Wikipedia: community or social movement?

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Abstract

In recent years a new realm for study of political and sociological phenomena has appeared, the Internet, contributing to major changes in our societies during its relatively brief existence. Within cyberspace, organizations whose existence is increasingly tied to this virtual world are of interest to social scientists. This study will analyze the community of one of the largest online organizations, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia with millions of volunteer members. Wikipedia was never meant to be a community, yet it most certainly has become one. This study asks whether it is something even more –whether it is an expression of online activism, and whether it can be seen as a social movement organization, related to one or more of the Internet-centered social movements industries (in particular, the free and open-source software movement industry).

Introduction

Since the very beginnings of our civilization societies have been based on local communities, which continue to play a crucial role in the survival of our species (Adler and Wolfe 1968:26). On the other hand, social movements, many of which have emerged from various communities (Dillon 2003:320), are a fairly recent phenomenon. They are a little over two centuries old (Tilly 2004:147) and are still evolving, with their future is uncertain (Tilly 2004:158).

The development and spread of a new communication network, the Internet, has drastically affected both traditional communities and social movements. Barely 35 years since it was invented, the Internet is now used by over a billion people throughout the world (World 2006, Mason 2008:164). An increasing number of communities and organizations have adopted the Internet as a tool; what's more, for some it has become a primary method of interaction with other social actors (Diani 2000; Earl 2006; Garrett 2006; Lovink 2003:85; Harwood and McIntosh 2004:218; Smith and Kollock 1999:23; Lessig 2004:25; Pickerill 2003).

This raises a question: Can an online community facilitate the emergence of a new social movement? To answer this, I have chosen to look at Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. It may not be representative of the entire Internet, yet it is one of the largest and most rapidly growing online communities, and is related to several social movements, including the Free and Open Source Software Movement, Open Publishing Movement, and Free Culture Movement). It is a good example of what Benkler (2006:62) refers to as "commons-based peer production". My analysis of Wikipedia offers valuable insights about new trends

in online activism, which for the purpose of our discussion I define as any social action expressed on the Internet aiming to bring about social change.

The aim of this article is to estabilish whether the millions of volunteers who created and run Wikipedia might be defined as 1) a community and/or 2) a social movement. The following discussion will begin by introducing Wikipedia and illustrating that it is a social phenomenon that goes far beyond being just "an online encyclopedia". I will then prove that it is indeed acceptable to call it a community, building on both a classic definition (1988:279, 2001:xvii-xviii) and a modern discourse about virtual communities in cyberspace (Harwood and McIntosh 2004:209, Wuthnow 1994:2). Finally, I will analyze whether Wikipedia is a social movement, testing whether it fits some establisted definitions (Tarrow 1998:4, Staggenborg 1998, Zald and McCarthy 1999:1-2, Tilly 2004:3-4) and introducing a discourse related to the Free and Open Source Movement (Kling 1995, Kling 1996:40-59, Kling and Iacono 1996:85-105, Lehman 2004 , Ekbia and Gesser 2004). (A certain caveat is in order: current mainstream definitions of the social movement are still evolving to be able to fully come to terms with the new empirical phenomena in cyberspace).

As I will illustrate further, Wikipedia stands on the outskirts of what would usually be considered a social movement. Whether it is an indicator that determines the future trend, an outlier, or perhaps not a social movement at all is left open for further debate. For the time being, Wikipdia is a case that offers insights into both the unique virtual community and the social movement process.

What is Wikipedia?

Wikipedia was founded in 2001 and quickly became the world's largest encyclopedia, steadily climbing to the Top 10 of the world's most visited websites and showing no signs of losing momentum (Alexa 2009). Wikipedia was, at its inception, first and foremost an encyclopedia (Sanger 2005; Wales 2005b). It has, however, long ago outgrown that description. Its evolution has surprised even its own creator, Jimbo Wales, who admitted that the site has become more than just an encyclopedia, and is now "a community" (Wales 2006) and even "a grand social experiment" (Wales 2005a).

