NO SPANISH MUNICIPALITY WITHOUT A PHOTO

What is this about and why we organize it?

No Spanish municipality without a picture is a project by Wikimedia Spain looking to get pictures of all the municipalities of Spain.

Knowing how many pictures of Spain there are on Commons is almost impossible but we can say that there are hundreds of pictures of, for example, certain monuments. However, not all Spain is in Wikimedia Commons, and this gives us a new geographical reality.

Spain has 8,122 municipalities, of which more than 2,000 had no picture at the beginning of the project. Its distribution was not regular; predictably, all larger municipalities, 10,000 or more inhabitants, had a photo. And that goes for those who have very renowned tourist attractions. But from there, geography plays.

Spain is characterized by a population mainly concentrated in large cities and there are large areas of low population density, doomed to become demographic deserts. It is in those areas where most of municipalities without a picture on Comoons are based.

Thanks to Wikipedia, we know knowledge is not only composed by great historical events or scientific discoveries, but any content, whatever its source, is worthy. The fact that many small municipalities do not have a single image is a certain cultural slant, not giving visibility, for example, to the historical and artistic heritage of rural areas. Hence the importance of this project as a way not only to get images under a free license, but also to show the world the little treasures hidden in the smaller villages.

How we run the project and since when?

The project started on June, 2015. In that moment 2,239 of 8,122 municipalities in Spain did not have a picture on Wikimedia Commons.

When we say a picture we mean any photograph of the whole or a part of a municipality: a building or some squares metres of a street are OK. So we did not pretend to achieve a perfect or even a representative view of each municipality: that's a second phase, for the future. Another relevant point was geography. Some parts of Spanish geography are not easily accessible (no public transport or bad roads, for example) and that means problems in obtaining photographs.

Organizer team notify, through lists on Wikipedia, with coordinates and maps, about what is missing and participants (they can be Wikipedia users or not) look for it. How people get involved into the chase of municipalites is quite interesting. In some cases local pride is the key, as happened with Biscay and Gipuzkoa. Other people run for themselves, they want to have more municipalities started than any other.

There is no such thing as a contest, so there are no prizes, no rankings, not even a finish line other than the general one. But somehow people know who is doing more, when, where, and how. Individual strategies diverged.

Some people look for free pictures available on the web, a strategy that has limited results. Others drive long distances

Picture from La Guancha, in the island of Tenerife.

to photograph as many places as possible in the shortest time. That means that they can get very few pictures of each place. Other people pay more attention to a few places, with larger sets of images. In one case a volunteer convinced the Mayor of a town to take pictures himself. In some cases we just ask to other Wikimedians for help: that's how we got a photo from La Guancha, Tenerife, the most distant location.

We thought in using other contests to promote the initiative. For example the Spanish edition of Wiki Loves Monuments gives special prizes to places that have never been pictured for Commons. In addition to that, it is the participants' initiative what leads the event.

What problems have we found?

After a year, we have found the following problems:

    - Creating lists manually generated some long-term problems, like some duplicates and errors of omission, and a significant number of hours, close to 60, was necessary. It included creating categories and re-categorize some pictures wrongly categorized.

    - Motivating people to cover some parts of the country is difficult. It can be explained by geographical reasons, but in some cases there is no explanation: municipalities that are very accessible are not pictured, like around the city of Salamanca.

- Some forms of motivation, like local pride, have limited impact in some areas. Problems arise where there is a low population density or Internet access is not easy, like some parts of Cuenca, Guadalajara and Toledo.

- Free pictures from the Web do not always have the appropriate licenses.

- In some cases, we ended up with just one picture of a place. That's better than none at all, but not much better.

Learned lessons

After the elapsed time and found that some of these problems slowed the project, we have taken into account a number of lessons learned to continue it until completion. Having Simple APG in 2016 has facilitated the implementation of these lessons.

For example, the problem of obtaining photographs from places hard to reach or with poor infrastructure to facilitate the work of local volunteers, we can solve organizing small Wiki Tours or Wiki Takes; as a result, volunteers, with financial support for the transport, will have access to many municipalities after planning a route.

Another problem, the lists, has been improved by creating them through Wikidata; it saves time, it will serve for future projects related to municipalities and they are more reliable.

Finally, after the good results last year, we will continue to introduce the project as part of the Spanish edition of Wiki Loves Monuments, giving a special prize to the best contribution of a previously non-photo municipality. This means an incentive for participants and encourages obtaining images.