Wikipedia for Indigenous Communities

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Presentation Outline

Indigenous Knowledge

- **Indigenous**: originating in, and characteristic of, a particular human group and biophysical environment (Purcell)
- **Knowledge**: justified, true belief (Plato)
- **Indigenous knowledge:** (More detail in my 2013 Hong Kong talk)
    - not codified in writing but in stories, dances, customs, artefacts
    - practical rather than abstract
    - deducted from spiritual rather than scientific patterns of thought
- Indigenous knowledge is verifiable knowledge. You just have to:
    1. Travel to the particular location
    2. Learn the language
    3. Understand the organisation of the indigenous knowledge
    4. Gain the trust of the community
    5. Request a re–publication (orally) which will likely be granted
- "Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of **all** human knowledge." (Wales, emphasis mine)

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Ubuntu

- **Ubuntu:** I am because you are. Community comes first
- English Wikipedia has it wrong. And many others, too
    - Community $\neq$ society
    - Ubuntu $\neq$ humanity
- A few interesting consequences of *ubuntu* philosophy and way of life:
    1. No person can have an own opinion about a group matter
    2. To gather such opinion by poll is absurd
       One would, literally, create such opinion by polling it
    3. Much of our writing on Wikipedia is—or at least requires—an own opinion
       Not the facts but the explanation of the facts (or: not the information but the knowledge). See my 2014 London talk
    4. To entice opinion by teaching to write articles to individuals is absurd
- $\Rightarrow$ We're not working the *ubuntu* way!

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Content Creation, Culturally Aware

- Outreach to Otjiherero speakers in eastern Namibia in order to develop the Otjiherero Incubator
- A group of participants was gently forced to create an article.
- Observations on work flow:
    1. Met in person to discuss article content
    2. Coordination of the meetings via a closed Facebook group
    3. Content discussed in person until consensus was achieved
    4. Result of consensus typed and uploaded by group representative
- Not really how (the rest of) Wikipedia works
- Painfully slow ($\approx 10 \frac{words}{hour}$)

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Notability Question

1. A community meets for 5 x 2 hours to write their very first own Wikipedia article
2. Nothing of their culture or tradition is on Wikipedia as yet, in any language
3. They have to submit something (persuasion)
4. **What will they be writing about?**

Not so obvious.

A: *Omimbonde vitano:* The five sacred camelthorn trees of the Ovambanderu in Epukiro

Explanation

- **Values** are vastly different
- Example: Individuality, effectiveness, self–fulfilment... are not values of the Ovaherero
- But: Deference, pride, stability, courtesy, *ubuntu*... are values of the Ovaherero
- Freely sharing knowledge is another value. Which is good
- **Software enshrines values**
- Example Wikipedia:
  - Congregate as a group? ⇒ Not easy
  - See what other group members are doing at the moment? ⇒ Very difficult
  - Check what people at [place and time] did last week? ⇒ Impossible
  - **Value:** Individualism
- **Western software** enshrines **Western values**. MediaWiki is no exception

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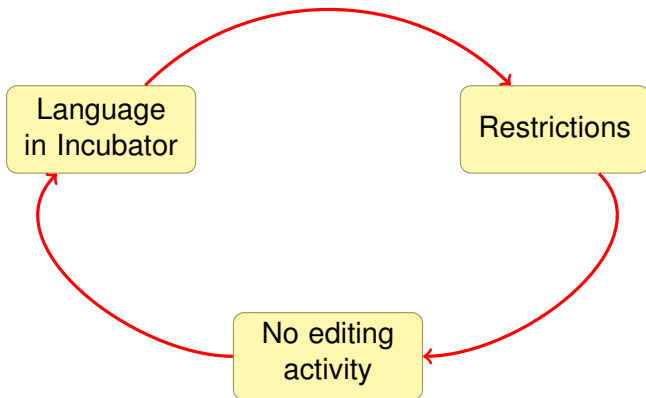- **Western software** enshrines **Western values**. MediaWiki is no exception

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Vicious Circle

Incubator Restrictions

1. Content restrictions:
   - No usable encyclopædia ⇒ No readers
   - Not indexed by search engines ⇒ No readers
   - As we all know: No readers ⇒ No writers

2. Rule restrictions:
   - File uploads not possible
   - Many features on or off wiki–wide, Incubator = 1 wiki
   - Inherited assumptions and habits from large language editions (no group accounts, focus on translation, article structure, etc.)

3. Usability restrictions:
   - Confusing navigation (all of Incubator vs. specific language)
   - Syntax even worse than elsewhere in the wiki

     Imagine teaching piped linking in
     `[[Wp/hz/Epukiro|vaPukiro]]`
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To–Do List: Practical

1. Audiovisual Wikipedia
   - real, exciting, rich–media example of audiovisual coverage
   - created by participatory design
   - First try: Incubator:Opuwo
2. An app to easily upload and release media, and a way to integrate new material into existing narrative
   - Not to Commons but local. Not least because Otjiherero would be media, not text
   - Cellphones everywhere—material everywhere
   - Recordings and pictures much easier to handle than text
3. Live Otjiherero Wikipedia with own rules
   - Self–regulation: Ovaherero editors unlikely to touch controversial or sensitive topics
   - Flagged revisions, group accounts, oral citations, `IP` editor restrictions, file uploads, civility rules, hidden areas (DarkWiki), and quite a bit more
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To–Do List: Theory

1 Ethical discussion
- Lots of Western innovations had devastating consequences
- . . . including those viewed as positive, for instance formal schooling
- Replacing humans with machines?
- Cultural Second Life?

2 Legal considerations (intellectual property)
- Lots of Western documentation had devastating consequences
- What, exactly, is `CC-BY-SA` in a video?
- What is shown? What is said?
- Rather explicit with imagery: 2D replication of 3D object (picture) / 2D object (copy)
- Rather vague with audio: magnetic replication or digital approximation of sound waves?

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End of Presentation

Any questions?