Wikipedia's popularity and its number of articles, now approaching three million in its English language edition alone, are indicative of its success. Yet the number of volunteers who wrote them (commonly referred to as editors or Wikipedians) is by no means less significant. The existence of these volunteers (nobody is ever paid to write for Wikipedia), solely responsible for creating Wikipedia's content, is a key feature distinguishing Wikipedia from other encyclopedias, a feature that enables us to discuss concepts of community and online activism.

The barriers to becoming an editor are low, with the most significant one being the ability to master the MediaWiki software (Viégas, Wattenberg and McKeon 2007; Wikipedia Usability Initative 2009). Anybody can potentially become an

editor of Wikipedia, simply by spending a few seconds registering an account. English Wikipedia contributors hail from various countries, making Wikipedia's membership base extremely diverse and certainly multinational (Collaborative Creativity Group 2009). During December 2005, English Wikipedia had about 23,000 editors who made at least five edits that month and a more active group of about 3,000 editors who made more than 100 edits in the same period. A year later, those numbers doubled (Wikimedia 2008). As of late 2009 Wikipedia has had over 10,000,000 registered editors, more than the population of many countries. Even though only a few percents of them can be considered active, this translates into hundreds of thousands of people active *every day*.

The most surprising thing about Wikipedia is that it actually works: the wiki concept has been described as counterintuitive (Lih 2004) and even bizarre (Gillmor 2004:148) because, unlike in traditional common sense collaborative projects, in their basic form the wikis provide no gate-keeping function to control what is being published. Wikipedias allow all of their editors to vote and voice their opinions, and empower them to change the content of articles and organizational policies to an extent unthinkable in traditional organizations (Kolbitsch and Mauer 2006; Viégas, Wattenberg and McKeon 2007). Wikipedia's governance is a puzzle; characterizations of Wikipedia's governance range from anarchy (in the sense of its political philosophy of social change), on the one hand, (Reagle 2005) and democracy (Lebkowsky and Ratcliffe 2005:163-167) or dictatorship, on the other (Gillmor 2004:149); John Holloway and his collaborators (2005) called it a "hybrid model of democracy, meritocracy, aristocracy and monarchy".

Although wikis look fragile at first glance, they are in fact very resilient (Leuf and Cunningham 2001; Gillmor 2004:150). What allows this almost completely open editing system to function? The first part of the answer lies with the bazaar model of knowledge creation that wikis have adopted (Raymond 1999). This model follows the Linus Law, which states that if enough people are looking for errors, they will find them all. Wikis track all changes and store every version of an article edited, which means that given a sufficient number of active editors, all malicious edits (vandalism) will be quickly reverted. Because of such design it actually takes more effort to vandalize a page than to revert an article back to an acceptable version.

Therefore, in the wiki world actions that benefit the project are much more effective than vandalism which means that rational editors will prefer to do constructive work—and rational vandals will move to other, easier to vandalize communities. This makes wikis, despite their openness, quite vandal-proof, and ensures that the "fixing broken windows" mentality is even more effective in their online world than in offline reality (Kelling and Coles 1996, McGrady 2009). This asymmetry benefits the members of the wiki communities and is crucial in allowing quality content to emerge from a seemingly chaotic environment (Lih 2004).

Wikipedia's style and tone is formal, resembling, at least superficially, traditional encyclopedic content (Lih 2004, Emigh and Herring 2005). Yet

Wikipedia is more than just an encyclopedia. The Wikipedia project has also become the largest example of participatory journalism to date, evolving or copying practices similar to those of the mainstream media (Lih 2004). Although Wikipedia's MediaWiki software has allowed it to became what it is today, this social software technology is at best only half of the answer to what makes Wikipedia 'tick' (Leuf and Cunningham 2001; Sanger 2005). It seems that other social forces are at work here, forces that foster communication and collaboration with other editors and drive the development of software in the directions that the editors want; no software, no technology, can be the sole factor in creating such a social institution.

Is Wikipedia a community?

