

The Never Ever Perfect Encyclopedia

An ethnographic analysis of participation in Wikipedia

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Abstract

Wikipedia represents ‘the sum of all human knowledge’ and is becoming the authoritative source on the Internet. As a collective work, how exactly are articles created by editors? The aim of the study is to seek the answer by use of participation theory. Instead of considering the active and visible editors, the thesis attempts to shed light on the hidden side of Wikipedia through netnographical analysis of archives. Wikipedia correspondingly becomes the field site while the case selection is the guideline ‘Notability(academics)’. The data on which the analysis at the heart of the case is based is retrieved from ‘Talk’ pages affiliated to the case. The selection of data narrows down to one archive as the gem of ‘small data’. Furthermore, Wikipedia is analysed as a civic cultural phenomenon from an analytic framework.

Through the use of netnography, the thesis outlines the dynamic period of how the article ‘Notability(academics)’ constructed from scratch to a documented guideline accepted by participants. Following on that, the data is positioned in a more theoretical discussion by virtue of relevant theory on public sphere, participation, rational discussion and procedural-deliberation. The thesis therefore provides sight into the backstage of how the consensus is achieved in combination with mechanism of Wikipedia.

Lastly, the thesis will conclude by the suggestion that the contents in the site are as a result of both the participants and the site. However, the participation is largely influenced and controlled by the rules of the site. By exploring Wikipedia through six dimensions of civic culture, the further mobilisation of civic engagement can be drawn upon.

Keywords: participation; deliberative discussion; governance; public sphere; civic cultures; online collaboration; online community; netnography; wikis; Wikipedia

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Introduction

On October 2, 2018, Donna Strickland was awarded to the Nobel Prize in Physics and became the third women after Marie Curie and Maria Goeppert Mayer in the field. Her page on

Wikipedia was created within 90 minutes after the announcement. What makes the story dramatic is that a page draft about her had been submitted on March 28, 2018, on Wikipedia but it was rejected two months later by a viewer with the message: “This submission’s references do not show that the subject qualifies for a Wikipedia article.”¹ The site was, therefore, subjected to criticism by being gender bias from some news sites because of the declination and fewer entries of notable women on the site. The Guardian published the article ‘Female Nobel prize winner deemed not important enough for Wikipedia entry’. (2018) It sounds, at first sight, reasonable and seditious. However, is it true?

Since Wikipedia constructs its own egalitarian and democratic avatar, it is prone to be under attack once anything happens against its image. Obviously, fewer people are familiar with procedures and eligibility for publishing an article on the site. Instead of blindly criticizing Wikipedia, the point is how and why the article was not qualified. Are policies and guidelines inherently gender-biased or is the reviewer a misogynist? There is no one could be better to explain the whole incident than oneself who rejected the draft. In Wikipedia ‘*Signpost*’ from that month, the reviewer wrote an essay (Brad v, 2018) to thoroughly clarify the reason why the entry was rejected and reflect how Wikipedia could be better to document the sum of all human knowledge. According to the article, it is genuinely from consideration of rules and procedures. In addition, what those media fail to mention is another scientist George Smith who won a Nobel Prize the previous day is not included in the site before the announcement, either. Nowadays, gender is a buzzword and media should be aware of discussing relevant issues. To respond to the criticism, the site’s CEO Katherine Maher said in her twitter:

“Journalists — if you’re going to come after @Wikipedia for it’s coverage of women, check your own coverage first. We’re a mirror of the world’s biases, not the source of them. We can’t write articles about what you don’t cover.”

¹ See Additional sources

In other words, the site just mirrored the underrepresentation of woman in academia. On the other hand, the incident also prompts the fact that Wikipedia does not include everything in the site and there are some certain ways to decide. Following this, it triggered my curiosity about how Wikipedia works at large and how publics contribute to the site.

1. Wikipedia in short

Wikipedia, as a prominent example of commons-based peer production (Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006), has been investigated from various perspectives toward different issues, for instance, inquiring the quality and reliability of content (Sundin, 2001; Rasoamampianina, 2012), exploring the motivation and of editors (Lai & Yang, 2010; Rafaeli & Ariel, 2008) or probing its impact on intellectual property. (Boldrin & Levine, 2008). Born in the Web 2.0 era, Wikipedia precisely represents the ‘zeitgeist’ as called by Tim O’Reilly (2005) that Web 2.0 is all about harnessing collective intelligence. As the largest and most popular general reference on the internet, it is almost the only impression for the public. Correspondingly, what always unobserved is that it is also a socio-cultural-technical platform in which people are encouraged to participate in and contribute to the open-collaboration project.

Village Pump², for instance, is one of the hidden spaces in which contributors discuss issues including technical problems, policies, proposals or any other operations of Wikipedia. In this study, ‘Talk’ pages³ accompanying to each article page is chosen as the research object to investigate how the site functions and participants interact in the backstage. In addition, as the incident illustrated above, there is a certain procedures to follow in order to publish articles on Wikipedia. This unveils that Wikipedia is built upon a sophisticated structure including a complex of rules that the community largely relies on and a bureaucratic structure that controls

² See Appendix D

³ See Appendix D

the participation through a high degree of regulations. In fact, participation is strictly controlled within a boundary.

2. Aim and Research Questions

Instead of focusing those who are regularly active and visible on Wikipedia, the thesis, therefore, examines the edge of Wikipedia and aims to find out the backstory of the site, that is, how collective works are gradually built and finally come to exist by contributors and the site. As a collective project, dealing with coordination and conflicts is inevitable and become a daily job, in which rational discussions and debates are the central and fundamental approach to solve the problems. To investigate the question, this is done through analysing a specific guideline ‘Notability(Academics)’. Given the case’s property, the research also wishes to supply additional knowledge about online self-governance because members engage in collaborative policy/ guideline-making processes that emphasize a consensus in the community. In the thesis, the case reveals the site and editors are two facets deeply intertwined and indispensable, which jointly determines the content of the guideline. To delve deeper how the guideline is formed, I will adopt netnography as the main method to draw and examine the dynamic process from the data in the associated ‘Talk’ page. Particularly, Wikipedia can be seen as an example of civic culture thereby I will examine the civic engagement through the lens of the dynamic circuit. (Dahlgren, 2009)

In the course of the research, I will answer

1. How is an entry created on Wikipedia from the point of view of individuals and the site respectively and collectively?
2. How to understand Wikipedia as a civic cultural phenomenon?

3. *Outline of the thesis*

Following the *Introduction, Literature Review* thus firstly come to craft a foundation of relevant theories which are closely combined with previous researches to form concrete understanding. In it, the site itself is first, drawing from Habermas, scrutinized as an online public sphere providing an arena for editors to conduct a rational discussion about the guideline. Following that, the role of editors is transformed from passive to active audiences before they participate *in* and *through* the mediated environment. Furthermore, the decision-oriented conversation is largely influenced by the institutionalization and regulations of the site. Dahlgren's civic culture concept is equipped to examine the larger cultural phenomenon.

After outlining the theories, I begin with identifying *netnography* as the main method, thereby focus on a 'dynamic field', and select the gem of 'small data' for the qualitative research in *Method and Methodology* sector.

The following *Analysis* sector is comprised of two parts. The result comes first with a summarized trajectory of how 'Notability(academics)' developed in which it is categorized into four themes: *Who is notable enough, What is a good guideline, Why is the guideline needed, and Proposed => Accepted*. Then I explore the underlying meaning of the whole process on the notation of the relevant theories to yield a thick description. To some degree, civic culture is a broader concept covering sides from both the site and participants. It thus represents a combination and conclusion to the overall analysis. Finally, the last chapter will discuss the results and back to the research questions.

Literature review

The following chapter of the thesis is structured to present the theories paving the foundation for the later analysis. To gain a better understanding of the site, the relevant literature on the subject

of Wikipedia is complemented to the corresponding theory. After that, the analytical framework circuit of civic culture is adopted to understand Wikipedia from six dimensions.

1. The online agoras: public sphere

The information and communication technology replace the ancient Greek agoras or town-halls and become increasingly commonplace as a means of everyday interaction and participation. That is, new technologies, especially the Internet, provide information and tools that extend and pluralize the public in the social arena but it does not guarantee a healthy public sphere. In the following, the concept of public sphere starts from the Habermasian (1974) trajectory to Fraser's (1990) further developed rethinking and then extends to the Internet context in which it is understood in accordance with Papacharissi (2002) as a metaphor that suggests a mode and ideal for civic participation and interaction. Wikipedia, the online website that provides virtual spaces for discussion and revives civic participation, deserves consideration as a public sphere.

To start with defining 'public sphere' from the architecture of the concept, Habermas (1974: 49) presents it as "a realm of our social life, in which something approaching public opinion can be formed". Then a functioning public sphere must permit the circulation of information for the communicative interaction among individuals to form a public accord and offer decision making. Talking as fundamental participation, therefore, could be practised although ideal results may not necessarily routinely be achieved. As Habermas suggests "public opinion can only come into existence when a reasoning public is presupposed." (ibid), which means it is premised upon the discursive interactional processes and rational debates about public affairs rather than satisfied with consumption and mere opinions among atomized individuals. (Dahlgren, 2005) Following this logic, the 'free-riding' readers on Wikipedia do not fit the criteria for the public. Yet, what makes Habermasian public sphere irony is that a discourse of publicity acclaiming accessibility, rationality and the abolition of hierarchies is employed as a strategy of distinction based upon

class and gender. (Fraser, 1990:60) This model echoes the minimalist democratic participation with more focus on macro-participation. (Carpentier, 2011)

Fraser (1990) in her work 'Rethinking the public sphere' critiques the function of the bourgeois-society public sphere in the late capitalist society and stresses a more conflict-oriented approach. (Carpentier, 2011: 68) There is a large similarity between her arguments and maximalist democratic participation. First, she advocates an equal 'intrapublic relation' within a public sphere and a multiple 'interpublic relation' among different publics. The inequalities in one public sphere cause and even widen the gap between the advantage of the dominant group and the disadvantage of subordinates whose articulation becomes repressed. On the other hand, the plurality of publics empowers the 'subalter counterpublics' to formulate and circulate counter-discourses. To some extent, it reflects the features of maximalist model with attempts of maximizing multidirectional participation and emphasis on heterogeneity. (Fraser, 1990: 58-63)

Besides accessibility, she points the publicity also concerns with interests of everyone and pertains to a common goods. Through the process of deliberation in which private preferences, interests, identities and so forth discursively influence, it is inevitable to overcome the wide chasm since what counted as commons is very subjective and ambiguous. (ibid: 70-74) One cannot help asking whether it touches most peoples' interests. In the context of Wikipedia, the proposal for an article must meet the requirements from Notability guidelines although the interpretation might be varied. At last, the conception of the public sphere is re-assessed from the standpoint of weak public characterised with opinion-formation and strong public characterised with decision-making. She proposes that considering both strong and weak public, as well as the hybrid forms, enables us to envision more possible relations among such public. (ibid: 74-77) In addition to Fraser's work, Dahlgren (2009) provides an analytical starting point for examining the public sphere from three dimensions: structure, representation and interaction. The first two dimensions direct our attention to the institutional features and the output of the media. The last dimension consists of two aspects: the interaction of publics with media or among publics themselves.

Re-appropriating the public sphere from offline to online, the Internet holds the promise of reviving the public sphere in which the limitation of participation and deliberation could be complemented. Indeed, the discussion of technology per se seem to increase civic participation and democracy but it just camouflages the essential issues of the public sphere. According to Papacharissi, “it is not the nature of technologies themselves, but rather, the discourse that surrounds them, that guides how these technologies are appropriated by a society.” (2002: 2) She further carefully examines the internet as a public sphere from the following three aspects of online communication: access to information, globalization or tribalization, and commercialization of online space. (ibid.) In a nutshell, the greater access does not guarantee more informed citizens or a rational deliberation; Internet connects more people from diverse background and concurrently reinforce fragmented discussions; it provides additional tools but is still confined by either the established public discourse or the political and economic structure, specifically capitalism, as McChesney concluded that “Internet-based technologies will adapt themselves to the current political culture, rather than create a new one.” (1995: 13) On this account, it unveils the true nature of the Internet as a public space. Nevertheless, the Internet offers an alternative way for the public sphere and might inspire to transform the political and social structure. In terms of Wikipedia, Moe (2019) compares the article of ‘Islam’ across the three Scandinavian languages on Wikipedia. The findings show that the site, as both an arena and a source for the public, functions differently to the receiving end of public communication and reveals political differences.

