GLOBAL MAJORITY WIKIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY PRIORITIES

INTRODUCTION

These Global Majority Wikimedia Technology Priorities and the process they rest upon aim to contribute from the Global Majority perspective to the strategic directions of the Wikimedia Movement. Recognizing that the Global South represents the Global Majority, incorporating its perspective into tech development fosters inclusivity and ensures that Wikimedia initiatives reflect the diverse experiences and knowledge systems of the world.

The representation of the Global Majority in the open movement is especially relevant for enhancing sustainable development. In many countries, authoritarian governments have effectively integrated major tech companies into state propaganda, which makes it especially difficult if not impossible to voice and advocate for liberties and digital rights. Platforms like Wikimedia often serve as the sole avenue for human rights. Nevertheless, we are concerned by the restrictive nature of our technology, which hinders the participation of Global Majority communities.

In 2017, the Wikimedia Movement started to discuss its collective future and decided in 2020 that, beyond our core mission of developing, collecting and sharing knowledge, in the next few years we will embody the concepts of knowledge as a service and knowledge equity. These directions aim respectively to foster an infrastructure that serves free, trusted knowledge through different interfaces to the users of our platforms and to focus our efforts on the knowledge and communities that have been left out by structures of power and privilege. As a movement, we have claimed that by 2030 Wikimedia will become the essential infrastructure of the ecosystem of free knowledge, and anyone who shares our vision will be able to join us. In this document, our contribution entails both consolidating, synthesizing, and presenting the technology priorities of the Global Majority, and building a sustained multi stakeholder action process to support the realization of these priorities.

Our current methods of prioritizing technology often do not align with our strategic directions. Wishlist of different kinds, hack-a-thons, hiring staff/consultants, tech plans are usually driven by the urgency to resolve outstanding and upcoming issues. This approach has systematically skewed the development of technology against underrepresented communities and their long-term needs.

This document was produced collectively by Global Majority Wikimedia tech stakeholders, and main questions we have asked ourselves were:

1. **What specific socio-technical infrastructure does the Global Majority communities envision to better serve their needs?**
2. **Having the hurdles of the Global Majority communities in mind, how do we overcome barriers that prevent communities from fully accessing and contributing to free knowledge, and foster an inclusive and effective socio-technical infrastructure?**

This document is the culmination of a collective effort involving nine Wikimedia organizations and the participation of fourteen individuals. The methodology for selecting these stakeholders and producing a consensus-based set of collective priorities is outlined in Appendix A. The research was conducted throughout the year 2023, with data organization and writing taking place in the first quarter of 2024. This process was facilitated by Wiki Movimento Brasil, in collaboration with CIS-A2K. Affiliates that were consulted during this research ratified this document on XXXXX.

We expect this research and the process it rests upon to influence tech development directions and priorities in the Wikimedia Movement. We expect this initiative to support the implementation of several Movement Strategy recommendations, especially *Improve User Experience* (R2), *Ensure Equity in Decision-making* (R4), *Coordinate Across Stakeholders* (R5) and *Innovate in Free Knowledge* (R9).

GLOBAL MAJORITY WIKIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY PRIORITIES

1. **Promote epistemic diversity in Wikimedia's Artificial Intelligence coordination efforts** by prioritizing representation of Global Majority communities.

2. **Advocate for ethical standards in Artificial Intelligence technologies** by engaging in initiatives such as mandating disclosure of information sources, promoting fair working conditions in the AI development ecosystem, developing best practices to address colonial biases in AI, and proactively recommending regulatory frameworks for AI that respect indigenous knowledge, cultural perspectives from the Global Majority, and other marginalized communities.

3. **Prioritize decentralized, diverse and inclusive software development** by enhancing accountability, fostering project-based working groups and ensuring developments echo communities needs, as well as internet consumption and content production practices prevalent in the Global Majority.

4. **Empower inclusive development** by fostering Global Majority communities to co-create tools that address their needs, making an equitable distribution of funds and nurturing ownership and mentorship for sustainable progress, and prioritizing Wikimedia projects that are chronically underfunded and underdeveloped.

5. **Establish a federated network of stakeholders to develop the Wikimedia projects and tools** based on a three-year development plan that prioritizes the Global Majority needs and that decenters Wikimedia tech development from the Global North.