Technological advances have penetrated deep into our society. From the invention of pen and paper, information and communication technologies, coupled with effects of growing literacy, have been shaping our lives (Goody & Watt 1963, Tarrow 1998:132). Those tools of change are technological but their results are social (Lovink 2003:85; Lessig 2004:7). Not only are we getting closer to McLuhan's proverbial "global village" (McLuhan 1962:21), but we have created an entirely new plane for social interactions, the cyberspace, defined as**:** "not simply an array of communication devices, but a new, technologically determined location that can be populated by new communities and host extensions of current ones in electronic outposts" (Harwood and McIntosh 2004:209) .

The term 'community', as many other important social constructs, has evolved to have multiple meanings (Harwood and McIntosh 2004:210). I will adopt the definition of Ferdinand Tönnies (1988:279, 2001:xvii-xviii), that of the community (Gemeinschaft) as a group, regulated by customs and traditions, in which individuals are concerned more about the group than about their self-interest. Communities have been a part of human culture since the very beginnings of the history of mankind but the advent of cyberspace is forcing a major change of what we define as a community. Local, geographically constricted social relations are becoming less important (Adler 1988, Wellman 1998). The community is now frequently understood in non-spatial terms. Tönnies wrote about families and local communities, but later included globally dispersed religious communities among his examples, discussing community building through mental processes (1988:34;218). Wuthnow (1994:2) wrote about communities formed by small groups centered around "the private, largely invisible ways in which individuals chose to spend a portion of their free time"; such groups are increasingly present online (Harwood and McIntosh 2004:211). Empirical evidence shows that over 41.5% of Americans aged 18-24 find a "sense of community" online, and it is likely that the number is going to increase with time (Harwood and McIntosh 2004:222). One need to look no further than the increasingly popular Facebook and MySpace sites for a proof for the most popular modern examples.

Although Wikipedia is a fairly recent addition to cyberspace, it has been identified as a community in one of the earliest academic papers discussing this organization (Ciffolilli 2003) and since then it has been repeatedly described as one of the most vibrant virtual communities (Gillmor 2004:148-149, Lebkowsky and Ratcliffe 2005:163-167).

Though Wikipedia stops short of two hundred millions of users Facebook had in January 2009, it should not be surprising that the sheer number of over ten millions Wikipedians would find a "sense of community" as well. Yet those numbers are not the only reason; Sanger (2005) noted that the Wikipedia community dates to the first few days of the project, back in 2001, when the editors were creating the basics of Wikipedia's policies.

The wiki technology itself creates a friendly environment for the communities (Lih 2004; Bryant, Forte and Bruckman 2005; Emigh and Herring 2005; Kuznetsov 2006; Viégas, Wattenberg and McKeon 2007). It fosters the creation of a community by allowing its users to easily communicate with others (Kuznetsov 2006). It is through interactions with other editors that Wikipedians "begin to feel needed by the Wikipedia community" (Bryant, Forte and Bruckman 2005; Kuznetsov 2006). Over time those interactions give rise to a culture based upon customs and traditions—as most Wikipedia editors knowingly rely on the body of knowledge, policies and tools developed by others (Rafaeli, Hayat and Arier 2005; Sunstein 2006:152-153, Viégas, Wattenberg and McKeon 2007). As McGrady (2009) clarifies, the wiki technology by itself is not what makes the project work, nor can Wikipedia's success be attributed to a random outcome of the work of millions of individuals. It is the coordinated work of individuals, sharing similar goals, customs and traditions—which they have developed and agreed on themselves—that brings order to the "anybody can edit" chaos.

With regards to its governance and power structure, Wikipedia is mostly a self-organizing (adhocratic) community (Viégas, Wattenberg and McKeon 2007, Konieczny 2009). Although initially Jimbo Wales and some other early editors were influential in setting the original direction and guiding policies, the community now operates effectively with very little managerial intervention (Malone 2004:45). Members of the Wikipedia community perform various tasks, operating together under an unwritten social contract (Murdock 2004). Hundreds of them are democratically elected and recognized with titles like developers, stewards, bureaucrats, and administrators, each of which allows access to special tools. For example, administrators, who form the largest such group, are given the ability to prevent articles from being edited, delete articles, or block editors from editing—but the limits of their power are set in accordance with the policy designed and modifiable by the community. Overall, it appears that the Wikipedia model of governance is highly decentralized, and sucesfully prevents creation of oligarchies (Malone 2004:45, Konieczny 2009).