On the other hand, the virtual sphere focuses not necessarily on the traditionally political terrain but shifts to new trends. Instead of conducting deliberation among publics, individuals are situated in a more personal and private setting in which they articulate ‘narcissistically derived, civically beneficial expressions of political opinion’ and emphasise ‘plurality and agonism’ concerning to subversive actions in virtual public space 2.0. (Papacharissi, 2009: 24) Moreover, Dahlgren (2009: 116) points out the potentiality of online spaces of connecting a vast network

and generating new spaces. However, he also expresses concerns that online spaces can be utilised to reinforce territory borders as well.

One positive example, nevertheless, is that Mendelberg shows the evidence from previous research that minorities would be more vocal and upfront about stating their beliefs more openly in absentia compared within small face-to-face groups. (2002: 163) This resonates the virtual sphere is more comprehensive with several counterpublics that have been excluded from the mainstream. Overall, the practices of individuals that fill in the public sphere have retreated back to private sphere but it is the online technologies like the Internet which “possesses ‘reflexive architecture’ and is responsive to the needs of multiple private spheres bridge what is private and public.” (Papacharissi, 2009: 25)

2. More than anyone can edit: participate in Wikipedia

Jemielniak (2014: 186) describes Wikipedia is an embodiment of Habermasian rational discourse platform in which mass amateurization contributes egalitarian knowledge creation, emancipates communication of knowledge and replaces the professionalism. The point of departure here, however, is audience theory of ‘active/passive dimension’ because it is always how participation starts (Carpentier, 2001) The production process of Wikipedia seemingly very relates to, or even extends, the maximalist version of participation as O’Sullivan’s (2009: 186) description of Wikipedia: “A culture of sharing and participation is the most radical feature of the entire project, and the most promising for the future of the Internet [...]”. In this sector, the participatory theory and its relation to Wikipedia will be discussed.

Following Carpentier (2011: 65), debates on structure and agency are usually the first and foremost topic of the active/passive model dimension of media audience. However, such debate can only lead to a dichotomy that individuals can be either the object of socialization process or the subject of meaning-making. Yet, this should avoid. As a matter of Wikipedia, readers are

clearly the audience of the site and reading is the most basic type of activities. Many research focuses on examining editors' contribution in terms of their motivation, roles and responsibilities (Littlejohn & Hood, 2018; Yang & Lai, 2010) whereas readers are usually perceived as receivers (Shannon & Weaver, 1949), the 'end point' of the communication process (DeFleur, 1966) and free-riders (Hardin, 1968). In a traditional sense, it seems right because they just take advantage of collective effort but it would be a mistake to characterize all the readers as free-riders.

Antin and Cheshire (2010) suggest that reading itself is a form of legitimate peripheral participation which transforms readers towards more active ways such as editing history or tracks or starting a discussion in the talk page. Furthermore, evidence from their research shows that readers are not self-interested actors but deliberately cautious individuals, which clearly connects to active audience theory (Livingstone, 1998) and the transformation of 'prod-users'. (Bruns, 2007)

With regards to the active model, it further touches relations between individuals and media and reveals two dimensions of audience activity: interaction with media content and participation in media production. According to Carpentier (2011), the concept of media participation explicitly emphasizes the power dynamic rather than a broad definition. It includes two interrelated forms: participation *in* the media and *through* the media. The former deals with the practices of content-related and decision-making processes whereas the latter attends to the practices of expressing opinions for either public interests or self-representation. To spot participation *in* Wikipedia is seemingly clear because of its editing practices but there is a rich diversity of activities and areas where editors participate *in* and *through* the site. There is a no strict line between these two forms and some projects tend to be deeply blended, for instance, as Kelty (2012: 28) points out, participation in 'Talk' pages concerns with both the processes of design and carrying out. Previous studies (O'Sullivan, 2009; Shirky, 2008) have shown that collaborative cultural production such as Wikipedia can be grounded into a maximalist participatory model. From a technical perspective, the nature of 'wiki' decides such feature of Wikipedia since it encourages users to share, create, push the boundaries of knowledge and leave room for

collaboration. Milberry marks the 'wiki' shows "democracy, equality, and justice switch from being abstract ideals to concrete social practices". (2008: 338)

Predictably, that collaboratively editing content among participants constitutes the ground of Wikipedia. It is the word 'collaborative' that reminds me another dimension of audience revealing the relations among participants: do they represent as an aggregate of individuals (the micro-dimension) or a collective (the macro-dimension)? Nevertheless, Carpentier (2011: 71) describes that the audience can be seen as a community since both approaches contain different levels of collective in different ways. Lih (2013: 186) borrowed the concept of stigmergic effect of how insects implicitly conduct collective work from biologist Pierre-Paul Grasses to describe the similar collaboration among editors. This is because "Wikipedia's transparency and availability of metadata such as edit histories, watchlists, and user contributions are an online version of the stigmergic effect, by displaying artefacts and trails of people's work to inspire (and incite) others." (ibid) On the other hand, the explicit way for collaboration is direct communication through IRC, verbal planning, open discussion, and so forth.

Kittur and Kraut (2008) conducted a quantitative research about the article quality in these two modes of coordination. Their result indicates that coordination and communication play a critical role instead of simply increasing the aggregation of contributors. In order to harness the 'wisdom of the crowd', both implicit- and explicit- coordination are valuable and associated with increases in article quality but the degree of effectiveness depends on different situations. Individual's practices are naturally integrated within the 'community of practice' as Wenger et al. (2002: 4) put it "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis".

Without doubt, the Internet, in knowledge- and content-production activities, empowers individuals to become the societal driving forces of knowledge and cultural resources in which professionalism was used to be the only gatekeeper. Wikipedia becomes the symbolic of collaborative project over near 20 years' development but it still faces challenges needed to

overcome such as the digital participation and knowledge gaps. Prior research has indicated that the participation on Wikipedia exists a gender divided gap with most of the contributors are male. (Ford & Wajcman, 2017) By employing the metaphor of the pipeline of participation to analyse Wikipedia, Hargittai and Shaw (2018) were able to examine digital stratification processes and knowledge gap in the digital age with the inclusion of potential pools participants. Their findings underscore the multidimensionality of digital inequalities and suggest the way to close gaps by highlighting the importance of education and internet skills.

Until now, the participatory theory is articulated through audience-to-audience interaction component and then strengthened by collaborative practices. The examples from Wikipedia correspondingly are mapped into the participatory behaviours. As discussed before, the explicit coordination always deals with direct communication. On the other hand, conflicts also drive Wikipedia's development. (Jemielniak, 2014: 6) In the next sector, the main practice, dialogue and deliberation, in Habermasian public sphere will be illustrated.

3. We are not on the same boat: deliberative discussion

In a broad sense, Wikipedia can be regarded as a consensus-oriented collective action work in which everyone allows to edit content and produce a common goods through specific procedures. Hence, coordination of collaboration and conflicts among participants is inherently existed in every step of the collective works and leads to ask how they finally come to a rough consensus. One way to work with differences among individuals in the system, with the help of spaces that the site provides for, is through freely and publicly posting opinions for negotiation. In this sector, the rational-based and decision-oriented arguments, namely deliberation, will be examined.

Before deliberation is defined as a theory, it goes hand in hand with the public sphere and has already been practised since Greece and Rome time during which the discipline was closely tied

to pedagogy with a focus on oratory and providing students with communication skills to thrive as citizens or leaders. (Black et al, 2010) In the 1980s, to respond to the decline of the paradigm of consciousness, Habermas starts to develop communicative rationality in which language-in-use or speech is a tool to revive the 'desublimation of spirit'. It is here that deliberation arises and becomes a key promise of democracy. The interpretation of deliberation is articulated from various aspects. In the model of deliberative democracy, Elster (1998: 1) points out that it refers to "decision making by discussion among free and equal citizens". Gastil and Black (2008: 2) offer a flexible yet precise definition of deliberation "When people deliberate, they carefully examine a problem and arrive at a well-reasoned solution after a period of inclusive, respectful consideration of diverse points of view." Mendelberg (2002: 153–154) puts emphasis on values that the egalitarian, reciprocal, reasonable and open-minded exchange of language leads to greater empathy and a broadened sense of personal interests. All in all, the process of deliberation could not only seed a functional result of valued ends leading healthy civic cultures such as fairness and truth through discussion but also cultivate a social relationship among citizens becoming more empathetically self-conscious. (Mendelberg, 2002; Gastil & Black, 2008; Dahlgren, 2006; Habermas, 1996) With good deliberation, one of the hopes from deliberation advocates is that the established power relationship would be contested and minorities have a chance to influence.

Yet, the attempt of deliberation is likely to fail especially when the conflicts are deep, under strong social pressures or the matter at hand centres on values rather than facts. (Mendelberg, 2002) In other words, sheer power still dominates discussion. Another concern for the effective deliberation is people in groups tend to ignore novel information but discuss commonly known information. That is, the common knowledge effect (CKE) makes the commonly known information have a greater influence over group discussions than the one that is uncommonly known. (Myers, 2018) In the context of deliberative democracy, Dahlgren (2006) also sees limitations when it is used as an analytic horizon for understanding the democratic impact of political discussion in online public spheres. He listed two reasons. The first shortcoming is by its rational nature. That is, it excludes alternative communication modes such as the ironic, the

affective, the memes, and so forth that can be important for democracy. The second is deliberation might be in line with the power relations in communicative situations, which can be explained by Kohn's argument (2000: 409) "reasonableness is itself a social construction which usually benefits those already in power." In turn, the established power strengthens reasonableness. To some degrees, this recalls CKE mentioned above and echoes why deliberation is likely to fail. It is thereby the point to signify the necessity of procedural-deliberation for breaking power relations, which will be discussed in following.

In addition, discussion processes could be more socially driven instead of deliberatively desire in some circumstances. Mendelberg describes a 'late-compromising minority effect', which means the way for minority to succeed is avoiding 'the perception that it is socially divisive.' or 'set the overall group's norm about what is right'. (2002: 163) Sawchuk and Gauthier's (2016) study reveals that certain entries can act as a contestation between different communities of practice, for instance, feminist scholars and Wikipedia experts, after their attempts of editing Wiki entries on ageing from intersectional perspectives are rejected. This shows that although everyone can edit the site as long as adhering to policies, guidelines, and related pages, an article still could be deleted or marginal opinions could be muted because of the established mechanism of Wikipedia and the divisive perception of feminism in society.

Even though the concept always comes along with theories of democracy and is as a mean of organising and making sense of the political communication complex, deliberation can be operationalised in a variety of contexts including the jury, citizen forum, community groups engaging in self-governance and a focus on public good. Gastil and Black (2008) proposed a unified conceptual and critical framework for pan-political communication topics, in which the decision-oriented conversations are conceptualised from both analytic and social processes. However, it is not saying two aspects in the analysis process are separated or single-threaded but deeply intertwined and interacted. Specifically, they conducted a content analysis about how the policy 'Wikipedia: No personal attacks, 2007' achieved consensus by utilizing the framework. The result illustrates a high level of analytically consensus-seeking process as well as

demonstrates social exchanges such as respect, consideration and mutual comprehension within the group. (Black et al, 2011) One thing should be cautious is there is no ideal deliberative processes that participants engage in discussions would experience and the deliberative analysis is context dependent.

In the Habermasian model of deliberative democracy, the success of deliberation depends not only on the multidirectional participation but also on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication. (1996: 298)

4. The ostensibly anarchical platform: institutionalization of Wikipedia

Before I deeply study Wikipedia, my impression toward Wikipedia is a site with an anarchic system because of its openness and members' autonomy. In opposition to my fantasy, there is a crucial theme lingering as the process of gathering and analysing data: the massive complicated regulations and parahierararchy system. That is one of the dimensions of public sphere categorised by Dahlgren: structure featured with institutional rules.

Benkler and Nissenbaum (2006: 395) define Wikipedia as common-based peer-production in which participants are expected to share the reciprocal sense and are empowered to collectively develop the product within the anti-authoritarian and pro-democratic structure. The peer-production mechanism indeed can yield content and promise quality. For the mass collaboration system, however, the costs of communication and the rise of conflicts are inevitable with an increasing number of users, bytes and articles. (Kittur et al. 2007) To efficiently collaborate works and effectively manage content, Wikipedia relies on a Weberian bureaucracy form (Joyce et al., 2012) consisted of formal numbers of rules and a quasi-hierarchical system filled by specific roles. To some extent, this recalls the procedural-deliberation emphasised in Habermas' model of deliberative democracy.

Today there are 56 policies about a hundred guidelines and hundreds of essays for the bureaucratic control and steer the organizational ideals of consensus building and discussion. (Jemielniak, 2014; Joyce et al, 2008, 2012) These formal rules provide shared principles and common language for self-governing processes so that members can exercise ability to maintain consistent institutional arrangements. Prior studies have proved that the self-governance principles proposed by Ostrom (1990: 90) for long-enduring institutions can be fitted well in Wikipedia. Safner (see, 2016) comprehensively articulates how those principles can be accommodated well within Wikipedia. Viégas et al. (2007) scrutinize how bureaucracy controls the procedure on Wikipedia by taking “Feature Article” (FA) as an example. Their research reveals that:

“the policies were written by the community to address a set of problems that is common to all efforts to organize collective action: creation of institutions, monitoring mechanisms, arbitration, and conflict resolution. [...] There is an impressive degree of overlap between what happens on Wikipedia and the design principles that Ostrom extracted from offline communities.”

