups. The author compares the webspheres of two different research groups, and traces the elements of 'mutual dependence' and 'task uncertainty' in different elements of the two webspheres. Mutual dependence and task uncertainty are the main variables introduced by Whitley (2000) in order to explain the different organization of scientific fields.

The interesting element of the paper is that it introduces a sociological theory for explaining different patterns of web production. Indeed, even though scholarly representations of the web have been studied quite extensively, what is mostly missing is a sociological theory that can help us understand the patterns emerging. In this way, the paper can feed into and explain more quantitatively oriented papers in this issue (such as the article by Cothey et al. and Heimeriks and van den Besselaar). This study aims at providing a theoretical framework for understanding different patterns of scholarly web representations which have been until now studied in an aggregated way.

Another promising point of the paper is the construction of the object of inquiry (the webspheres of the two research groups) following ethnographic methods, such as interviews. The advantage of this method is that it takes into consideration the perceptions of the participants in each research group as to which URLs and links are important for the online representation of these groups. The link between this approach and the article by Beaulieu and Simakova in this issue is that the hyperlink as a structural characteristic of the Web is not taken for granted, but its function is further explored.

It would be very interesting for subsequent work if Whitley's theory was further explored, with a systematic operationalisation of his explanatory variables, in order to understand field differences online. At the same time, the scaling – up of ethnographically informed hyperlink studies is a promising way forward in the area of cybermetrics.

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