6. **Take immediate action to mitigate IP blockage effects** by implementing robust circumvention tools, especially for outreach activities in the Global Majority.

7. Considering that 70% of people from the Global Majority exclusively access the Internet using mobile devices, **break down barriers that hinders access and contribution to the free knowledge ecosystem** by optimizing the mobile infrastructure and prioritizing the development of the visual editor for mobile devices.

8. **Invest in core development within the Global Majority** by prioritizing capacity building, fostering the growth and sustainability of its technical community, and cultivating a culture of innovation.

9. **Build and sustain the Technology Council** as an instance that bridges

communities through inclusive representation, deep democracy principles, decolonial agenda-setting practices, and transparent governance, ensuring equitable participation from underrepresented projects and Global Majority communities. **Establish a multi-stakeholder executive committee** to guide technological priorities, ensuring equitable representation of stakeholders from the Global Majority while the Technology Council is not yet formed.

10. Considering that subsidiarity is crucial for advancing decentralized technology development, **create and run events to showcase Global Majority's tech abilities and foster the talent** via a systematic and sustainable structure.

CONCLUSION

The Global Majority tech priorities obtained through this investigation outline the more inclusive and effective socio-technical infrastructure we want for the Wikimedia Movement. We also lay down the steps needed to be taken in order to reach that infrastructure, effectively answering our main questions proposed.

The ten priorities ultimately orbit two high priority main concepts: the promotion of epistemic diversity, prioritizing representation and inclusion of the Global Majority communities and knowledge in decision-making spaces and protocols, and the decentering of tech development, prioritizing Global Majority communities' needs and fostering a federated network of stakeholders to develop in the Wikimedia projects and tools.

Moving forward, we want to take concrete steps to realize the priorities declared in this document. One aspect is to decenter the Wikimedia Hackathon from the Global North, aiming to enhance inclusivity and engagement from the Global Majority. Moreover, we want to initiate discussions with the Wikimedia Foundation, affiliates and other Wikimedia Movement bodies to advocate for the incorporation of these priorities into their strategic plans and to have an opportunity to jointly discuss performance indicators for each one of them.

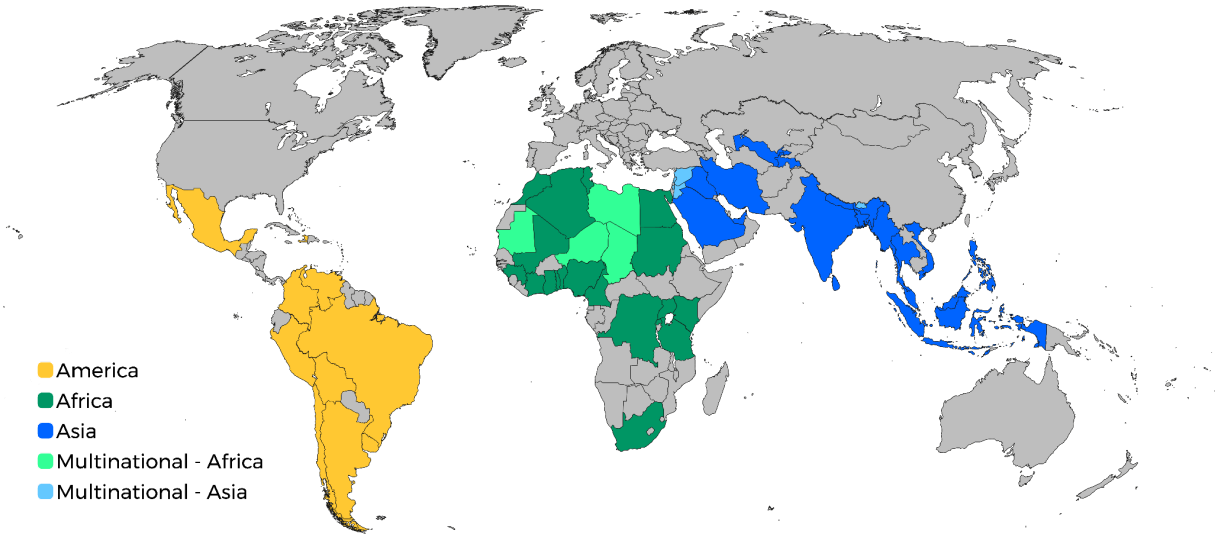
APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The research process is divided into four stages: Assessment, Interviews, Proposal and Internalization.