Moreover, one of the results from Forte et al.’s (2009) research by examining self-governance on Wikipedia shows that the governance in the site is becoming increasingly decentralised and the Wiki policies are fluid. For instance, the interpretation of policies could be very subjective among Arbitration Committee⁴ and Administrators⁵.

Not only rules in the site are substantial but the authority structure is also instrumental in self-governance. What little known is that there is a para-hierarchical system within the community in which contributors take different roles that are linked to not just specific jobs but more pertained to power. Although Wikipedia is transparent in most cases and tries to mock judicial proceedings to balance and allocate organizational power, the administrators communicate with each other ‘secretly’ without the communities’ control but with the use of mailing lists. For instance, Jemieniak, based on his ethnographic experience as an administrator in Polish Wikipedia, points out the ‘internal-I’ and ‘private-I’ mailing lists in the Arbitration Committee, which is not

⁴ See Appendix D

⁵ See Appendix D

reachable by an ordinary editor. (2014: 53) However, becoming administrators has to be undergone and legitimized through a community review process.

While policies and regulations guide editors how to engage on Wikipedia, the fact is that proceduralisation and formalities in practical are sometimes deviated from the rules. Besides, “Wikipedia is full of paradoxes” (Jemielniak, 2014: 29), which makes contributors more confused. For example, ‘Wikipedia: No firm rules’⁶ is on the top of all other rules. Rather than resulting in chaos, it precisely features the rigorous dynamic that balance the tension between the desire of active individual agency and the rigid nature of bureaucratic structures. According to Joyce et al (2012), Wikipedia represents a hybrid deliberative bureaucracy. The seeming contradictory co-existence between open-participation logics and role-constrained rule-based decision making is exactly reached by deliberations. Their study suggests the unusual policy ‘ignore all rules’ is the buffer zone to ease the tension between individuals and institutionalisation.

In sum, the formalized rules, the well-organised administrators and the rigid bureaucratic systems are important references for self-governance but at the same time, it may hinder development, innovation and forms of social capital. Therefore, decentralized initiative for deliberative discussion is the way to balance.

5. Wikipedia, evolving civic cultures

Debating on rights and entitlement is an eternal issue in democratic environment, which overpasses the inquiry of what obligations individuals should carry first. When it comes to describing Wikipedia, as discussed above, it is hard not to mention the democratic structure. In addition, Wikipedia aims at representing ‘the sum of all human knowledge’ and distributing it ‘freely to every person on the planet’ (Wikimedia Foundation, n.d.). Such sum, however, ascribes

⁶ See Appendix D

to the contribution from editors. They see themselves as participants and engage in the activities via the interplay of reason and passion. Dahlgren suggests that the connection between civic culture perspectives and the research of collective action is closely tied. (2009: 108) It is here that I try to understand Wikipedia on the notion of civic culture.

According to Dahlgren (ibid: 103), civic culture refers to “cultural pattern in which identities of citizenship, and the foundations of civic agency, are embedded.” In other words, it weighs on the identity as the cornerstone leading to civic engagement. The relationship between identities and culture is not a one-way causality, but rather an interplay and dynamic process. Factors that impact on identities, then, indirectly shape the civic culture and vice versa. For civic culture, those factors constitute conditions for engagement. Dahlgren conceptualized a dynamic circuit for civic culture from six dimensions: knowledge, values, trust, spaces, practices, and identities. He further emphasizes that ‘robust civic cultures are necessary pre-requisites for viable public spheres and thus for a functioning democracy.’ (ibid: 106)

The six dimensions are closely intertwined and overlaid rather than separately independent. The first key dimension of civic cultures is knowledge. Apart from the known knowledge, he stresses on ‘knowledge acquisition’, which means that civic agency is capable to search and accommodate information into different context and personal interpretation. (ibid: 108-110) In addition, to which degree of being familiar with ‘background knowledge’ determines the ability of interpretation and appropriation from information to knowledge. The second dimension in the circuit deals with values. It is universally constituted with substantive values such as ‘equality, liberty, justice, solidary and tolerance’ and the procedural ones, including ‘openness, reciprocity, discussion and responsibility/accountability’. (ibid: 111) For a voluntary, collective and anonymous production, values play a crucial role in sustainability and self-governance. Many of policies or guidelines in Wikipedia express some degrees of values. For instance, the fundamental principles of the site ‘five pillars’⁷ consist of both types of values.

⁷ See Appendix D

The next dimension in the circuit is trust. The concept in the study refers to trust among or between groups of citizens. Dahlgren cites Putnam's theory that 'thick' trust exists in established interpersonal relations whereas 'thin' trust indicates a desire of building a relation with strangers. For the collective efforts concerning with majority, it is usually built upon the loose relations of networks, he stresses that, in which a minimal 'thin' trust is more functional than 'thick' trust. (2009, 112-113) In the case of Wikipedia, interpersonal relation is very weak along with minimal trust because of no mechanism for the identities or credential verification to the largely dispersed individuals. In contrast, the site is regarded as the largest reference site given to its authoritative articles. Spaces comes to the next dimension in the circuit, which refers to 'citizens need access to each other to develop their collective political efforts to act together' (Dahlgren, 2009:114). In addition, the new media like the Internet allows individuals to easily create new communicative spaces and one of them is wikis.

Toward to the next dimension of the circuit: practices. It is agency and skills, especially communicative competencies, that construct the concrete and recurring practices in diverse situations. Such practices help generate 'personal and social meaning to the ideals of democracy.' (ibid: 116) When it comes to deal with coordination and conflicts on Wikipedia, communicative skills are always valued. In addition, the capability of reaching out network to connect relevant issues signifies the common interests and creates a new communicative space. The last dimension identities are as the centrepiece of the circuit, 'with other five dimensions contributing, reciprocally, to shape conditions of its exist'. (Dahlgren, 2003: 118) It refers to the subjectivity of being part of democracy. One way to develop and evolve is through emotionally-based experience but most of the times such involvement is low. (ibid: 119-120) This phenomenon is not hard to observe from Wikipedia in which people's participation is originated from fun but relatively fewer people join in. Once identities achieved, there are two schematic components influence to each other: 'the sense of being an empowered political agent' (ibid.: 120) and 'membership in one or more political communities.' (ibid: 121) 'Wikipedia Awards' (see, WP: AWARD⁸) is an honour system to reward vigorous contributors for their hard

⁸ See Appendix D

work by rewarding them a ‘barnstar’ or other awards. (Kriplean et al, 2008) Pentzold (2010) employs grounded theory to exam the community-build on Wikipedia and discovers what he called ethos-action community that the community members are not through admission procedures but the personal acceptance of a set of moral obligations and rules of conducts.

Method and methodology

Having paved the ground of theories and relevant literatures, the method and methodology will be presented in this sector. In exploring how an entry is developed from aspects of both editors and Wikipedia, the research is positioned in qualitative research using content analysis to examine the developing process of a specific policy: Notability(academics). The following part illustrates method and methodology architecture, the management of case and data and ethical concerns.

1. Netnography

Unlike natural sciences evolving from the cumulative, stable and predictive paradigm, Flyvbjerg points out the social sciences have always “in a situation of constant reorganization, characterized by a multiplicity of directions”. (2001: 30) This is clearly reflected from the ethnographic theory and practice which has undergone repeated transformations along with social changes. The advent of ‘Web 2.0’ represents a new condition of online activities and social interactions to which ethnography adapts and suits. Traditionally, ethnography is practised in cultural anthropology and is prized “as a method for getting to the heart of meaning and enabling us to understand, in the round and in depth, how people make sense of their lives.” (Hine, 2015: 1) However, it has been appropriated to various disciplines drawing upon its complex of ‘epistemological framings, methodological techniques, and writing practices’ (Burrell, 2009: 181) In relation to Wikipedia, the ethnographic tradition is particularly important to shed light on

silences, lacunae and edges of Wikipedia and seek out the actors who are largely invisible to the audience but influence the site substantively. (Ford, 2016)

From its portmanteau name, netnography has inherited many of the characteristics of traditional ‘ethnography’ but also with fundamental differences including technological medium, the unique public-private hybrid, recorded interaction data, ethics and so forth. (Kozinets, 2015: 72-75)

Furthermore, it is important to point out the distinction between netnography and other approaches such as digital ethnography. Kozinets in his book *Netnography Redefined* (2015) writes that:

Netnography is the name given to a specific set of related data collection, analysis, ethical and representational research practices, where a significant amount of the data collected and participant-observational research conducted originates in and manifests through the data shared freely on the Internet, including mobile applications. (79)

In other words, the definition of data in two methods is completely different. Netnography collects data from the Internet and does not require the researchers to collaborate and negotiate with website whereas digital ethnography or digital anthropology is more in orientation combining with traditional ethnographies to collect data and treat the Internet as an extension from offline field. (ibid: 79-83) Furthermore, netnography is particularly valuable in “revealing hidden world [...] and [...] prying open the door between the public and the private.” (2015: 92)

Online social interactions often leave permanent trace providing rich qualitative insight into the invisible social interaction from groups of people and understanding routinized activities. In essential, a wiki engine is a type of content management system (CMS) which supports collaborative work and documents the modification of the digital content. Following this, I found trace ethnography is a useful method for ‘exploiting the proliferation of documents and documentary traces’ on the site. (Geiger & Ribes: 2011) The ‘Page history’⁹ of an entry records

⁹ See Appendix D

editing revisions illustrating what changes were made with information of the editing time and date, edit summary and so forth.

In line with anthropology, immersion is part of conducting netnographic research. Through a series of immersive practices including massively reading, handling large digital dataset, taking notes, narrowing down the sample, I would be able to investigate how the case is formed by interaction among editors.¹⁰ One thing to be clear is that the study cannot generalise the entire picture of entries-producing processes on Wikipedia, but it certainly unlocks the portal to learn how editors deliberate online to reach a rough consensus and reveal features as a civic cultural phenomenon.

After the preparation of data collection and cultural entrée and following netnographic procedures (Kozinet et al, 2014), I start to collect and create the data.

2. *Case and data selection*

First of all, I choose the entry ‘Notability (academics)’ as the case in the study. The guideline is subordinate to the main ‘Notability’ guideline but specialized in academic researchers. I choose this one because the Donna Strickland incident and the article in *Signpost* written by the reviewer trigger my curiosity as mentioned above. However, in practical, it is a longstanding guideline which means that the content is widely accepted by Wikipedians and would not change during the time of analysis, which made the coding process more manageable. Moreover, the case per se bears the marks of governance, which could shed light on a broader sense of online ‘political’ communicative discussion. The guideline plays an important role in the site especially for

¹⁰ Please see ‘Appendix B’ for more details about netnographic conduct process.

discussions about AfD (Article for Deletion)¹¹ in which the guideline is always cited as the benchmark. To some extent, it decides the life and death of articles.

The function as an encyclopedia is the most prominent of the site. However, it is also a community in which participants come together to seek and create collective works. What behinds of every single 'Article' page on the site is its associated 'Talk' pages, in which editors can discuss improvements of quality or inform the modifications in revisions. It is exactly the 'Archival Data' that comprises all online social interaction and the concrete proposals. Despite the notion of a significant amount of research data could be graphic, photographic, musical, and so forth the materials in the study are only the textual data collectively produced by users. Following this, the data is gathered from 'Talk' pages affiliated to the case. The posts in the 'Talk' pages are usually broken into archives when they grow long or over a certain period by bot. According to Kozinets "Netnography is a technique of small data search and analysis, of human scale readings of other human groups, people and practice." (175) Instead of analysing the overwhelming dataset, which is impossible also, the study puts a focus on finding and interpreting gems of 'small data'.

Since the aim of the study is to observe how people participate in and through Wikipedia, the emphasis in the data is on 'a dynamic field' (Kozinets, 2015: 171). While combing through archives and tracing the revision history, the data is narrowed to Archive 1 (May 2005—March 2007) including 58 topics. A topic created by a user contains the information that the user wants to discuss. In addition, it can be seen as a thread discussion in which others post their comments and discussion. Therefore, the data analysed in the research refers to all the posts in Archive 1 which are categorised into 58 topics regarding to specific themes. In it, the discussion about Notability(academics) shows the journey of the entry from scratch to officially legitimized as a guideline, which is the period representing major debates about how the article should be. Even

¹¹ See appendix D

though the data is more than 10 years ago, it still can reveal the mechanism of participation in Wikipedia. Another thing that I would like to mention is I was trying to follow new discussions triggered by the Nobel incident and to see how people discuss the guideline. Unfortunately, there are not enough data for analysis, which I assume it is because of the niche field.

