Vulnerability in Society: How the Wikimedia Movement can make a difference

**Mina Theofilatou,
Wikipedia Community Schools Association Greece
(WCSAG)**

About me

- **Greek / Canadian / American** (pardon my New York accent!)
- **Electrical & Computing Engineer** (Patras University, Greece)
- **Computer Science Teacher in Secondary Education** (Kefalonia, Ionian Islands, Greece)
- **Wikipedian since 2007** (User:Saintfevrier, there's a story behind the name ;-))
- **Numerous Wikipedia in Education projects** (see Newsletter Archives October 2014, December 2015, June 2016, May 2017, June 2017)
- **Initiated Wikitherapy** (programme to train mentally ill patients to edit the Wikimedia projects)
- **Member of Wikiproject Medicine** (My latest passion is editing medical Wikipedia and Wikidata. See more in Etherpad!)

Your takeaways from this session:

- **For educators**: some ideas for projects that YOU can try at your school

- **For health professionals and/or Wikipedia trainers**: how training disadvantaged individuals to edit the Wikimedia Projects can bring value to their lives, and to the WM Projects

- **For everyone**: you will be the first Wikimedians to discuss how we can make a difference in combatting vulnerability in society :)

Vulnerability in society: Why am I doing this?

Derivative, File:Castle and princess forearm tattoo.jpg, Wikimedia Commons, by Saintfevrier

My tattoo is my badge:
"Throw stones at me, and
I will build castles".

- **Because I am a Wikipedian.**
  Copy-paste from the article **Age of Enlightenment**, EN Wikipedia (highlighting is mine):
  The Enlightenment included a range of ideas centered on reason as the primary source of authority and legitimacy and came to advance ideals like liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government and separation of church and state....The most influential publication of the Enlightenment was the Encyclopédie (Encyclopaedia). Published between 1751 and 1772 in thirty-five volumes, it was compiled by Diderot, d'Alembert (until 1759) and a team of 150 scientists and philosophers. It helped spread the ideas of the Enlightenment across Europe and beyond…

- **Because I have been through hard times and I have overcome many obstacles. I feel it is my duty to help empower others from the lessons I have gained.**
  More about this at the end of the presentation :)

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Vulnerability is a word we do NOT like

Vulnerable

Definition: More or most likely to be exposed to the chance of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.

Synonyms: (*exposed to attack*):
defenceless, helpless, powerless, unguarded, unprotected, weak

Antonyms: (*exposed to attack*):
durable, indomitable, invincible, invulnerable, powerful, strong

Screenshot from EN Wiktionary

We want to transform "powerless" and "weak" to "powerful" and "strong"!

Part I:

EDUCATION (not only) for the vulnerable

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The Argostoli Evening Secondary School is a second-opportunity learning establishment under the Greek Ministry of Education, that enables adult learners and employed students aged 14 plus to attend Middle School and High School and earn a qualification equivalent to Regular Morning School. Evening School graduates in Greece can also participate in the Greek University Entry Exams

Numerous projects throughout my 12 years at the school… the one project I can single out as my "favourite" was the **"Wild Flora of Kefalonia" app** we developed in 2016-17 to help users identify edible wild flora species on the island, according to season. The app uses images we uploaded to **Commons** in a 2012-13 project and can be used both off and online: **offline** use shows photo and summary from Wikipedia article, **online** use additionally enables links to our edits on **Wikidata** and **Wikispecies**. All our projects have been communicated to the rest of the world in Wikipedia in Education Newsletters and the WMF Blog. I'll be happy to tell you more: just ask me :-)

Part I:
EDUCATION (not only) for the vulnerable

A screenshot from my favourite project (Wikipedia in Education Newsletter June 2017)

The home screen of the app.

Clicking on the START button of the home screen leads to the SEASONS screen.

Clicking on one of the seasons, e.g. WINTER, leads to a list of the wild plants in season.

Clicking on one of the plants leads to its dedicated page, with botanical name - photo - description - months in season - links to Wikispecies/Wikidata/Wikipedia entries.

Clicking on the LINKS button at the bottom of a SEASON page leads to a screen with useful links.

Part I:
EDUCATION (not only) for the vulnerable

Photo from presentation at a Students' Digital Creativity Festival in Agrinio, Greece in April 2018

That's me with my two students Evangelia (left) and Rodamanthi at the booth of the project. In the auditorium presentation there were over 100 students and teachers, some of whom downloaded the app to explore biodiversity in their region: Agrinio is a town in the prefecture of Aitoloakarnania in Central-Western Greece, and many of the species we studied are present in their region as well!

