

Community Talk with:

Fopke Klok

The Klok is ticking ... on life at ITEA ... and beyond

Fopke Klok has been Office Director at ITEA for a dozen years – on 1 June to be precise. Time for him to take centre stage in this Community Talk column, before he retires and moves on to other things.

A potted history

Before embarking on his professional career at Groningen University and Delft University of Technology, Fopke studied Mathematics at Groningen University. In 1986 he joined Philips Electronics as a CAD Systems analyst but it was between 1988 and 2007 that he gathered the knowhow and experience that would later stand him in perfect stead to steer the ITEA ship. During this period, Fopke held various managerial positions in the Netherlands and in the UK at Philips Research, where he covered areas like Computer Graphics, Compiler Technology, Wireless Communication and User Interfaces. In 1998 he became Head of the Strategy and Programme Office and was responsible for Planning & Programming at Philips Research. He is also Chairman of the Scientific Technical Council of SURF, initiator of ICT-based innovation in higher education and research in the Netherlands as well as an active member of the

VVD (Dutch Liberal Party). Now, anno 2019, how does Fopke look back on life at ITEA, what were and are his aspirations and, indeed, how will he fill the 'void' when he relinquishes the reins to his successor later this year?

The story begins ...

"... when ITEA and I first met. It was pretty much love at first sight. I was ready for a new career challenge and ITEA was in the market for a new Office Director. It was an opportunity for me to operate in an environment in which there was a mix of large and small enterprises, government and academia – new and refreshing, and a good possibility to use the knowledge and skills I had acquired in programme management and apply them to a wider context. From day one I have enjoyed every aspect of my work at ITEA. I must say that the move I made back then has provided me with one of the best periods of my professional life."



What has happened since then ...

“Well, it is interesting to talk about changes, but perhaps what has not changed is equally important. That is a set of core values in ITEA: an R&D programme, managed by industry and focused on impact while being flexible and supportive to its project partners. It is a far less institutional set-up than many other R&D programmes. I feel it is really operating like a customer-focused SME with companies and Public Authorities. The main changes concern the dynamics of the environment. In the past, ITEA was the only show in town for industrial software innovation. There were EC programmes, but they generally had a more scientific nature. During my period in ITEA we helped with the creation of ARTEMIS, followed by ECSEL, Eurostars was created, new EUREKA Clusters, etc. At the same time, our Public Authorities had to do more work to safeguard the political and financial support for ITEA. All this pushed the focus even more towards the impact of our projects and, especially, on making the impact visible. This has been reflected in many changes in the way we set up our communication, our website, our social media presence and also our core processes around the project creation

and monitoring, which have been completely digitised. And to demonstrate our flexibility in combination with our professionalism we acquired the ISO-9001 label for the first time in 2013. We have also created many new events: the ITEA-ARTEMIS Co-Summit, customer workshops, and now we are preparing ITEA projects to demonstrate their results in an even more customer-oriented environment: the Smart City Expo World Congress in Barcelona, which attracts more than 20 000 participants.”

Active engagement

“This expansion meant that my own role also became more dynamic. Of course, at some level of abstraction my day-to-day tasks as Office Director have remained more or less constant: ensuring the quality of operations of the ITEA Office and maintaining the positive atmosphere and team spirit. But I gradually started to travel more, attend more and different meetings, conferences and events. Not only that, but through ITEA I also have gained hands-on knowledge and experience of legal, tax and financial matters, for example, or human resource management – I guess I have become a jack of all trades. In brief, though,

my role in managing the Office – in facilitating people – has remained pretty much unchanged throughout the years. I’m not someone who goes around issuing orders. I want to create an atmosphere of shared responsibility, and I think here at the ITEA Office we have managed to get to a situation where we are all on the same page of what we consider to be important. A constant factor over the years has been the good team spirit along with the openness and reliability with which we communicate. I hope this sense comes through to our Community.”

Working relationships

“Over the years I have been privileged to work with and get to know a number of interesting people in the ITEA Community, including