Moreover, as for the online collective works, the low level of recognition displayed by participants may lead to concerns about trust and reliability. One thing particularly worthy to point out is that the edits anonymously made by IP addresses in both talk pages and article page are quite rare.

3. Treat data and position

As Kozinets suggests that “data flows from an inductive stream, punctuated by the occasional startling moment of abductive clarity” (2015: 162) Following this, a constructivist version of Grounded Theory developed by Charmaz and other scholars is employed during the process. Instead of delaying the literature review during the research process, I take advantage of knowing and using the existed and related literature to draw abductive inferences. (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014) Given that the ethnography is emergent and unpredictable, I write down observational fieldnotes to capture themes in the discussions and interactions among participants while going through the data. The approach includes open coding through inductive reasoning to label and categorizes data and hermeneutic interpretation via abductive reasoning to analyse the collected data and draw interpretations. In other words, the data collection and analysis simultaneously take place while abductive reasoning moves throughout the process.

Before conducting a scientific classification, there is only information, content, messages, archives, which are bytes essentially online. Here, the onset of analysing starts with coding. Starting with open coding, I am able to flexibly explore what actually happened behind the guideline, what conflicts are generated, how the conflicts are solved, and how the guideline

becomes accepted by everyone and so forth. Even though such raw materials become legitimized after processing, namely data, it is still not true objectivity but a scientifically processed result because “methodology is a concrete practical rationality”. (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 29) Taking this into combination with Sherry and Kozinets’ argument that “qualitative researchers elicit information in context, as a gift, rather less invasively than excising it for examination out of context, as a fact.” (2001: 166) The analysis thus is context-dependent. While wading through big data sets, I am not only participant-observer with my own consciousness to reflect but also become a participant automatically while data collection, analysis and presentation/representation. (Kozinets: 164) In other words, I become a netnographic instrument collecting human level data. Besides, Flyvbjerg states that “the object is a subject” (2001: 32) in social science because self-reflecting humans must take account of changes in the interpretations of the objects of study. As netnography is a naturalistic method, I will also hermeneutically interpret and analyse data.

After thoroughly reading the texts, therefore, I further divide the data into four phases based on the theme of they were discussing: *Who is notable enough*, *What is a good guideline*, *Why is the guideline needed*, and *Proposed => Accepted*. To some degree, these themes can reflect how the conflicts of discussion changed across time but it is not saying a certain time period is only about one specific theme.

4. *Ethical considerations*

Since the study involves observation with the wealth of data as part of the ethnographic method, I, correspondently, have to be aware of a number of ethical concerns in the online environment. (Markham & Buchanan, 2012) In ensuring the ethical nature of this study I mainly stick to two practices proposed by Guillemin and Gillam (2004): the first is procedural ethics leading to accuracy and avoiding fabrication, fraud and so forth and secondly ‘ethic in practice’ referring to

contextualized consideration. The second is for the most part conducted in determining how to display the identities of participants when posting public statements.

Wikipedia provides an option to participate online or comment without logging in an account but with using an IP address. In other words, it possible for participants to decide whether to expose or to disguise their identities when they make statements on public spaces. In addition, technically, it is legal to cite statements made by editors to their usernames since Wikipedia is under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike copyright license where contents are free to be shared and adapted as long as researchers follow specific conditions.

For this reason, I will not disguise the users' names and originally cite their comments for the following analysis. Nevertheless, the data was, of course, treated and contextualized carefully in order to not harm the users and misinterpreted information.

Analysis

The following chapter is structured into two sectors: *Results* and *Discussion*. The first part contours the outline of how the discussions proceed across the time and what topics participants deliberate. In *Discussion*, the results are analysed by means of theories presented above.

1. Results: A rough consensus of what is worthy of inclusion

The first version of 'Wikipedia:Notability (academics)' traced from 'View history' is from 26 January 2006 submitted by [BenAveling] with a message that "Offer some rough guidelines that seem to be agreed to by everybody."¹² Before listing criteria, the article¹³ starts with a statement

¹² See Appendix A

¹³ See Appendix A

“there is no hard and fast criteria for judging notability of academics.” As he said, the version is a rough consensus summarized from the discussions since the first post in the ‘Talk’ pages from 17 May 2005 and the statement precisely indicates the nature of this entry as a guideline instead of a strict rule or policy. Within a month, the article is tagged as a proposed Wikipedia guideline indicating “the proposal may still be in development, under discussion, or in the process of gathering consensus for adoption.” Almost one year later until 2 March 2007, the article is legitimated as an official guideline by [Mangojuice] marked the article with a message that “dispute seems to be resolved. rv to Radiant”.

In this section, I provide a thick description of the process of Notability (academics) page from its first version to the generally accepted guideline.

1) Who is notable enough?

Before the page was created, topics discursively deal with a wide range of proposals followed with comments from other users. At the first sight, the discussions seem to stray from one to another without any patterns because the fact that whether an academic should be included in Wikipedia or not is full of subjective consideration and concerns to varies criteria. Since heavy revisions in article’s ‘View history’ can be perceived as achieved consensus in the talk pages, I treat it as an indicator of how debates process. There are certain keywords lingering during debates before the article created: professors, publish, journal, tenure, academic criteria, awards and so on.

In the beginning, the discussion of criteria is stemmed from the position of a professor who should work for a prestigious university or belong to any professional organisation but it leads to several questions. The most mentioned disagreement from others’ comments is the bar is too broad and it would attract a huge amount of entries. Obviously, Wikipedia is not a dictionary and not aim to replace the Internet. To the problem, [Srleffler] then proposes that “the ‘notability’

requirements for academics should be set higher than merely being a professor with a publishing history” and [Uppland] suggests “full professors at major research universities should at least always be given the benefit of the doubt”. Even though it is the English Wikipedia, the significance of professors is varied distinctively in different English-speaking countries. Another counterargument suggests that the standard for notifying professors is not because of their position as tenure at any particular universities but their accomplishments.

Based on the above point, some Wikipedians turn to propose from an aspect of publication and in accordance with the internal academic criteria.

Keep it simple, stupid. If a reliable academic bibliography of works published in internationally recognized journals or major academic book imprints can be compiled, that compilation can be placed into Wikipedia under the author's name. Verifiable biographical details may be appended. --Tony Sidaway|Talk 21:06, 18 May 2005 (UTC)

It is worth to mention the background that Wikipedia become the most popular reference website on the Internet in 2005¹⁴ and Wikipedians start paying more attention to verification after the John Seigenthaler hoax in May¹⁵. Such advice is also received backlash as a ‘too low’ standard and analogically compare Wikipedia with a phone book by others even including professors in real life who argue that their work might not attract to anyone outside the particular field and university profile pages can be reached from via Google. Through the discussion, citation criterion and textbooks emerge as potential indicators. The proposal is, nevertheless, challenged from different factors such as circulation, quality, quantity, discipline and so forth.

¹⁴ See Additional sources

¹⁵ See Additional sources

2) *What is a good guideline?*

If I categorise discussions in the last phase are mainly debates about the notability of academics, meanwhile, the debates turn to the *guideline* about notability for academics. 20 February 2006, the former English Wikipedia administrator [Mangojuice] made a heavy revision to the main page. Roughly a month later, [KSchutte], taking his field in philosophy as an example, posted questions arguing that different criteria are needed for different fields and encyclopedia should be a vessel of information rather than a bunch of stubs.

To respond to field-specific guidelines, [Mangojuice] first thoroughly explains what a good guideline is before replying to [KSchutte]'s proposal. It is not clear whether or not [Mangojuice] is an administrator under the time but the detailed arguments indicate he/she is a quite experienced Wikipedian and reveal parts of the mechanism in Wikipedia. Firstly, a good guideline should be useful and understandable to ordinary editors, backed by strong consensus and obviously reasonable so that it can navigate debates about the deletion and avoid flaming breaks. Specific guidelines would be more accurate but a general one is more useful. The second point is a good guideline should give positive criteria instead of negative ones. It will, therefore, provide a clear yardstick in AfD when discussions about if an article meets the guideline or not. The last is the guideline should be conservative in implying notability. Such rational debate persuades [KSchutte] changing recommendation and suggests a disjunctive guideline (bold in original) “**either** special notability... **or** beyond-stub amount of information of at least decent quality...”

In addition, the debate between the two back and forth is not around the disputes only but also includes emotional exchanges.

“... I'm sorry if I'm ranting, but you are just making me angry. Try to give me some argument for your position instead of just asserting it. I won't be convinced by you just saying "nuh-uh, that's not how it works". How it works is what's at issue. Don't beg the question. KSchutte 18:07, 14 March 2006 (UTC)”

“I appreciate your comments and my anger has settled down a little... KSchutte 03:53, 15 March 2006 (UTC)”

Few hours later, [Mangojuice] replies with a modest apology and thoroughly deliberated opinions in order to seek a solution.

“I'm very sorry if I made you angry, that wasn't my intention... I concede you have good points about the notability of academics... Now respond to your points... I do think there's a definite lack of strong consensus on that... Or maybe, we could add a conservative blanket guideline... Mangojuice 21:15, 14 March 2006 (UTC)”

Both sides are conceded eventually and the debate leads [Mangojuice] to rewrite the page including some common arguments from inclusionist/exclusionist and clarification that this guideline is conservative. This sector, however, was deleted by [KSchutte] a few days later left a message “A guideline shouldn't tell people how to debate about something. It should set a standard and explain how that standard ought to be used.”

3) *Why is the guideline needed?*

While the guideline is continuing discussed, [Rossami] suggests that the page should be merged to the general standard of WP:Bio¹⁶ (Wikipedia:Notability (people)) rather than a further balkanization of the guideline. The advice is rejected by the fact that the guideline still has its merits in precedents even though many of arguments in debates are repeated. On the other hand, it precisely indicated that the necessity of a clear consensus to help people make a more intelligent decision in AfD. The debate initiated by [Rossami] is very short without any further deliberation. In the end, an unregistered IP address left a post “This is SO wrong! [67.109.101.226 22:46, 26 April 2006 (UTC)]” but one editor is still in accordance with the core policy ‘assume good faith’ and ask for further clarification.

¹⁶ See Appendix D

Similarly, another editor [For great justice] believes that the notability concept is bogus because it is ‘a disruptive, unhelpful and inherently POV¹⁷’ but insists that the standard set of verifiability is “high enough that every academic who has enough verifiable information from credible sources could easily have an article without any problems.” The discussion is contentious and sometimes lose track. To sum it up, [For great justice] believes that the debate about notability is the battle of whose POV prevail instead of the principle that verifiability governs what should be included. Again, [Mangojuice] thoroughly explain the existence of guidelines can promise fairness and consistency. The point is that even if the information is verified and accorded to WP:NPOV¹⁸ (Wikipedia:Neutral point of view) backed with reliable sources it does not mean that it should be all included in Wikipedia according to WP:NOT¹⁹(Wikipedia:What Wikipedia is not). Not a surprise, [For great justice] interprets WP:NOT as “My POV is that X is not encyclopedia-worthy” and believes that POV should not be in part of either writing articles or deciding what should go in. Subsequently, [Mangojuice] puts a simple fact that “It's preposterous to imagine that we can function as a community without using our opinions.” and points out that NPOV is only applied to articles so as to represent views fairly and without bias but not to guidelines or policies. Just the reverse, the guideline encourages Wikipedians to decide and interpret what they think is notable and what is not. In the end, [For great justice] is seemingly convinced and posts:

“OK, I see the confusion. I am applying the concept of NPOV to editorial decisions about content. All article content should be written from the NPOV. Furthermore, editorial decisions about which content should be included are subject to NPOV...”

but emphasises that NPOV in editorial decisions promises that all candidates are equally considered without personal preferences.

¹⁷ Abbreviation for Point of View

¹⁸ See Appendix D

¹⁹ See Appendix D

4) *Proposed => Accepted*

9 February 2007 (UTC), [Iquilter] posts a suggestion setting the article to be an official guideline since there is little dispute about the basic criteria. Prior to this, the article is tagged ‘inactive’ in January because many discussions in ‘Talk’ pages have died down. It has, however, been actively used in the AfD referring criteria in the guideline, specifically, by well-respected members of the community, which shows that the guideline is an important one. Ten days later, the guideline is firstly marked as an official by [Radiant!] because of the seeming consensus. One week later on 26 February, the statue of the guideline has been challenged by [Kevin Murray] who reverts it back to a proposal with the following comment to his edit “return proposal tag. This should be more broadly discussed, not just by the promoters of the page. This is just more Creep.” [Mangojuice] reverts it but the guideline is reverted again by [Kevin Murray] arguing that the proposal tag is valid until a consensus is reached.