Further, on Wikipedia, any editor can create an organization dedicated to improving any aspect of the project; there is no need for permission or registration. Anybody can decide on the meaning of 'improvement'; if others

agree and join the project, it prospers. If not, the project becomes inactive and disappears. The ease with which one can do so resulted in the present situation, in which in addition to thousands of Wikipedia's volunteer officials, there are literally hundreds of formal, semi-formal and informal organizations gathering Wikipedians to perform various voluntary tasks—or just express their allegiance to a certain point of view. Such complexity and richness of those organizations certainly deserves a dedicated research project in itself. A brief selection of Wikipedia's organizations presented below illustrates the complexity of Wikipedia's community:

- *The Arbitration Committee (ArbCom)* is an elected body that acts as Wikipedia's court and has the power to permanently ban disruptive editors from editing.

- *Mediation Cabal* tries to resolve disputes before they appear before the ArbCom.

- *Counter-Vandalism Unit* and *Recent Changes Patrol* specialize in reverting malicious changes monitors.

- *Guild of Copy Editors* and *Good Article Reviewers* concentrate on improving each article's content.

- *Welcoming Committee* takes care of welcoming newly registered editors to the project.

- *Wikipedia Signpost* is the online Wiki newspaper.

- *Regional Noticeboards* gather Wikipedians associated with specific geographical locations or languages.

- Other noticeboards like *Biographies of living persons noticeboard, Reliable sources noticeboard* or *Fringe theories noticeboard* provide places for centralized discussions of more general issues.

- *Wikidemia* or *Wikimedia Research Council* are dedicated to fostering and even studying the community

- In addition, hundreds of *WikiProjects* provide places for those interested in particular issues (for example, WikiProject Sociology, WikiProject University of Pittsburgh or WikiProject History of Poland).

This list offers a brief glimpse into the community that Wikipedia has become. Wikipedia has even evolved its own internal "philosophies", with hot debates raging between proponents of *Inclusionism* ("information should be liberally added to Wikipedia") and *Deletionism* ("only information that fullfills rigorous standards should be added to Wikipedia"), to name just two of more than a dozen factions that are now in existence (Meta 2009). At the beginning of 2009, Wikipedia's own "Category:Wikipedians by Wikipedia editing philosophy" contained over 300 editors who declared their allegiance to deletionism and over 1000 followers of inclusionism.

Self-awareness (Weber 1978:361-362) and collective identity (Bergquist and Szczepanska 2002, Melucci 1996:68) are important for a sense of belonging to a community, and indeed many Wikipedia contributors identify themselves as members of the Wikipedia community (Rafaeli, Hayat and Arier 2005). There are many editors' essays that refer to the Wikipedia community (Meta 2008). The "Community Portal" is accessible from every page of the Wikipedia through a link always visible to the left of every Wikipedia article; its main discussion forum is called the "Village Pump" (Rafaeli, Hayat and Arier 2005). Kriplean, Beschastnikh and McDonald (2008) discuss how the Wikipedia community was strenghtened by development of an award system. There are now hundreds of community designed awards, such as the Anti-Vandalism Barnstar that "may be awarded to those who show great contributions to protecting and reverting attacks of vandalism on Wikipedia" or the Human Rights Barnstar which "may be awarded to an editor who contributes significantly to expand or improve an article related to human rights". The development of specialized language (with words like wikipedian, wikify, wikiholiday) or products (T-Shirts, mugs) that allow fans to display their allegiances and support the project are another indicators of a community with a rich and constantly evolving culture (half of the profits from the sale of Wikipedia-brand items are donated to the Wikimedia Foundation).

