

The Netizen as the Emerging New Form of Citizenship

by Ronda Hauben, 10/21/2019

I am happy to be here today to make a contribution about the nature and importance of netizens.

In my talk I want to focus on this significant phenomenon that has emerged along with the Internet's development. That is the Netizens. First I want to give an example.

Recently Facebook users in Turkey have been finding ways to enhance Turkish-Greek friendship. They post about similarities in Greek and Turkish culture with the mission of diminishing the historic hostility that is common between the two peoples.

In a study,¹ Turkish researchers sought to determine if these online friendship groups between the two peoples help to build friendly feelings on a cultural basis. The study stresses that the effort is to discuss subjects like foods the two groups eat that are similar, pictures of holidays each group celebrates, and music video clips by each of the two groups. Such postings are intended to convey the common idea that people of both groups are "ordinary people with common world views."

This study refers to the definition of the word *netizen* provided by Michael Hauben in the book *Netizens: on the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*.²

A Netizen (net citizen) exists "as a citizen of the world thanks to the global connectivity that the Net makes possible. You consider everyone as your compatriot. You physically live in one country but you are in contact with much of the world via the global computer network. Virtually you live next door to every other single Netizen in the world.... A new more democratic world is becoming possible ... that allows excluded sections of society to have a voice." Such activity on the part of netizens of different nations is intended to create a peace communications channel for building peaceful feelings between different peoples via the netizen contributions to the Internet."

Why is this distinction important?

There is universal appreciation that the Internet is a major advance in human communication. But it is less well understood that the Internet brings to ordinary people an empowerment, a greater chance to have a fuller spectrum of information and opinion and a chance to participate and get feedback.

Feeling that empowerment some people online, not all people but some, adopt public purposes. They become citizens of the net. This is an ongoing process. Having online search engines, a wide variety of information repositories, and different sources of news and eye witness reports, make people better informed. Plus the possible contact with other people not restricted by location, is a force to increase people's confidence and ability to make a contribution toward the solution of the problems of their society, and in so doing they help to build a more peaceful world in the process.

Thank you for your attention.

Notes

1. Burak Gümü°, A Baran Dural, Mustafa Selcuk, "Kalimerhaba: Turkish-Greek Facebook Communities," *Atlasjournal of Social Sciences*, 2018. Online at:

https://www.academia.edu/37946632/Kalimerhaba_Turkish-Greek_Facebook_Communities

2. Michael Hauben, Ronda Hauben, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*, IEEE Computer Society Press, 1997