HOW TO MAKE YOUR WIKIMEDIAN EVENTS MORE AUTISTIC-FRIENDLY?

ANNEJEA – GRENOBLE, 7 OCTOBRE 2018
WHO AM I?
I. INTRODUCTION
ONCE UPON A TIME…

… not an isolated case!
AUTISM & WIKIMEDIA PROJECTS

• 1% of the general population

• And... on the projects?
AND...

HERE IS THE CATCH
AUTISM?

• Neuro-developmental condition

• Triad of symptoms
  - Communication
  - Social relationships
  - Specific topic of interest, repetitive behaviors

• … but not only!
  - Sensory particularities
  - Psychomotor effects
‘AUTISM’?

- Autism spectrum: ASD (autism spectrum disorder/condition) ➔ huge diversity in autistic profiles

[Diagram showing a spectrum from light to severe]

‘normality’ (neurotypical people)

About: cognitive, sensory, language aspects… (for each aspect a person with autism can have a different level of difficulty or aptitude)
EXPERIENCE & AUTISM
EXPERIENCE & AUTISM

- Aquarium
- Hall
- Breaks,
  meals
- « party » :["too many noises"]
- too much overcrowding
EXPERIENCE & AUTISM

Too:
- many sensory input
- much confusion
- much stress

\( \Rightarrow \) 3 meltdowns
EXPERIENCE & AUTISM

• ‘Do I belong here / this community?’
  • ‘I’m not enough’… extrovert / resistant / social…

• What place for neuroatypical / autistic people in our community, in our events?

• Not an isolated case!
INCLUSIVITY?

• Gender:
  • more and more known (women, LGBTIQ+…)

• White and Occidental biases:
  • increasing concerns (IMO)

• Disability? Being neuroatypical?
2. WHAT TO DO?

No problem, only solutions: make your event more “autistic-friendly”
BEFORE WE START

• Extensive overview of measures

• Huge diversity in autistic profiles:
  Person A with autism ≠ Person B with autism

• ASD: cognitive, sensory and social particularities, all interconnected
2.1. COGNITIVE ASPECT
COGNITIVE ASPECT

• CAPITAL point
• Stress
• Anxiety
• Specially when routines / habits are disrupted or when new situations happen

↓

ANTICIPATION

Make the environment predictable
ANTICIPATION

• Informations:
  • Place: map, entrance and access, hours
  • Planning: activity, breaks, meals
  • Social story?
  • Contact person(s) + how to reach them

• Specific and personal needs

• Communicate about accommodations you set up
2.2. ENVIRONMENT
ENVIRONMENT

• Quiet spaces: meals + activities + extra activities

• Simple environment
  • no extra details
  • no hard/garish colors (prefer soft tones)
  • no echo

• No obstacle on the way to move
ENVIRONMENT

• Space:
  • Good signage
  • Big enough for less overcrowding (- noise)
  • Groups stagnation*

• Ideal: to be able to choose the level of sensory input for each activity

• Quiet room 🛋️ QUIET ROOM
QUIET ROOM/SPACE

• Sensory and social ‘break’

• For overwhelmed or ‘on-the-way-to-be-overwhelmed’ persons

• Gathers ideal features:
  • Soft light, no noise, no people…
  • Some things to be comfortably settled in order to take a breath and recover
QUIET ROOM/SPACE

• Available all the time

• Strict: this is **NOT** the place for chatting or preparing something!

• Close to all the places of the event
HIGH INPUT ROOM

• High input
• Walking, moving…
• Talking, make some noisy things, alone or with other people…

• Available all the time
• Quiet + high input rooms = choice of the level input
SENSORY ASPECT
SENSORY PARTICULARITIES

• Perception, treatment and regulation of sensory informations
  • Simultaneous informations (α cognitive aspect)

• Hypo / hypersensitivity
  • Sensory intolerances
  • Strong preferences or aversions…

• See environmental aspect
HEARING / NOISE

• No background noise: music, air conditioning, construction works…

• ‘social’ noise: expected or demanded sound level
  • by people / by room / by activity
  • + environmental considerations, i.e. groups stagnation

• Flappause

• Anti-noise headphones / earplugs
SIGHT

• Light
  • No fluorescent / neon light
  • Prefer incandescent, soft and warm light
    • Light dimmer
    • Natural light (+ blackout curtains)
    • Indirect light
  • No hard light

• Environment: overdose of details = risk of overload
SMELL & TASTE

• Ø personal perfumes
• Ø background perfumes, sanitizers and kitchen smells…

• Specific diet
• Fridges / Micro-waves
SOCIAL ASPECT
SOCIAL ASPECT

• Social difficulties +/- visible and +/- impairing
• Sociality not ‘innate’
• Camouflage: masking difficulties
• Social situations: tiredness, stress, avoidance behavior…
• Sometimes need to isolate themselves some days or weeks to recover after a social event
SOCIAL ASPECT

• Interpersonal relationships:
  • Do not touch people when you meet them nor their personal objects!
  • Do not make people obligated to interact with you specially at the end of the day
  • Do not ‘out’ people – being autistic is a private information more specially again on social networks
  • Give a list of allowed and forbidden behaviors

Badge system? (see questions)
SOCIAL ASPECT

• For each activity / intervention:
  • Anticipate social times:
    • give advance warning
    • type of social time: questions, talk, working groups…
  • Do not make people feel obligated to join social activities
  • Speaking time management:
    • avoid some people monolopolizing the talks
  • Give an email address
OTHER TIPS

(but this is the end soon)
OTHER TIPS

• Propose to be accompanied
• Give an ‘awareness course’ for your volunteers
• Speech for raising awareness for attendees + reminders
THE END

(you gonna recover soon too)
CONCLUSION

• Social events require a lot of energy and are exhausting for autistic people in many aspects (sensory, cognitive and social)

• Give choice (input, social level…) in the ways people can live the event. Choice is the KEY.

• Have a quiet room

• Anticipate +++

• Keep available
CONCLUSION

No matter who you are, attendee or organizer:

• Pay attention to people

• Do not assume that other people have the same wishes and needs (or absence of need) than yours
THANK YOU!

Contact:
vetannejea@gmail.com
or annejea@wikimedia.be

• Something to add?
  Personal experiences?
  Questions?
  Feedback?
BADGE SYSTEM

• Specific needs, ‘social availability’

• Advantages
  • Visible
  • Gives specific informations
  • Diversity of messages (pronouns, projects…)

• Disadvantages:
  • Risk of stigma?
    ➔ raise awareness + increase badges diversity (not only badges about limitations/things perceived as negative)
  • Not always adapted for instantaneous situations (ex. panic attack)

➔ Examples: https://www.instagram.com/sootmegs/