Finally, the of editors' motivations are of interest. Several studies related to motivations of Wikipedia's contributors have consistently pointed to similar factors. Kuznetsov (2006) wrote that on Wikipedia, "the values of reputation, *community*, reciprocity, altruism and autonomy" are crucial in motivating editors. Nov (2007) found in his survey that the top three motivations of Wikipedians were: fun (enjoying oneself), ideology ("information should be free") and values (helping others). In the most recent study of Wikipedia's editors motivations, Schroer and Hertel (2009) found that significant factors positively influencing editors' activity included identification with the project goal—providing free access to information—as well as *identification with the Wikipedia community*. It is interesting to note that the motivations roughly related to helping others are always ranked above the values of pure self interest, such as career motivations (Malone 2004:45, Nov 2007, Schroer and Hertel 2009).

To summarize, Wikipedia seems to easily fit the Tönnies' definition of community. Its editors form a group. They are governed by their own customs and traditions (policies) and in a period of few years they have created their own community culture. Finally, they are concerned about more than their self-interest, working towards a goal shared by the members of the entire group (building an encyclopedia).

Thus a project to build an encyclopedia in cyberspace evolved somewhere along the way into a lively community. Based on the bazaar model of knowledge creation, one could argue that for Wikipedia to work it was inevitable or even necessary to have—or rather, to become—a community. Yet what if Wikipedia is evolving into something more?

Is Wikipedia a social movement?

Although Wikipeda is now increasingly cited as an example of a virtual community, there have been few attempts so far to analyze it as a social movement. Perhaps this is due to the simple fact that Wikipedia has never framed itself as one. However the lack of self-identification as a social movement has not precluded the analysis and identification of certain phenomena by social movements theorists; the case in point being the Free and Open Source Software Movement (FOSSM). A typical Linux programmer may not think of himself as a social movement activist, yet the Linux software is a flagship of the FOSS Movement. This movement has been the subject of an increasing number of studies from different perspectives, ranging from the technical analysis of the software used and produced by the movement to the sociological analysis of the organizational, socio-economical and political aspects of the movement. In that latter capacity, FOSSM has also been analyzed as a new type of a social movement based on various social movements theories, from resource mobilization (Kling 1995, Ekbia and Gesser 2004), through social constructionism and framing analysis (Ekbia and Gesser 2004), to the new social movements theory (Bergquist and Szczepanska 2002).

Thus the question arises: Where does Wikipedia fit in the structure of the social movements in general and FOSSM in particular—if it does at all? Matei and Dobrescu (2006), who in their paper clearly call Wikipedia a social movement, argue that it is "a descendant of a class of social projects inspired by the 'meaning revolution' of the 1960s counterculture", tracing its roots to movements such as the Xanadu hypertext project (Keep, McLaughlin and Parmar 2002), the techno-reversionary project (Roszak 1999), the hacker culture (Levy 2001), the free software movement (Feller 2005), and the virtual community project (Rheingold 2001). Following their analysis, and using terminology proposed by Zald and McCarthy (1999:1-2), one can argue that Wikipedia can be seen as a formally organized component of a specific social movement (FOSSM), or in other words, a social movement organization (SMO), one of the newest rising stars in a Free and Open Source Software Movement Industry (FOSSMI)—a collection of all SMOs focused on the FOSS field.

FOSSMI is composed of two distinct subindustries: the Free Software Movement (FSM) and the Open Source Software Movement (OSSM). The existence of those two subindustries is crucial in understanding the environment that gave birth to Wikipedia and the debates on what kind of a social movement the FOSSMI really is. FOSSMI began in 1983 when Richard Stallman, motivated by strong convictions that proprietary software is inferior and unethical, announced the formation of the GNU project, giving birth to the concept of "open source software" (Deek and McHugh 2007:297). Although among the best known products of FOSSMI are software packages such as the Linux operating system, Star and Open Office application suites and Netscape, Mozilla and Firefox browsers, the FOSSMI is no longer limited only to software. Stallman noted that "open source is a design methodology, free software is a