Assessment

The assessment phase began by collecting data and information about organizations of the Wikimedia Movement. The database used for the initial assessment was the Wikimedia Affiliates Portal, where data were collected and the affiliates divided roughly into origin regions and geopolitical divisions (Global Majority and Global North). The organizations from the Global Majority amounted to 74, 35 of which received Wikimedia Community Funds in the last three years or were financially independent. Jessica Stephenson, from Let's Connect made a bridge with other organizations of the Global Majority that could be of interest to this research.

A list of the organizations that had technology activities in their reports were selected to the next phase of the research.



Interviews

A round of semi structured interviews was conducted to identify their plans and desires for the future of the socio-technical infrastructure of the Wikimedia Movement. There were 10 topics pre-selected, to which some of the interviewees answered a form in order to identify their topics of most interest. Not all topics were addressed in every interview, and the ones marked by the interviewees were prioritized. These interviews were recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

Proposal

A small set of articles and publications were consulted and tagged by topics addressed in them. Those were determined *hypothesis topics*. We tested the interviews against these topics and much discussed with the Global Majority interviewees was possible to be tagged into these tags. Excerpts of the interviews were tagged and put into a matrix and then consolidated, with some being merged.

Each consolidated excerpt had its meaning extracted and applied to a descriptive and propositive declaration, which sum up to ten declarations.

These statements were presented in April, 2024, to the interviewed Global Majority communities members in an open discussion, in which they collectively proposed changes.

Internalization

The finalized proposal was written as a manifesto, containing all the revised declarations. This document was then submitted to their organizations internal process of analysis, with the intent of identifying if their organizations agreed with the assessment and declarations of this document. After a month's period, we published the results of the research findings and outreached it to the general Global Majority communities and individuals.

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

Deep democracy

System that presupposes the broad and equal participation of its members in decisions that concern them to the extent that they concern them. In deep democracies, organizations function according to the interests of the people and are governed by them.

Reference: HOOKS, bell. "Ensinamento 15: conflito". In: HOOKS, bell. Ensinando pensamento crítico: sabedoria prática. São Paulo: Elefante, 2020.

WRIGHT, E. Envisioning Real Utopias. London: Verso, 2010.

Epistemic diversity

Diversity of perspectives, knowledge forms and practices within the Wikimedia movement. An epistemic diverse environment values and respects diverse voices and promotes equitable contribution to decision making and understanding.

References: SENGUPTA, A.; BOUTERSE, S.; ALLMANN, K. Build an internet for, and from, us all. Nature, v. 563, n. 7733, p. S147-S148, 2018.

CUSICANQUI, S. R. Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2010.

Federated network

Type of social network in which individuals and organizations are able to exchange information, good practices and learnings with interoperability among other stakeholders.

Reference: SERRANO, M. et al. Review and Designs of Federated Management in Future Internet Architectures. In: DOMINGUE et al. (orgs), The Future Internet. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2011. p. 51-66.

IP blockage

Technical restrictions applied to a specific or range of IP addresses that prevent anyone from editing, creating accounts, sending emails or otherwise contributing to a Wikimedia project if they are in that IP range.

Reference: MediaWiki, "Manual:Block and unblock".

Knowledge as a service

One of the components of the Wikimedia Movement's strategic direction. According to this direction, Wikimedia will enhance its infrastructure to provide open knowledge globally across various interfaces and communities.

Reference: Wikimedia Movement Strategy, "Knowledge as a service".

Knowledge equity

One of the components of the Wikimedia Movement's strategic direction. According to this direction, the social, political, and technical barriers that prevent historically marginalized communities from accessing and contributing to free knowledge must be broken down.

Reference: Wikimedia Movement Strategy, "Knowledge Equity".

Mobile infrastructure

Technological framework and resources available dedicated to facilitate access and contribution to Wikimedia projects using mobile devices.

Reference: MediaWiki, “Wikimedia mobile engineering”.

Socio-technical infrastructure

Complex interconnection between technical and social systems that support wikimedians activities. It combines platforms and tools (technical systems) with policies and practices (social system) that shape the way Wikimedians organize and execute their activities.

Reference: Wikipedia, “Sociotechnical system”.