[Mangojuice] is compromised at last and marks the guideline as in disputed statue but also post a topic to explain why the guideline is not instruction creep and how it is useful in discussions. This, however, is not convincible enough for others simply because of the long and complex criteria and leads to another proposal by merging the guideline to WP:Bio again. Here, it seems that the debate has been repeated from time to time with similar thoughts. As mentioned above, the guideline is apparently valuable as a separable one and useful for specific groups backed by precedents.

In the end, like [Mangojuice] writes “...notability is a silly concept anyway, the real point is to what degree we can write about a subject while sticking to the main Wikipedia policies WP:V²⁰ (Wikipedia:Verifiability) and WP:NPOV.” For guidelines, like this one, that is accepted proposals to change Wikipedia practice, deliberation is the essential way to practice rather than voting or

²⁰ See Appendix D

polling as the way to reach a consensus. Nevertheless, discussions about how the guideline comes to be are still going on until today and people are trying hard to make it better for the community.

2. Discussion: exploring the hidden side

After almost two years' discussion, Notability(academics) is eventually reached a consensus in the community and legitimized as a documented guideline. The process, however, is never fully complete as Wikipedia is always open to being refined, merged with another or even deleted. Although I restored the whole process into four phases in the last sector it does not mean debates have died down and controversies never come up again. Last year, Donna Strickland incident brought the discussion to the table again. In this sector, I will examine how Notability(academics) is formed by the impact of both individuals and the site and how to understand Wikipedia from the notion of civic culture.

1) The unknown and balkanized spaces

It seems like a boring truism that Wikipedia, given to its flat, egalitarian and decentralized structure, make broader discussions possible because it is an open and accessible space to all. Public spaces, however, can never become public spheres until rational deliberations practised otherwise they are just expanses. (Papacharissi) Nevertheless, it is still important to point out accessibility as 'the central meanings of the norm of publicity.' (Fraser, 1990: 63) is the premise of any further activities. Behind the seemingly full-open accessibility are digital inequalities, which might exacerbate the existing social pattern and reinforce the position of dominant groups. (ibid.) Although I did not adopt interview as a method in the study, the daily small talks with other people about the thesis leave me a very subjective and rough impression that everyone has heard of Wikipedia as well as is aware that people can contribute to but rare of them has ever edited or discussed in the site. Obviously, the data in the archive is from people who have already shown a certain degree of Internet/Wikipedia literacy and passed a sequence of stages of the pipeline (Shaw & Hargittai, 2018) to be able to propose and contribute the guideline. Like the

Habermasian public sphere is dominated by bourgeois property holders, Papacharissi (2002: 21) suggests that the virtual space is dominated by bourgeois computer holders. In terms of the case, even fewer people realize such spaces. Let alone how many of them would really participate in processes.

Notability(academics) is one of the 12 subject-specific guidelines under a general notability guideline including books, sports and athletes, people, web content and so forth. It may lead people to assume that Wikipedia creates a stratified space because of subordinated and dominated relations of those guidelines. Just the reverse, the specific ones are in line with the general guideline but towards different perspectives. Since the balkanized guidelines are stemmed from the diverse publics and social dynamics of the real world, it further shows how cultural diversity and social equality can be possible in Wikipedia. One specific controversy in the discussion recursively popped up is merging the guideline to the general WP:Bio one in order to avoid instruction creep²¹. [Deville] objects the idea as he argues:

“Well, as it stands, WP:Bio is explicitly balkanized with respect to profession. While the standards are all morally the same (notable and verifiable), the standards are explicitly different in terms of practical application.”

This justifies what Fraser argues that the participatory parity is better achieved by a multiplicity of publics than a single public. (1990: 70) because the seeming ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution is difficult to be contextualized. Until now, Wikipedia has displayed its nearly-no-barrier accessibility with multiple strands. When it comes to what information should be included in the site, though, it becomes tricky. To some extent, the notability considers exactly the same senses as ‘publicity’ does, for example, whether or not entries concern to everyone’s interest or pertain to common goods. This leads to the core issue of the case and triggers the contentious problem of Wikipedia: system bias.

²¹ See Appendix D

2) *Not an indiscriminate site*

To which degree of inclusiveness has been debated over and over and the guideline is consistently questioned to be either too restrictive or permissive. How to set the criteria, however, highlights the complexity. During the first phase, many proposals have been erected for various reasons. While individuals deliberate about public matters, people somehow reveal their opinions about Wikipedia as the following statements “I assume we don't want wikipedia to be like a phone book” [David D.] or “Wikipedia isn't meant to replace Google” [cmf]. All in all, this is in accordance with WP:NOT policy, specifically, "WP is not an indiscriminate collection of information." Then what is worthy of inclusion? Through deliberation, as Fraser suggests, “the result of such discussion would be “public opinion” in the strong sense of a consensus about the common good.” (1990:59)

One of the interpretations among Wikipedians is the site is not an ideal tool covering as much as possible but should touch public interests and avoid conflict of interests editing (see, WP:COI²²). As [Profilae] suggests that

“it should be an encyclopedia recording facts that are interesting to readers, so (a) people will want to look something up on Wikipedia and (b) we aren't wasting our time writing stuff that no one will read.”

When it comes to implementation, the guideline is first followed the general consensus reached in WP:BIO that is ‘more notable than the average professor’. [Mangojuice] For instance, a user who acclaims as a professor in real life does not consider to be notable enough just because of a handful of papers well-regarded by the corresponding community and interested by a small group of people.

²² See Appendix D

Some Wikipedians argue that there is a greater inclusion of biography in other fields such as film, sports, or fiction characters than that of academics.

I mean, seriously, what's more important, a Pokemon character or a research scientist? Shouldn't Wikipedia cover important things as well as popular things? Average Earthman 21:17, 18 May 2005 (UTC)

Such statements are usually perceived as advocating inclusionism but also reveals the criticism toward systemic bias in coverage. The accusation of bias is not a new thing, especially for perspective bias which is restricted by WP:NPOV. For academics, it is the issues of low symbolic importance to Wikipedia and marginalized in the mainstream. Nevertheless, as [Mangojuice] explains that the overly inclusive might be a problem in some areas and in Wikipedia but it does not mean that it should work within academics also.

Remember what Katherine Maher said on Twitter at the beginning? “We’re a mirror of the world’s biases.” It is not an excuse of getting rid of criticism but precisely as Papacharissi claims the internet enhances and pluralizes public spheres it is nevertheless largely decided by the established public discourse. The physicist and amateur historian Einbinder expressed the same ideal in the introduction of his book *The Myth of the Britannica* but further points out that "it [encyclopedia] offers a valuable opportunity to examine prevailing attitudes and beliefs in a variety of fields.” The collective online encyclopedia, therefore, re-examines the world from diverse perspectives.

3) Shifting from self-seeking individual to public-spirited collectivity

Before the main page is created according to the results in discussions on 26 January 2006, the discussion has been last for more than half a year from the first post on 16 May 2005 (UTC). This is precisely echoed what Mittell (2012) called the emergent culture, which is participation through the collection of small practices from bottom to up instead of being planned from above.

To some extent, the case displays the ‘media-based collectivity’. (Couldry & Hepp, 2018) Firstly, Notability(academics) achieved over discussion sets a frame of relevance for the construction of collectivities. Secondly, the guideline represents the space of communication specifically for academics and is practised as a benchmark for these collectivities get constructed. As Fraser points out in the process of decision-making, “participants are transformed from a collection of self-seeking, private individual is into a public-spirited collectivity capable of acting together in the common interests.” (72)

Just like the site provides various spaces for multifarious discussions, there is correspondingly more than one kind of participation from basic reading, editing to the discussion. Wikipedia, as a self-govern platform, is an arena allowing the articulations of both opinion-forming and decision-making at large. It recalled the post-bourgeois arena (Fraser) blending strong and weak publics and rendering the maximalist participation. Following the logic, the idea can be related to Carpentier’s two forms of participation.

Direct to the specific case, then, since it is not just an ordinary entry but a guideline, the practices of participation *in* and *through* the media becomes even more imbricated. It is practices of expressing personal opinions *through* Wikipedia about the practices of content-related and decision-making processes *in* Wikipedia. For instance, [Sandstein] posted a topic ‘High quality academic work’ in which he suggests to delete these words because it is inherently POV. Then [Mangojuice] joins the discussion and argues that it might be better to reword it into ‘highly regarded’ because

“The difference as I see it is that high quality asks for a judgement in the mind of the editor, while highly regarded is a matter of the opinion of experts, which is something else entirely. Your point is good, though.”

Following the understanding from [For the great justice] in the last sector, any forms of notability are really a matter of opinion regardless of how criteria are and editors have to form a judgement

in anyways. The revision, nevertheless, indicates an effort of approaching to the impossibility of objectivity in a practical sense.

The role of Wikipedians consistently changes from the audience to participants because the premise of joining an existing discussion is to be a reader first. That is, the potential participants need to read the current flow before posting their ideas in order to continue an effective discussion. It could be an explicit statement for instance “Hi. So I've read through the whole discussion, and I want to make some comments...” [Zweifel] however, more often, it is expressed as a way of weighing pro and con toward solutions and expressing consideration. For example, [KSchutte] starts a topic ‘A few points’ with 3 bullet-pointed advice. In the flow, it is followed with a response either simply saying “I disagree with your conclusion” before further deliberation or replying to the previous comments and seeking solutions. Apart from concrete advice, the expression of consideration, for instance, the discussion between [Mangojuice] and [KSchutte] illustrated in the last sector, also plays an important role to promise effective discussions. Besides, the cost of communication and collaboration could be very high if the discussion was last a long time and filled with a bunch of posts. Then, it might constitute one of the reasons that discussions usually happen within a small group.

Not like face-to-face, the mechanism of communication is recorded, asynchronous and text-based. This means that actions from agents and collective works could be partly influenced by the trace previously left. For instance, the edit summary wrote by editors in the ‘View history’ works as a log indicating what has changed in the main page. This could be a result of consensus after discussions, especially for the heavy revisions, but also minor changes without necessary prior consent. Taking the example from [Sandstein] again, he made a revision on 15:36, 25 May 2006 after the discussion and left a message to his edit “Criteria: #4: rm "high quality" - see talk”. In a sum, given to the design of the site and technological factors, the stigmergic effect and transparent feature indirectly allow editors to participate in the community and facilitate collaboration. (Mittell, 2012)

4) *The driving force of deliberation*

The success of Wikipedia is often attributed to its collective mechanism and the large numbers of contributors collaboratively participate to improve and maintain articles from basic editing, verification to vandalism. As Jemielniak points out, however, the site is not solely driven by collaboration but also dissent. (2014: 59) Moreover, Dahlgren (2009:93) marks that conflicts may due to insufficient communication but also represent a power relationship between groups with major differences. While Notability(academics) comes to be recognised from scratch, conflicts and disagreements among editors function as an impetus force fuelling their engagement and involvement. To deal with conflicts on the site, the best method is to achieve a consensus since it is, as the ‘Consensus’ policy²³ states, “Wikipedia’s fundamental model for editorial decision-making.” Although there are several potential other ways on the site, in line with the research question, I will mainly focus on the discussion for consensus-making, more precisely deliberation in which Wikipedians are expected to reason together and assume in good faith.

According to Coleman and Götze(2003), several methods can be adopted for online public engagement in policy deliberation but public opinion poll is the least effective one to measure dialogue and influence. When it comes to contribute to guidelines in Wikipedia, one specific rule is ‘don’t call a vote’ as [Mangojuice] elaborates that “the question is not whether or not a page passes an arbitrarily timed and advertised poll, but whether or not it enjoys community support and whether it should be a policy.” This is in accordance with ‘Wikipedia:Polling²⁴ is not a substitute for discussion’, at the same time, that polling is only meant to facilitate discussion and should be used carefully. That is, ‘consensus-oriented models of democracy’ is positioned under the practices of societal dialogue and deliberation in which collective decision-making processes take place based on rational arguments, as Carpentier has it. (2011:21)

²³ See Appendix D

²⁴ See Appendix D

The equal opportunity for participation is ground for discussion and transparency structure catalyses discussions to be maximum. Insofar as concrete discussions, I am not surprised when some users complain the guideline is instruction creep and makes things complicated because the topics discussed are sometimes examined so detail that upset those people. Taking publication criteria as an example, how to measure it concerns a wide range of further queries including quality, quantity, subjects, significance, citation, peer-review and so forth, thereby it sparks other levels of consensus needed to reach. On the other hand, it is these consistent exchanges or conflicts that stimulate the guideline to be specifically refined. In addition, it is not hard to map discussions into the deliberation framework with regards to both analytic and social process proposed by Gastil and Black (2008) and most of the discussions are meaningful and instructional. To come to a generally accepted consensus is not easy and take a long time, participants have to be consistently rational so as to convince others, clarify the problems and seek a new solution.

