

# Crowd



“Crowdsourcing is a type of participative online activity in which an individual, an institution, a non-profit organisation, or company proposes to a group of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number, via a flexible open call, the voluntary undertaking of a task. The undertaking of the task, of variable complexity and modularity, and in which the crowd should participate bringing their work, money, knowledge and/or experience, always entails mutual benefit. The user will receive the satisfaction of a given type of need, be it economic, social recognition, self-esteem, or the development of individual skills, while the crowdsourcer will obtain and utilise to their advantage that what the user has brought to the venture, whose form will depend on the type of activity undertaken”. This definition proposed by Estellés and González in 2012 in the Journal of

Information Science is found under the lemma Crowdsourcing on Wikipedia, which in itself is one of the most classic examples of crowdsourcing.

Crowdsourcing is in the air and opinion leaders in different fields are researching possibilities of the concept for the benefit of their own field. As is the land administration and cadastral world, where billions of parcels still need to be surveyed before they can be entered into a land administration system to give millions a base for their economic existence. What could be more appealing, and maybe easy, and efficient than to have the crowds do a lot of work for the different governments and national mapping agencies? Wouldn't it be quick and cheap, involving the subjects of the system, the landowners themselves, in acquiring data?

I am pleased to introduce to you a series of articles on crowdsourcing in *GIM International*. In this issue we kick-off with a feature article The Crowdsourced Cadastre by contributing editors Rohan Bennett and Paul van der Molen. The authors predict the future of crowdsourcing in land administration which could unwind into several scenarios. One firm conclusion might be, after reading their article, that all of the talk about the crowdsourced cadastre is still in time, because – as Bennett and Van der Molen have identified - there is no crowd evident in the cadastral realm yet that has voluntarily taken up a task, nor has there been a flexible, open call to the crowd coming from an institution so far. I am referring back to the definition mentioned above.

The big question is, despite the wishes, hopes or predictions of many in the field, will there be in the future? And is it possible to gain reliable data from volunteers, not trained at all in acquiring geo-information? Will banks give out mortgages or loans based on volunteered geographic information? Is crowdsourcing something that will really change the institutions or are the 'crowds' just a help in the institutionalised world of land administration? More questions than answers, right now. We will follow up with more articles on the same topic, trying to lead the discussion, drawing and drafting the role of the crowd in geomatics in the future, unmasking a few myths along the way and feeding the community with more questions. Please join the discussion on our website [www.gim-international.com](http://www.gim-international.com), in order for the crowd to come up with the answers.