Thoughts on Representation

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São Paulo, 30 August 2014
Who represents Wikipedia?

- Anybody?
- Nobody?
- "the community"?
  - only those with >N edits?
  - only those who remember the GFDL license?
  - only admins?
- only the Wikimedia Foundation? Pfft.
A word from Wittgenstein:

"Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language."
--Philosophical Investigations (1953)
Danke! Let's take one step back

- "Representation" can mean lots of things:
  - ownership, legal responsibility
  - being a legally-authorized representative
  - making commitments on behalf of "Wikipedia"
  - presenting and discussing community norms, values, and vision
  - expressing an individual opinion while identifying as "from Wikipedia"
  - (news headline: "Asaf, Editor of Wikipedia, says...")
Which "representation" worries us?

- there are probably different anxieties and concerns around the different senses of "representation"
- volunteers are volunteers :)  
- Clarity on what is legitimate for these different kinds of representation could be achieved, with some public, on-wiki discussion
Some examples from outside PTWP

- Reactive and proactive communications (media, press) are *organized* by a designated volunteer; local chapter a default contact point for "muggles"; many participate; individuals don't *have* to coordinate interviews; on-wiki documentation and post-factum discussion; tolerance of misstatements and misquoting; deliberate corrections. (Israel)
Some examples from outside PTWP

- Volunteer media contacts listed on ENWP; global mailing list used to report post-factum (ComCom); local chapters referred to when appropriate; no consultation required or expected before approaching media or creating partnerships in local or even individual initiatives
- The community engages (or not) with whatever happens. (USA)
Some examples from outside PTWP

- Local chapter whose membership includes almost all the very active editors; projects, grants, and institutional partnerships are run by chapter volunteer, and recently new staff, with broad community support.

- The chapter rejected one individual's idea; he still pursued it, with an individual grant from WMF; everybody's happy. :) (Estonia)
So...
Representation to figure out...

- ownership, legal responsibility
- being a legally-authorized representative
- making commitments on behalf of "Wikipedia"
- presenting and discussing community norms, values, and vision
- expressing an individual opinion while identifying as "from Wikipedia"
- …?
Stay in touch!

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