To start a rational debate, it largely depends on how agents perform. While scrutinizing the archive, I found that a virtual identity could somehow decide how agent perform. Even though discussing anonymously can sometimes promote a more enlightened and broader conversation (Papacharissi, 2002:14), Editors tend not to disguise under IP address as exchanging ideas. From the data, it is barely to find IP editors and few comments from them indicate exercises without moral responsibility and accountability. For instance, one calls the guideline is rubbish and posts that:

“Existing policies cover entering telephone books (WP:NOT, 6.Genealogical entries, or phonebook entries.) There is no need for more rulecraft... That's rubbish. There are no cases that can't be dealt with existing policy. I agree that we don't need more instruction creep. Especially not crap instruction creep. 67.109.101.226 22:39, 26 April 2006 (UTC)”

Again [Mangojuice] objects the comment first and then replies in the below that “... You're calling our work crap, but you're hiding behind an anonymous IP number even though you're

obviously an established user.” How people conduct themselves online is simply different from offline. Participants’ identity in their real life does not very matter in Wikipedia but the enactment of a virtual identity can be particularly meaningful in certain ways. To some degree, the process of deliberation is more effective under accounts rather than IP address because a traceable account can represent personal credibility and reputation and make it possible to establish from binary interpersonal relationship to collective trust within the community. (Jemielniak, 2014)

5) *Sticking to the main policy*

While editors come together and make an effort to build consensus by taking account of all legitimate concerns, another factor that fundamentally determines how discussions evolve is site’s policies and guidelines, as another part of Wikipedia:Consensus puts it. To some degree, the latter is more powerful than personal deliberation. Since the established guidelines are also from the previous consensus, prior consensus can be presented as incontestable and lead to form new guidelines. For the multidirectional participation, Carpentier puts “the strong emphasis on the procedural-deliberative, and on the role that institutions play in the transformation of public opinion into communicative power.” (2011:36) It not only promises rational deliberation is fairly performed but also makes sure the process is consistently conducted.

It might be easily confused with policies and guidelines. Concerning policies, apart from the WP:IGNORE (Ignore all rules) policy²⁵, all users are expected to follow because they “have wide acceptance among editors and describe standard.” In contrast, guidelines are results of consensus supported by the community while editors should attempt to follow. On this account, policies enjoy more ‘power’ than guidelines. Since Notability(academics) per se is a consensus-based guideline and aims to navigate discussions, particularly in the AfD, the discussion, therefore, has to follow policies. From the above analysis, how polices interplay with the informally developed public opinions, such as WP:NOT, WP:COI and so forth, has already been briefly touched.

²⁵ See Appendix D

Through the deliberative process, the attention largely is focused on two policies: Verifiability (WP:V) and Neutral Point of View (WP:NPOV).

Verifiability has been mentioned at the very beginning in the discussion and constantly cited. It is, sometimes, suggested to replace the guideline. For instance, [For great justice] finds the core policies of verifiability, sources and NPOV are useful enough for inclusion. Regardless of how discussion proceeds, contributors scrupulously abide by WP:V as the following examples:

“Nothing, of course, should remove the requirement of verifiability.”

“Ultimately WP:V is the final determiner of whether an article should be included, as Loom91 says.”

However, there are difficulties with verifiability when it comes to taking notability into account. For instance, some editors argue that once confirmed by the verifiable information, such as international journal, professors then should be included. This is obviously objected as an example of inclusionism. Alternatively, [Deville] suggests a proposal to keep articles in which he argues that “as long as someone has written an article with the motivation of describing research contributions”. The problem is that the article could be written by authors themselves instead of by a reliable third-party. Such issue correspondingly refers to conflict editing and neutral point of view as the following excerpt by [Deville]:

“... And any statements from a professor about his own research will usually violate WP:V as well. And in any case, if the only one able to summarize a person's research is that person, then it's almost definitely not notable by our standards.”

In practice, although academics can be subjected to self-promotion if they write their own articles on the site, the fact is that they can write their own works better than others do. As such, editors also need to be open-minded and slightly disregard and deviate from guidelines rather than a blanket prohibition. The rigid rules need to be contextualized and combined with personal

experience. Overall, verifiability and other policies are necessary conditions for Notability(academics) but not sufficient.

6) *A do-able activity*

To become civic agency, people need to consider themselves as participants and be motivated via the interplay of reason and passion. Dahlgren continues points out that “it must be an integrated and dynamic part of a larger cultural environment that has relevance for politics.” (2009:103) If we consider the concept in an expansive way, Wikipedians may somehow share senses of civic agency.

Even though I accidentally find out that [Mangojuice] was as an administrator it should not automatically link with bureaucracy playing a decisive role since there is no clear evidence to mark whether he/she holds the position during the time. Further, citing so many excerpts from [Mangojuice] is not my intention but it is simply because of the comprehensive and rational arguments, which are largely built upon knowledge. As Dahlgren puts it, knowledge plays a central role in a civic agency to form opinions before further participating in the public sphere. From prior excerpts, it is easy to notice that the arguments are usually supported by guidelines and policies. This demonstrates not the ability to interpret these rules only but also the degree of familiarity with the system. Specifically, it reveals the exact what Dahlgren (ibid:109) says about background knowledge which provides schemata that facilitate the integration of new information. Insofar as the case, to make guidelines in the site also needs some background knowledge of the site. He further points out that the original issue may even be overtaken to other discussions because of background knowledge. As [Sidaway] post in the first topic:

“With time I've found that my opinion has tended to focus more on verifiability, and I worry far less about notability, which I have come to regard as a chimera, and I worry not at all about other issues such as namespace.”

Moreover, knowledge can impact on that group's sense of trust and potential practices. For example, editors who are familiar with the policies are relatively more convincible compared with those who only express personal opinions. Since knowledge is represented by the traceable identity, this may partly explain why editors decide not to anonymously edit.

As Dahlgren puts it, both substantive and procedural values are indispensable for democracy. (2009:110) Shifting to Wikipedia, instead of presupposing someone with the substantive values, the site clearly articulates it into policies and guidelines. For instance, behavioural ones precisely reflect substantive values as exemplified by Wikipedia:Etiquette²⁶ pointing out that “while often wiki specific, is rooted in common sense intuitions about working together. Be friendly and flexible. Act in good faith. Focus on improving Wikipedia articles.” On the other hand, a large of guidelines and policies commit to coordinate communication, resolve conflicts, strive for consensus and many other works as discussed last sector. In some senses, these two values are inherently blended or “treated as universal” (ibid:111) by documented as rules. For the self-governance project, both values are deeply intertwined in every activity on the site. However, practices on the site ascribe to its democratic, equal structure and mechanism as well.

For Wikipedia, trust is one of the particular concerns and pertains to relations about not the only audience to site's information but also one editor to others in the virtual environment. The fact that Wikipedia is characterized with the absent real identity check, the limited incentives or punishments, and the dispersed membership determines a general 'thin' trust atmosphere, which constitutes a basic condition for civic engagements. (Jemielniak, 2014:106) The behavioural guideline 'assume in good faith' signals the notion of the bridging relations that are linking to 'the loose bonds and networking relationship of civic participation.' (Dahlgren, 2009:113) Relying on faith to produce trustworthy information is obviously not possible thereby a practical method is the one to seek for. Following this logic, the low interpersonal trust and the amateur and

²⁶ See Appendix D

collective work can obviously be suspicious with regards to reliability. The substitution is, then, turn to strong trust in procedures or the values in order to check credential. In this way, the ‘focused’ trust might not be needed for contribution but is directly related to ‘Identity’. (ibid: 114)

In the sense of modernity, space and communication are closely entangled. The dimension of spaces in terms of availability and accessibility, as previously discussed, is provided by the site maximum. The civic agency has already used to ‘there and now’ in the new communicative contexts. Just like the name of the ‘talk’ page, it is the prominent method for communication on the site. However, from the standpoint of civic engagement, the capacity to use networks to connect to specific issues weights more importance. (ibid:117) To some extent, it is also intrinsically required in collective works. Posting topics based on editors’ thoughts in the site could be regarded as practices of building social networks of others who are currently or potentially interested in articles. In the context of the case, Notability(academics) finally is reached a consensus and became a legitimized guideline. Following Dahlgren’s sense (ibid:118), it recalls that “practices become traditions and experiences becomes collective memory.”

The sense of identity is established on the notion of not only an achieved citizenship and civic agency but also as membership in one or more communities. (ibid:120) According to Wikipedia:Wikipedian²⁷, it suggests being part of a group, community or demonym (a resident of a locality). Although it is not necessary to register an account to conduct some basic activities on the site Wikipedians, to a certain degree, show a sense of identity and form the community with a unique culture. Currently, there are over 30 million accounts on English Wikipedia but only a minority of users regularly contribute to the site and only a minority of those participate in community discussions. Applying Wikipedian to the concept of citizenship, it echoes the result from Barnhurst’s study (1998) showing low civic involvement. Moreover, the community-based

²⁷ See Appendix D

identity in a 'thin' trust and weak-social ties environment facilitates democratic engagement and empowers civic agency.

Conclusion

Everything here--every issue we discuss-- has its real world counterparts.

--- [DGG]

This thesis sets out to discover the hidden side of how individuals contribute to Wikipedia from the case of the guideline 'Notability(academics)', which reveals the collective nature is determined by the interplay of both participants' initiatives and site's system. Building on the netnography method and drawing upon the archive from 'Talk' pages, the thesis combed through how the guideline comes to be legitimized from scratch. The discussions in the archive contain not only what editors argue but also how they interact with others and with the site. Through the process, the conflicts among participants consistently drive the community to solve the disagreements back and forth until reaching a rough consensus. What's more, the thesis does not attempt to generalize and predict a larger implication but aims to reveal some degree of the mechanism of Wikipedia.

1. A synactic result

In line with the first research question how individuals and the site per se, respectively and collectively, generate an entry. I argue that the online and public deliberative discussion is the fundamental approach for individuals to participate *in* and *through* the site. The seemingly simple answer, however, is built upon a composite of various factors and needs to be contextualised. With regards to the case, the research scrutinized from four-part: public sphere, audience/participation, deliberation, institutionalisation. First and foremost, I draw upon Habermas' public

sphere theory, its complementary extension from Fraser and re-position it to an online environment. Spaces of the site are subsequently examined from different perspectives.

For individuals, participating in the site is seeming without any obstruction because of unblocked accessibility but the fact is only fewer of the registered account has actively engaged. The maximalist mode provides the space for individuals to participate *in* and *through* the site, in which they can not only participate *in* content and structure related issues but also participate *through* Wikipedia in public debate with others. The impression of Wikipedia as the largest reference site could make people expect to find articles on the site when using it. While examining the case, the fact is that articles could be published only if they are ‘notable’ enough. This highlights the site’s inclusiveness and exclusiveness. The availability of the site is closely linked to Article for Deletion process, through which it primarily relies on Notability guidelines. Although the guideline provides a general standard, it could be interpreted differently and disregarded among editors and in specific cases.

One of the core conflicts is to discard it and merge the Notability(academics) to WP:Bio. What makes it ironic is that regardless of how many people suggest the guideline is instruction creep and it further divides the general notability guideline. In contrast, the actual efficacy of the subordinated guideline is to be better collaborated, integrated, and cohesive to the general one. This may not exactly reflect what ‘subalter counterpublics’ stands for but it unveils how minor spaces functions in the site.

The importance of consensus and deliberation could not be more overemphasized. The consensus is made by neither polling nor silence but by no disagreements. While individuals negotiate conflicts it is so easy to be bounded by the setting that the discussion only happens within people who are currently involved in. What is usually ignored, however, is the invisible audience in the public spaces, who are not in part of public spheres, yet. Not until I read [DGG] writes ‘I do not

attempt to convert my opponents--I aim at converting their audience.’ in his own ‘Talk’ page, realized I the blind spot that the importance of audience for the consensus in a public sphere, as the essay “Silence does not imply consent when drafting new policies.”²⁸puts it. Considering the transparent and asynchronous structure, the possibility of joining debates is always on the table and consensus is always temporary. Moreover, by the definition of consensus, the atomized self-seeking individuals are inevitably pulled together to pursue public-spirited collectively goals.

The deliberation process includes the articulation of both opinion formation and producing decision-making authority, rendering ‘weak publics’ and ‘strong publics’ respectively. During the process, the discussions are far more complicated than I expected. It covers a wide range of topics from considering who deserve to be included to weighing the function as a guideline. Moreover, the conflicts break the presupposed like-minded echoes. I believe this is one of the advantages of online deliberative democracy by providing equal access to publicly exchange information and opinions for common issues, which echoes Gimmler’s observation. (2011) Nevertheless, Wikipedia is not as liberal as many people think. It represents all human knowledge but not everyone’s. The extreme statements can be posted on the site but will not be presented in the articles as information.