social movement" (Bowrey 2005:86). Over the years the GNU project has become more than a source of software, it has become a new social movement, with millions of activists and followers, and carried forth by dedicated organizations such as the Free Software Foundation and the Electronic Frontier Foundation (Hakken 2003:9). The ideology of FOSSMI has been incorporated into fields as diverse as medical research (Tropical Disease Initative—Maurer, Arti Rai, Andrej Sal (2004)), culture, media and law (Creative Commons - Lessig (2004:282)). Wikipedia, with its open source software (MediaWiki engine), a free license (GNU Free Document Licence and increasingly, Creative Commons) and projects such as the distribution of free printed copies of itself in the Third World countries (Meta 2005), has its roots squarely within the FOSSMI, but it is much more than just a piece of (open) sofware.

Yet software is still important to FOSSMI. The OSSM, which concentrates on the issue of an open source rather than freedom, creates the impression that FOSSMI is not really a proper social movement. Lehman (2004) argues that FOSSMI should not be of much concern to social scientists, as it is "about creating software, not about social change... Therefore [it] is not a social movement" In their reply to Lehman, Ekbia and Gasser (2004) state that FOSSMI contributes to our understanding of the resource mobilization theory, helping to illustrate the relationship between 'political activities' and 'development projects'. Building on the work of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), they use the examples of the highly innovative FOSSMOs to discuss the importance of the degree of innovation in the collective action. Adapting Kling's (1996:54) notion of computerization movements ("loosely organized collections of groups that promote specific forms of computerization") and seeing FOSSMI as a subtype of those movements, Elliott and Scacchi (2008) stress the innovativeness of the FOSSMOs which attempt "to revolutionize software development practices by advocating that all software be"free' for access, study, modification, and (re)distribution". They and others (Tapscott and Williams 2006:184) point out the importance of key values within the FOSSMI that spread from the software development to other fields: "informal self-management, immediate acceptance of fellow contributors, and open disclosure of all documentation and work transcripts". Not incidentally, those are the same values that underly the Wikipedia project.

Ekbia and Gasser (2004) shed more light on the differences between FOSSMIs and the more traditional SMIs, pointing out that FOSSMIs have significant features that differentiate them from other forms of social movements, namely reliance on providing social goods instead of addressing grievances. They note that traditional social movements focused on "correcting some situation to which they object or changing the circumstances for a group that suffers some sort of social disadvantage" (Gamson 1975) are mostly grievance-driven, whereas FOSSMI is dominantly promise-driven (Kling 1996:46). This differentiation is very important in understanding Wikipedia as a social movement: Wikipedia is not "just an encyclopedia", but it is an organized effort—a movement—delivering a promise to make humanity's knowledge freely

accessible to every single human being, including distribution of CDs and DVDs in places with little Internet access, such as in Africa (Meta 2005).

The case of Wikipedia—particularly in context of demands for the right to free access to it in the countries like China (Washington Post 2006)—may also be seen as an ongoing case study of how the lack of a social good which had not existed until recently can be transformed into a grievance once people become accustomed to it, and/or are promised it. This process has been identified as an important factor leading to the creation of social movements (Gurr 1970).

Next, we may consider the language—both of Wikipedia's and of works surrounding it. Wikipedia might not frame itself as a social movement, but it uses frames that would not be out of place within a regular social movement. For example, Wikipedia's mission of providing information freely to all humankind seems more fitting to a social movement than to an encyclopedia publisher. Gillmor (2004:148) commented that Wikipedia, with its open community, transparent structure, reliance on voting and elections, and equal treatment of the project participants, is "an example of how the grassroots in today's interconnected world can do extraordinary things". The word "grassroots" in particular strikes an interesting chord—as it is often used in the contexts of social movements.

Tarrow (1998:4) writes that a social movement is "a collective challenge by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities". It is fairly easy to prove that Wikipedia fits that definition. As a community ("people with common purpose and solidarity"), gathered together to create an encyclopedia and ensure its free availability to others ("collective challenge") Wikipedia is also in "sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities". This can be shown by its conflicts with established encyclopedias (most notably, Britannica (Nature 2006)), media (for example, the "Seigenthaler affair", in which a respectable journalist criticized Wikipedia for including false and defamatory information in his biography (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2005)) and even governments (like the case of Wikipedia censorship in China (Washington Post 2006)). As Tarrow notes (1998:3), some movements can be intensely apolitical but they still interact with law-enforcing authorities, and Wikipedia has had its share of legal issues, primarily related to copyright and privacy (Signpost 2008).