Also, note that Evangelia is also a member of the Argostoli Day Center, in the next part of my presentation :-)
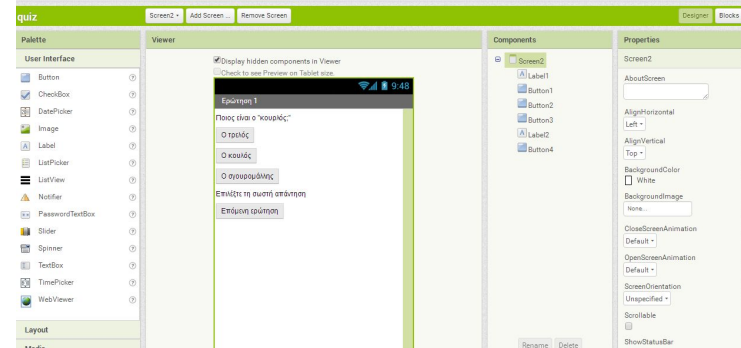
Part I:
EDUCATION (not only) for the vulnerable
OUR FIRST OVERLAP WITH THE MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

User Jim Vallianos displays his translation lists at Argostoli Day Center

Flashback to Wikipedia in Education Newsletter June 2016: the students of our school designed an app using edits from our Wiktionary Project in 2014-15. Meanwhile, the Wikitherapy pilot was coming to an end, and we wanted to share our achievements with the local community. So the Evening School and the Day Center participants teamed up to pool their skills and resources, and planned a mutual event in the Argostoli Municipal Library

A preview of the quiz developed in AppInventor by the Argostoli Evening School using words from the "Kefalonian dialect" category on Greek Wiktionary.

Part II:
WIKITHERAPY

Part II:
Wikitherapy

The Wikitherapy heart logo was designed and made by my daughter Melina, and edited/uploaded to Commons by my daughter Vicky (User:IloveGreece)

- The idea came to me one day when I was having a drink on my town's square: "why not get patients to edit Wikipedia?"
- I discussed the idea at the IdeaLab session of Wikimania 2015 in Mexico City
- Marti Johnson encouraged me to develop the idea into an IEG Grant
- Grant was approved and pilot launched in December 2015 at the Argostoli Mental Health Day Center
- After six months of two sessions per week, the results were presented at Wikimania 2016 in Esino Lario
- There I met Andrea Patricia Kleiman from Argentina, who loved the idea and replicated it in a psychiatric hospital in Buenos Aires ("Wikiquote at the Hospital")
- Results of both projects were presented in poster sessions at a Juvenile Psychiatry Conference in Buenos Aires, and Wikimania 2017 in Montreal
- Andrea presented the concept at Wikimania 2018 in Cape Town. Interest expressed from Spain, Germany and India.

Part II:
Wikitherapy

Now watch the participants speak for themselves, with photos and an interview…
Here is a four-minute video I prepared for my Wikitherapy presentation in the Wikiproject Med session of Wikimania 2016. Enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSfLNKLYHcs&t=21s

Part II:
Wikitherapy

Important notice!
Some of you may be wondering "why are you enabling mentally ill people to edit Wikipedia? It's hard enough for healthy people… imagine what it must be for people with issues!"

My answer:

1) One should not do this without the support of mental health professionals.
2) Even "healthy" individuals can develop issues with editing Wikipedia. Christel Steigenberger (La Kritzolina) introduced this topic with an interesting presentation at Wikimania 2016, titled "Wikipedia addiction and its comorbidities"
3) The first two trial runs of Wikitherapy - by myself in Kefalonia and by Andrea Patricia Kleiman in Buenos Aires - have shown that the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. So we believe it is an idea worth further exploring :)

Part II:
Wikitherapy

So what are these participants doing now, two years after the program?

My "star" students were **Dimitris** (translating Greek words into 15 languages on Wiktionary) and **Evangelia** (the sole editor on Greek Wikiquote for months on end)

With the ongoing efforts of the Day Center personnel, and the added value of a 6-month Wikitherapy course:

- **Dimitris** is in his second year of a journalism course at a vocational school in the third largest town of Greece.
- **Evangelia** is in her third year of High School, and will graduate from the Argostoli Evening School in June 2020.

BUT…. what will they do when they finish school? They may be able to find a job, but there is also a possibility that their issues may flare up again, and prevent them from employment in the fierce competition of the job market...

Part III:
Social entrepreneurship is the next step

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[Wikipedia]

[Audience]

What is social entrepreneurship?

Social entrepreneurship is the use of start-up companies and other entrepreneurs to develop, fund and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues.[1] This concept may be applied to a variety of organizations with different sizes, aims, and beliefs.[2] For-profit entrepreneurs typically measure performance using business metrics like profit, revenues and increases in stock prices, but social entrepreneurs are either non-profits or blend for-profit goals with generating a positive "return to society" and therefore must use different metrics. Social entrepreneurship typically attempts to further broad social, cultural, and environmental goals often associated with the voluntary sector[3] in areas such as poverty alleviation, health care and community development.