Dahlgren (2009:93) makes a point that if the deliberation is implemented in an appearing universal, neutral, and egalitarian mode, such mode can actually serve to conceal and reinforce its own symbolic power. This is exactly how Wikipedia advocates for deliberation to present its symbolic power, which I believe it is the nature of encyclopedic aspect as a valued source of reliable information and ‘wiki’ aspect as a user-generated content website. On the other hand, the process may also cement the ‘authorship’ image by the name of NPOV and deliberately selected sources, which could limit the progressive potential. (Luyt, 2012)

²⁸ See Appendix D

Institutionalization plays another important role and provides a formal decision-making sphere of deliberation, which echoes ‘two-track model of deliberative politics’ proposed by Habermas (1996: 359) In terms of the case, although no clear evidence to show how bureaucracy and structure affect the process of deliberation, the guidelines and policies are rather largely represented in the institutionalized environment. Without strict managerial supervision, it is precisely the established rules that maintain the community and navigate the consensus process. The power of rules is throughout every part of the site, explicitly or implicitly. It frames the boundary of the site, makes sure procedures to consistently proceed and even cultivates editing culture. However, the interpretation of the rules is varied in specific contexts and rules could be affected by other rules.

In practical, rules serve as the common language cited by editors to justify their arguments as well as maintain routine arrangements. Nevertheless, instead of everyone having the same power, those who are familiar with the structure and rules of the site hold more power. The prior rules as a form of established social construction are usually difficult to be altered. Hence, the established rules as a form of reasonableness, to some extent, present authorship. It may not be the same sense of what Dahlgren argues about the limitation of deliberation but signals a potentiality. According to O’Sullivan, the main danger faced by the site is ‘petrification into stultifying bureaucracy.’ (2009: 101) In addition, what I can infer is that the sophisticated rules and system might impede a beginner to regularly contribute to the site and transform to a ‘Wikipedian’.

The deliberative process is not only person to person but also person to rules. Arguably, personal initiatives are the primordial incentive but it, to a great extent, needs to collaborate with or confined by rules.

2. *Understanding Wikipedia as a civic cultural phenomenon*

Directing to the second question of how to better understand participants engage with Wikipedia in the context of civic culture through six dimensions: knowledge, values, trust, spaces, practices and identities. First and foremost, individuals need to be equipped with relevant knowledge before contributing to the site. This not only means knowledge about the subject or the specific entry but also the background knowledge of Wikipedia, namely the rules of the site. In the case, some degree of literacy is necessary for developing ideas but the background knowledge of the site curbs the proposals within a boundary. Moreover, since the established guidelines are documented in a broad sense, the process of interpreting those guidelines into the context highlights the knowledge appropriation. The general substantive values are crucial for collaboration in the collective platform, especially reciprocity which is a potential incentive in the community. The procedural ones parallelly aim for the resolution of conflicts and striving for compromise. The difficulties of measure intangible values in the virtual world leads the site to resort to adopting a concrete method. That is, both values are documented as a form of policies and guidelines. It is hard to argue how much influence of norms is in the discussion even though norms can be more efficient than the external rules in certain circumstances.

The site makes an effort to provide reliable information and cements its authoritative symbol. However, it is built upon mistrust among participants essentially. In democratic tradition, excessive trust is unsuitable in the sense that it can suppress conflict and sustain oppressive relations. (Dahlgren, 2009) That is, overmuch trust could result in bureaucracy. The nature of Wikipedia creates a general low trust atmosphere among participants. Jemielniak (2014: 117) marks that “trust in another editor is often asymmetrical and can be reduced to the expectation that the other editor argues with good faith and in the honest belief that his or her reasoning is valid.” In other words, and the stance of ‘assuming good faith’ constructs a minimum degree of trust among atomized users and is the ground for collaboration. (Reagle, 2014) In a sum, it is a low trust community providing trustworthy information. In the context of civic culture, the dimension of communicative spaces puts emphasis on experiential proximity to citizens.

(Dahlgren, 2009:115) In this sense, such feeling is quite weak among citizens since most of them treat Wikipedia as a reference without any further motivations of learning the site. However, for contributors, the situation could be the other way round. Since all the public activities will be recorded in the site, the ‘stigmergic effect’ creates a new experimental communicative space for guiding and managing collective practices.

The knowledge, trust, and values internally decide how and what an individual practice. Personally, I think the network would be linked with bureaucracy in the site rather than ordinary editors because it is not only hard to build a network among atomized individuals but also could enhance the general trust. The more dispersed individuals are the less network is connected. However, the ‘bottom to up’ and ‘publish then filter’ amateur production modes stimulate incentive to practice boldly. The membership-based identity of being a ‘Wikipedian’ is accessible by registering an account to achieve a legitimate status but indicates low-degree participation. However, I believe the community-based ‘Wikipedian’ is the core identity. To be accepted by a community, the fundamental way to do is to participate in Wikipedia without regard to activities such as correct typo, discuss issues, fight vandalism and so on. Through experiences of participating in the site, the identity of ‘Wikipedian’ is incessantly evolved and enhanced through to the common sense of ‘we-ness’.

3. Suggestion for further research

The study has been intentionally avoided technological factors, which is literally an indispensable part of the site. For instance, Niederer and van Dijck (2010) suggest that the site is driven by intricate collaboration between human users and automated content agents namely bots. Hence, how human collaborate with non-human actors and interact in the sociotechnical system deserves further discussion. In addition, most of the studies within the area is focused on active participants but the focus could also turn to retired Wikipedians. After the incident, Professor Dawn Bazely based her own editing experience wrote an article ‘Why Nobel winner Donna

Strickland didn't have a Wikipedia page' (2018). In it, she points out that what hinders people editing is the exact Wikipedia's editing culture. Hence, the following question comes to why people is gradually reluctant to contribute and even leave Wikipedia in the end.

Last but not least, the best way to summarise the thesis is to participate in Wikipedia and conduct a 'real' ethnographic research.

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Appendices

1. Appendix A: Sample and Page history

The data of the study is acquired from the accompanying ‘Talk’ pages of Notability(academics). Since the study focuses on a dynamic period, only Archive 1(May 2005—March 2007) is picked, in which it covered 58 discussions of the entry from scratch to a guideline across nearly two years. Available at: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_talk:Notability_\(academics\)/Archive_1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_talk:Notability_(academics)/Archive_1)>

Page history retrieved from ‘Wikipedia:Notability (academics): Revision history’. Available at:

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<[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Notability_\(academics\)&dir=prev&offset=20060919081048&action=history](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Notability_(academics)&dir=prev&offset=20060919081048&action=history)>

The first traceable version of ‘Notability(academics)’. Available at:

<[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Notability_\(academics\)&oldid=36775280](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Notability_(academics)&oldid=36775280)>

Excerpt from the sample:

Please! No More RuleCruft!

Enough already. There are plenty of guidelines, about guidelines about guidelines. There is virtually nothing that is verifiable that needs rules like this. Please stop.For great justice.00:40, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

From the position that any verifiable has a place in Wikipedia, that's reasonable. However, if we do continue to delete hard-to-verify articles that are just places for libel to hide (like any biography is prone to), we need rules for that.--Prosfilae 03:01, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

I find this request by For great justice upsetting, to say the least. We're trying to help! This guideline has been used, and I think it's been helpful in AfD, helping people make more intelligent decisions. And let me point out for anyone who isn't already aware, that For great justice seems to make it a practice to vote keep in just about every AfD debate he comes across; I've never seen a delete vote from him. WP:AGF, but it's like he wants people not to be able to have rules that can argue for deletion, because he doesn't want things deleted. Mangojuice 03:32, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

My personal voting history has no relevance to this guideline, it's just an ad hominem attack. I don't want true, verifiable things deleted, and I don't want endless rulecraft that allows anything someone doesn't like to get deleted just because they don't like it. For great justice. 05:30, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

This is not the page to argue against deleting verifiable things. That's standard practice on Wikipedia, and it is no more relevant here than arguing WP:NPOV would be at Talk:Albert Einstein.--Prosfilae 07:26, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

Just because you don't like that a guideline makes something get deleted doesn't make that guideline rulecraft. JoshuaZ 05:33, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

And just because you don't like an article doesn't make it collegecraft. Notability is a disruptive, unhelpful and inherently POV. It has not place in building an encyclopedia. For great justice. 05:42, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

Besides the standard answers, these rules are about living human beings. Bad articles about living human beings can create bad press and potential legal risks for Wikipedia, as history has shown. Removing those potentially libelous articles that aren't read frequently and aren't easily verifiable is very important for Wikipedia's continued existence.--Prosfilae 07:26, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

Articles which are bad should be edited to make them good. Information that is libelous and impossible to verify should be removed. That has nothing at all to do with 'notability' and is already covered by other policies. 67.109.101.226 22:39, 26 April 2006 (UTC)

The only way to find out whether an article is impossible to verify is if you spend the hours to look up the material. The problem is many articles that no one looks at to check whether they are bad, libelous or impossible to verify.--Prosfilae 03:11, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

'Spending hours looking up material' is the process of writing an encyclopedia! Sorry, but if you're not interested in doing research and writing, you're in the wrong place. Deletion of things that you're not

interested in researching is not the answer. For great justice. 15:56, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

This guideline is really not deletionist. Look at it: it gives many reasons why an academic may be notable, and tries explicitly to prevent people from arguing for non-notability. I agree with you that deleting an article that's imperfect because you're too lazy to improve it is a terrible thing, and it does happen a lot. But if you want to see the kind of thing this guideline is REALLY trying to prevent, take a look at Isotope's comments on Wikipedia:Articles for deletion/Christopher Winship. Mangojuicetalk 16:42, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

I agree - Isotope is voting without reference to existing policy. Making more policy will not fix this, since he's not interested in what there is. Less is more in this case, since a few well understood and clear policies is better than masses of ill written, poorly understood and only marginally supported policy. For great justice. 18:00, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

Great! If we ever have a question on an article, we'll just ask you to go look it up for us. In fact, since the problem is articles no one has questions on, each day we'll just randomly pull a couple of the biographies of living people and have you verify that they aren't libelous. Okay?--Prosfilaes 17:41, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

The concept is bogus. It's your POV vs someone else's. Is 'Christopher Winship' verifiable in the sense of the Wikipedia policy (and in compliance with sources, WP:NOT etc)? If yes, he should stay, if not, he goes. Easy. For great justice. 16:55, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

This is ridiculous. It's not about libel. It's about 'what I like'. AfD is not normally a forum for people who believe they have been libelled. Thank God. That's why we should stick to verifiability. That way, if someone complains, it's either verifiable from a source, or it's not. There's no arguing about whether or not a group of people once came up with a guideline about what they like being used as a criteria. For great justice. 17:56, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

No, AfD is not a forum for people who have been libelled. Court is. Which is why we want to reduce the number of articles where people can add "For a brief time, he was thought to have been directly involved in the Kennedy assassinations of both John, and his brother, Bobby. Nothing was ever proven." and nobody ever

notice. Go get people to delete the guidelines about notability, and then come back to us.--Prosfilas 03:44, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

Duh. That's why it's important to verify facts that go in. It has nothing to do with notability. For great justice. 17:15, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

Why didn't you stop the Seigenthaler incident? Could it be perhaps that verifying all the facts that go into the Wikipedia is an impossible job, and it will be all the more difficult the more articles we have, and the more obscure the subjects those articles cover? --Prosfilas 18:15, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

I don't see how that's relevant. A non-verifiable fact was added to an article. It was spotted, and removed. The system worked. Notability, as usual, had nothing to do with it. For great justice. 18:36, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

So the system is working perfectly fine when libel stays in an article for years and gets legal threats directed at Wikipedia? The fact is, the people who run the site and have to pay the lawyers disagree.--Prosfilas 19:30, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

Well, I don't see any input here from 'the people who run the site and have to pay the lawyers'. I think it would certainly be safer from a legal standpoint to delete everything, but that's not a great option. It seems to me that heavily edited articles are just as much of a liability as seldomly edited ones, and that you have not made any case for the validity of notability as criteria. For great justice. 07:03, 29 April 2006 (UTC)

Wikipedia is an encyclopedia, not a phone book. It's not about deleting things from some 'dislike' of the person or whatever. It's about deleting things that don't belong in an encyclopedia. Regards, Ben Aveling 10:32, 20 April 2006 (UTC)

Existing policies cover entering telephone books (WP:NOT, 6. Genealogical entries, or phonebook entries.) There is no need for more rulecraft. Please read and understand existing policy before making more bad policy! In any event, nobody is arguing for entering telephone books. That's rubbish. There are no cases that can't be dealt with with existing policy. I agree that we don't need more instruction creep. Especially not crap instruction creep. 67.109.101.226 22:39, 26 April 2006 (UTC)