Tarrow (1998:44;217) considers discourse a central component of any modern social movement and the major driving force behind modern revolutions. The intensity of the Wikipedia's discourse (Bryant, Forte and Bruckman 2005, Viégas, Wattenberg and McKeon 2007) gives further arguments supporting its classification as a social movement.

It is enlightening to consider how Wikipedia fits the more complex definition advanced by Tilly (2004:3-4), who sees three major elements in a social movement:

1. campaigns: a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities;

2. social movement repertoire: employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering; and

3. WUNC displays: participants' concerted public representation of **w**orthiness, **u**nity, **n**umbers, and **c**ommitments on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies.

Since Wikipedia has no salaried employees, the burden of all actions, from writing articles to press releases, falls on self-organizing volunteers. Those volunteers for close to a decade have dealt with creating the project's content and developing its internal policies. Zachte (2008) in a rough estimate of the commercial value of the yearly work of unpaid volunteer Wikipedia's contributors arrived at a number of over one hundred million dollars. This should fit the requirement of "sustained, organized public effort".

Let's now consider the "collective claims on target authorities". Here we can point out the difference between grievance-driven and promise-driven movements (Gamson 1975, Kling 1996:46). Wikipedia's claim can be defined as promising and delivering a new social good—the free encyclopedia, a good that the authorities are not providing. While the institutions traditionaly responsible for creating and delivering encyclopedias are private businesses and not governments, it has been argued that they constitute an increasingly valid target of modern social movements (Earl 2006).

As to Tilly's second point, the fact that Wikipedians do not use the most spectacular tools from the social movement repertoire should not be taken as proof that Wikipedia is not a social movement. Wikipedia editors may not be picketing the next WTO conference, yet Tarrow (1998:3) noted that collective action can be undramatic and undertaken by groups whose goals "would hardly raise an eyebrow". What's more, on a closer analysis, it does apear that Wikipedia has taken some actions from the social movement repertoire - if only in the virtual world. For example, numerous "special-purpose associations and coalitions" exist, as mentioned previously. As for public meetings, there have been worldwide meetings and conferences of Wikipedia editors (annual Wikimania conferences that began in 2005) and many more regional ones (from conferences organized by a local Wikimedia chapter, such as the Polish Wikimedia Foundation Chapter conferences, to smaller, but much more frequent events such as the Meetups listed on the Wikipedia:Meetup page). All of those form an interesting example of how computer-mediated-communication fostered face-to-face interactions. We should also not forget about the entire community interacting constantly through the Wikipedia site, using communication tools offered by the wiki technology (such as discussion

pages) or other tools adopted by the community (such as the IRC tool, allowing editors to chat with each other in real time).

In terms of WUNC displays one can argue that the majority of actions of Wikipedians are concentrated on building the encyclopedia, not on purposely taking any public actions for some external audience. Yet this criticism may be rebutted as the encyclopedia does not exist only for its editors; in fact studies of motivations of editors stress that they are highly concerned with the end users— the encyclopedia's readers (Nov 2007, Schroer and Hertel 2009). This external audience is the target of the encyclopedia and its editors whose goal is to provide the readers with the free encyclopedic information. Therefore the task of building the encyclopedia can be viewed as a WUNC display, designed to show the world that Wikipedia's primary goal, creating and distributing the free encyclopedia, is entirely feasible. Further, **w**orthiness can be seen in Wikipedians' recognition of most knowledgeable and active contributors; **u**nity is visible in adherence to Wikipedia's customs and netiquette and is shown on talk pages and user pages, where editors often choose to display specific statements or awards; **n**umbers can be found throughout Wikipedia - from various votes and discussions, which attract an increasing amount of voters displaying their opinions, to public meetings and conferences; and finally, **c**ommitment is manifested by an increasing number of editors and their activity (expressed both in time spent on Wikipedia and financial support).