At times, profit-making social enterprises may be established to support the social or cultural goals of the organization but not as an end in itself. For example, an organization that aims to provide housing and employment to the homeless may operate a restaurant, both to raise money and to provide employment for the homeless.

Part III:
Social entrepreneurship is the next step

Mentaleaty is a restaurant I came across one day when walking in a popular Athens neighbourhood. I walked in to congratulate them on the clever name, and ask what it was about… they said:
"In here we are all equals. No-one can tell who is mentally ill and who is not. That is our philosophy"

(Food was delicious BTW :-)

Part III:
Social entrepreneurship is the next step

Athena-Elpis ("Athena - Hope") is the name of the social cooperative responsible for the operation of Mentaleaty, as well as a number of other enterprises offering a wide range of services:

- restaurant, canteen and catering
- Cleaning
- Photocopies, scanning

[are you thinking what I'm thinking?]

I spoke with the chairman of the Social Cooperative Federation of Greece and asked him for an example of a social cooperative in the CEE region.

Part III:
Social entrepreneurship is the next step

Here is an example from Poland, as presented in the news portal Aljazeera
(link: https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/witness/2015/05/unwasted-poland-150510113808546.htm)

"At the EKON waste disposal and recycling plant on the outskirts of Warsaw, all of the workers are differently abled - suffering from varying conditions from mild learning difficulties to developed schizophrenia. The employees collect the rubbish from 60,000 flats and sort recyclable material at the factory.

The factory has run successfully as a company for 20 years. Many of its workers would find it hard, if not impossible to find other jobs.

The work done here provides a necessary service to the community, but it also helps to restore the self-confidence of employees, giving them a sense of purpose, companionship and allowing them to earn a wage while contributing to society.

However, the future of the company and its employees is now in jeopardy as the company battles market forces in tricky economic times."

Part III:

Social entrepreneurship is the next step

Back to my problem: what will my graduate vulnerable students do when they finish High School?

On my island there used to be a very innovative and popular cafe which employed disadvantaged individuals… but the municipal authorities closed it down in 2013. I have been very vocal about this on the local media, and I have brought the issue to the attention of the Petition Committee of the European Parliament. Unfortunately, they have taken no action as of yet.

Screenshot from the article "Kambana Square" on Greek Wikipedia. In the Wikitherapy programme we expanded the article to include the Kambana ("Bell") cafe, and added a photo of the now abandoned Bell Tower (which also happens to be recognised a "Newer Monument" by the Greek Ministry of Culture)

Part III:
Social entrepreneurship is the next step

Some points to consider:

- **We are Wikipedians.** We embrace the ideals of the first Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment (progress - tolerance - fraternity), and we are carrying them into the 21st Century and beyond. How can we use these ideals to underpin our broader role in society?
- Naturally, the above is reflected in the **Strategic Direction of Service and Equity** (for me, this is the most exciting page of the 2017 Movement Strategy: https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Strategy/Wikimedia_movement/2017/Direction#Beyond_Wikimedia:_What_will_change_around_us) And this is the most relevant item in the Strategy Discussion: *We will build tools for allies and partners to organize and exchange free knowledge beyond Wikimedia.We will continue to build the infrastructure for free knowledge for our communities. We will go further by offering it as a service to others in the network of knowledge. We will continue to build the ==partnerships== that enable us to develop knowledge we can't create ourselves.*
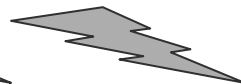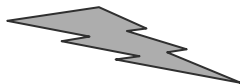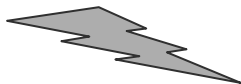- The key word is **partnerships.** So how do we create them?

Now let's brainstorm together!

Now let's brainstorm together!

Some starting points, to get the conversation going:

- **Scanning services:** we could partner with such social enterprises to include Wikisource in their activities, e.g. by providing them with an editor as a "Wikipedian in Residence"
- **Wikicafe** (see my IdeaLab proposal here)
- **Wikiwish** (see my IdeaLab proposal here)
- **Please throw in your own ideas!** Use pencil and paper, or Etherpad, or raise your hand and I will note your idea on the flipchart.

Let's get those brains storming!!!

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Thank you!

Do not hesitate to reach out to me for more information… I will be happy to talk with you either here at the conference, or on Facebook - Instagram , or naturally, on Wikipedia (User:Saintfevrier) Mina Theofilatou, Kefalonia, Greece

That's me with my sister Theodora. She has been brain-damaged for thirteen years… this presentation is dedicated to her.