Even if one were to refrain from making a case that Wikipedia is a social movement, Wikipedia can still be considered a part of the FOSSMI's social movement community (SMC). Staggenborg (1998) defined the concept of a social movement community as a group of organizations, sharing a collective identity, that exist to provide services or to educate or entertain participants of the particular SMI community. A related concept was introduced by Tarrow (1998:50) as the "communitiy of print": an association based on face-to-face interactions, building structures among the larger populace, allowing the diffusion of movement ideas to a wider public and aiding the growth of related SMI. Similarly, Rochon (1998) wrote of communities who incubate values that are later diffused to a wider public through more traditional SMOs.

The social movement community within the FOSSMI is well developed. Lovink (2003:266) noted that "networking in and between movements and social groups" is one of the three pillars of online activistm.

The size of Wikipedia—millions of editors—makes it central to the FOSSMI community. The project constanty drawing scores of thousands of new volunteers educates them and the wider public about FOSSMI values such as alternative copyrights. A sample illustration of this process can be the December 2009 donation of 100,000 images from the German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv) to Wikipedia's image repository (known as the Wikimedia Commons). This involved hundreds of editors who organized themselves, reached out to the Bundesarchive, negotiated the use of a free copyright license, ported the images to the Commons, categorized them, improved their descriptions and added them to the related articles. Throughout this process

those editors not only educated themselves about the copyright, but also generated significant media coverage, drawing attention to the issues dear to the FOSSMI (Commons 2009). By educating its editors, fostering a collective identity tying Wikipedia with the FOSSMI and diffusing those values to a wider public, Wikipedia seems to be, at least, an Internet-era 'community of print", or a part of the social movement community (SMC) surrounding the FOSSMI.

Conclusions

I have no illusions of grandeur that my paper will cause a major reshaping of the Wikipedia community and popularize the framing of Wikipedia as a social movement. I do hope, however, to contribute to the growing discourse in academia about the rise of what we currently see as "borderline" social movements, and which I believe will keep becoming more and more important. And perhaps this paper will cause a few Wikipedians—and activists elsewhere— to pause for a second, and give a rise to a new WikiProject centered around free culture and seeing Wikipedia as a social movement.

As I have pointed out in the preceeding sections, the Wikipedia project has evolved beyond "just an encyclopedia". It has given rise to a vibrant online community, certainly justifing the use of the "Wikipedia community" phrase. Whether we can speak of a "Wikipedia social movement" is less obvious. Although Wikipedia seems to be closely related to the Free/Open Source Software Movement Industry and it shows certain qualities commonly associated with SMOs, it is certainly not a typical one. Current definitions of what a social movement is seem to fit Wikipedia; however a degree to which some of them need to be stretched indicates the need for further discussions, and possibly a need for refining and updating those definitions.

There is ample opportunity for future studies of the links between Wikipedia, the FOSSMI, and social movements in general. Many questions await further consideration such as: does being a frequent reader or editor of Wikipedia translate into traditional forms of activism? If so, is this activism limited to FOSSMOs, or does it extend to more traditional SMOs involved for exmple in the global justice or environentalism issues? Does the multiethnic base of the English Wikipedia push its editors' attention to transnational or regional movements? To what extent may Wikipedia be contributing to the "[Internet] information should be free" attitude among the Net Generation? These questions form just the tip of the iceberg waiting to be scaled by the social movement scholars; it is my hope that this study will facilitate such future endeavours.

Putnam (1995) notes that the Internet, if used in innovative ways, may be one of the trends that goes against the erosion of civil society. Tilly (2004:158) in turn states that the future social movements may take a form quite different from those known today. Wikipedia, a new and innovative medium, which has made millions participate in the exercise of creating and sharing free information has the potential to become an interesting illustration of their statements. Whether

this will be in fact the case, we cannot be certain today, but the contiuing evolution of Wikipedia deserves more attention.

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