First of all, remember there's a big difference between policy and guidelines. I don't think this page aspires to be policy at all, just a guideline. Heck, WP:N isn't even policy. Second, this guideline is more about protecting articles on good subjects than about removing articles on bad subjects. Check them out: they have a lot of reasons why academics' articles should be notable, and very little about when an article on an academic is not notable. In fact, it specifically says that just because something doesn't meet these criteria doesn't mean it's not notable. Third, you're being really rude. Obviously you know a lot about Wikipedia policy and such, but you have almost no edits apart from this kind of criticism. You're calling

our work crap, but you're hiding behind an anonymous IP number even though you're obviously an established user. Mangojuicetalk 16:39, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

Of course WP:N is not policy. A lot of people think it is bogus. It doesn't matter whether the intention is deletionist or whatever, it is still bogus. Academics are notable to people who are interested in them, and not notable to people who aren't interested in them. Some of them have enough verifiable information about them to write an article that is more than a stub. It's that simple. For great justice. 16:55, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

Obviously, you're a relativist about this. So to you, no guideline will ever be useful. However, most of us on Wikipedia find guidelines useful. You say "a lot of people think (WP:N) is bogus." Who, besides you? I know an awful lot of people cite notability concerns constantly on AfD debates, and I've seen many people pick WP:V over WP:N (as should be done). But people who think WP:N is a bad idea? Show me. Mangojuicetalk 18:14, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

Re who finds it bogus - it's been voted on numerous occasions, check the archives on those votes for individuals. In fact, just read any talk page on anything to do with notability. They are full of people who don't agree with it as a concept. I find the core policies of verifiability, sources and npov to be very useful, it's just fatuous guidelines that I find useless and counterproductive. Good, well written and useful guidelines are, of course, useful. But we have them already. For great justice. 18:23, 27 April 2006 (UTC)

I was surprised to discover that WP:N is not, and effectively never has been, an official guideline. However, WP:BIO is. I have to say, I'm with you that Verifiability and WP:NOT are all we really need. However, WP:BIO and related guidelines (like this one is trying to be) are there for a good reason: to help ensure fairness and consistency. Take a look, if you will, at Simon Strelcheck. I believe the page redirects somewhere, but if you go to it and see what links there you can find some hotly contested AfD debates and two DRV ones as well. To sum it up, Simon Strelcheck was a municipal election candidate (not even elected) and so definitely falls below the politician threshold on WP:BIO. It was nominated for deletion at least once by pm_shef, who is the son of Strelcheck's opponent, and supporters of the article brought this up. Things got pretty ugly between pm_shef and those editors (many of whom turned out to be sockpuppets). The situation, obviously, was regrettable and ugly. However, the guidelines were the one thing keeping the debates useful. Because of them, no one could argue the WP community was being unfair to this candidate, and in the end, the article's destiny will probably end up being decided in a way consistent with how we've handled similar articles in the past. To put it another way, you're allowed to disagree with a

guideline and vote your conscience as you see fit. I don't think the existence of those guidelines is holding you back, except perhaps that if you don't explain why you disagree with the guideline you'll have a hard time influencing anyone else. So you may be right that the existence of guidelines may have a negative effect on you. But I think guidelines have a very positive effect on the community, which is really more important. Mangojuicetalk 18:18, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

I can't look up Simon Strelcheck, because it has been deleted. This sort of thing cuts to the heart of what I'm talking about. There is verifiable information about this person out there. He stood for public office. I have literally no idea why anyone would oppose me being able to look him up if I want to (of course, as you point out, his political opponents would not want me to look him up). Under the current system, it appears that his opponents POV carried the day - instead of the principle that verifiability governs what goes in, there was a battle about whos POV should prevail. I find that very damaging. If we had held fast and said that anyone for whom there is enough verifiable information to write an article stays in, the battle would never have taken place, and we would be consistant. For great justice. 18:41, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

You can still go to [2] even though the page has been deleted. For simplicity, here: 1st afd 2nd afd 2nd DRV. I agree with you, if we ignored notability and included all verifiable information, there would be consistency. However, there are two compelling reasons not to do this. The first is WP:NOT, specifically, "WP is not an indiscriminate collection of information." Some things aren't encyclopedia-worthy, period, and shouldn't be included. Admittedly, this doesn't say why there shouldn't be an article on any academic, although in the worst cases, articles on very unimportant academics may be effectively phone book or directory-type entries with no other importance. The second is based on a community consensus that we should try to stick to articles for which we can keep them verifiable and NPOV. This is a major problem for obscure subject. Simon Strelcheck, for instance, was a municipal election candidate in some city I'd never heard of before in Canada. I was able to fact-check some of the claims in the article, and revise things that were incorrect or not neutral, but it was a lot of work, on a topic that not only do I have no interest in, but the vast majority of people have absolutely no interest in. The WP community seems huge, sure, but that doesn't mean we can spend that kind of effort on every obscure article. Basically, the alternatives we have are to allow this kind of article to exist, which will probably not be neutral or verifiable, effectively indefinitely, or we delete them. Articles that aren't neutral or verifiable, and exist for a long time, are harmful to Wikipedia. This reason can be related to the policy that "WP is not a free webhost", too: perpetual articles that get no attention effectively turn WP into a free webhost; if a contributor is makes an article in bad faith (or to promote its subject), not deleting it effectively means the content remains HERE forever, which is much like allowing them their own home page on Wikipedia. Mangojuicetalk 20:09, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

OK. We agree that WP is not an indiscriminate collection of information, but the problem comes when we try to define that. A collection of people who have run for public office is not indiscriminate. It is a deliberate cataloguing of information. You say that 'Some things aren't encyclopedia-worthy' well, that's fine, but the devil is, again, in the detail. What you are really saying is that 'My POV is that X is not encyclopedia-worthy'.

I agree with you that, in the case of bios with no more information than that the candidate existed, no reasonable article can be written, and it should redirect to a list, which is a suitable way to deal with that. A list of candidates that ran in X election is an easily verifiable, and not 'indiscriminate' collection of potentially useful information. I don't think we disagree on the idea that articles should be NPOV and verifiable, I just don't see why we need more pseudo policy to enforce that.

Your argument seems to come down to whether or not there is an active community to maintain the article and prevent vandalism or POVmongering on the subject. I agree that that is a concern, but I don't think deletion is the solution. There are other ways to ensure that an article is factual than to delete it. There are plenty of articles that have active communities maintaining them that get attempts to delete them (or actually get deleted) because people think they are 'nn'. For great justice. 20:35, 28 April 2006 (UTC)

Sorry for coming into this late, but Justice, I have one question for you: are you claiming that every academic who has a position anywhere should be included in Wikipedia? You're saying that notability is POV, and thus we should include every verifiable fact in the Wikipedia? I admit I'm having a bit of trouble of figuring out what it is you're arguing for. Thanks! --Deville (Talk) 14:58, 29 April 2006 (UTC)

Hi there! I am saying that the standard set of verifiability set out in WP:V is high enough that every academic who has enough verifiable information from credible sources could easily have an article without any problems. There might even be fewer than there are now. I am saying that the concept of notability is inherently POV, while verifiability is much more objective. (There are issues of exactly what is a credible source, but these are, in practice, much easier to agree on). Have a re-read of WP:V, it is much more rigorous than most people think. For great justice. 17:02, 29 April 2006 (UTC)

You talk about POV as if it's always bad. It's not bad at all for editors to have different points of view about the project. WP:NPOV is about articles, not policies, guidelines, or debates. Notability, I suppose, does encourage each of us to decide for ourselves what we think is notable and what isn't, and it leads to certain problematic behavior from over-the-top deletionists. On the other hand, WP:NOT isn't that clear about the scope of Wikipedia, and "WP is not an indiscriminate collection of information" needs interpretation from people. Notability guidelines came into existence via personal interpretations about WP:NOT and related issues (like the issue of perma-stubs, or concerns over the possibility of making an article conform to WP:V or WP:NPOV. They're there to summarize community consensus about what we do and don't include. Now, maybe we shouldn't act this way as a community. But we do, and we did before the guidelines, it's

just that we did so with less uniformity and fairness. Furthermore, this isn't going to change so easily. But let's bring this back on topic. Is there a reason specific to this proposal for why you don't like it? Mangojuicetalk 16:25, 1 May 2006 (UTC)

Sorry to be late in getting back to you - personal points of view have no part in writing articles or deciding what information should go into the 'pedia. It's as simple as that. For great justice. 02:00, 7 May 2006 (UTC)

That's your point of view. I guess it should have no part in deciding what information should remain? It's preposterous to imagine that we can function as a community without using our opinions. From WP:NPOV: "All Wikipedia articles must be written from a neutral point of view, representing views fairly and without bias." (emphasis mine), and no mention of the idea of NPOV is put forward that refers to guidelines and policies, nor is there any such mention in WP:RULES. Mangojuicetalk 12:01, 7 May 2006 (UTC)

OK, I see the confusion. I am applying the concept of NPOV to editorial decisions about content. All article content should be written from the NPOV. Furthermore, editorial decisions about which content should be included are subject to NPOV. For example, the articles on democrats and republicans should be written from a NPOV. Furthermore, whether or not to have an article on Democrats is also subject to POV rules. You could not, for example, exclude the democrats simply because you didn't like them or were not interested in them. So, a policy or guideline that has implications for what information gets in or not must be in compliance with NPOV. For great justice. 19:32, 8 May 2006 (UTC)

Of course applying your POV to what is included is bad. My POV is that we have much too much mathcraft, and that's not notable to me at all. Unfortunately for me, and fortunately for wikipedia, it's verifiable, so I guess we're stuck with it. 165.254.38.126 15:40, 3 May 2006 (UTC)

Please don't mess with other people's comments. You obviously think that Wikipedia should have the mathematical articles, or you wouldn't say "fortunately for wikipedia", so your whole comment is being disingenious.--Prosfilae 17:43, 3 May 2006 (UTC)

May I ask how much is "enough" verifiable information? The reason I ask is because, at least in the US, pretty much every academic has a webpage, on which they have all of their publications and CV etc. In short, for pretty much any faculty member at every American university (and most European ones) there is enough information online to write a short bio for this person. I think the community consensus, so far, is that we should not include all of these people.--Deville (Talk) 18:02, 1 May 2006 (UTC)

2. Appendix B: Netnographic process, Fieldnotes example and Netnographic result

According to Hine (2015), an ethnographic study cannot be wholly designed in advance but is a boot-strapping method. During the research, I constantly adjust myself into different positions and fresh understanding of situations. Kozinets (2015) provides a preparatory guide for conducting a netnography research, by which I take into account and have experienced the exact process as the following description ‘more like a treasure hunt ... than a standard fishing trip ...’ (5) I begin with researcher self-understanding through introspective exercises, from which I roughly decided the general online participation and collective work as my study scope. For the next, the study proceeds to formulate the research including choosing the site, formulating research questions. Since netnographic research is based upon studies of the site, it is important to note that I have chosen Wikipedia as a field site rather than as a case. Whereas case selection implies the decision about which documents to study.

The fieldnotes is marked down in the PDF form with highlights and comments, which is the preliminary step for the following coding process and categorisation.

The screenshot shows a Wikipedia discussion page titled "Instruction creep". The main text of the page discusses the standards for WP:Biography of Academics (WP:BiO) and how they differ from other professional standards. Several comments and replies are visible, with key phrases highlighted in yellow. The highlighted text includes:

- "This strikes me as a serious case of instruction creep. Rather than try to set inclusion standards for every profession, much rather we spent our time and energy trying to improve the general standards at WP:BiO. I strongly urge that this guideline be merged back to the main page to prevent the further balkanization of our standards." (Rossami (talk) 21:47, 22 March 2006 (UTC))
- "The different communities have different sizes and different effects on the world's populace. For example, the set of all professional athletes is much smaller than the set of all professors. Thus it may make sense to include, say "all athletes in a professional league" and at the same time not make sense to include "all faculty at all universities". Since the academic community is larger than the sports community it's at least arguable that we should retain a smaller percentage of academics than athletes, and thus have more rigorous standards for inclusion for academics to any case. The two communities are so different that it certainly makes sense to me that the practical application of "verifiable" could differ wildly between the two professions."
- "The philosophy aside, from a pragmatic point of view it seems that this sort of thing is extremely necessary. WP:AFD is simply chock-full of debates about notability of academics; you see the same arguments every day it's almost always contentious, and this suggests strongly to me that the WP is very much not in a state of consensus about what makes an academic notable."
- "I'm strongly against merging back to WP:BiO. It comes down to this: what's the point of a guideline? It's not a law, it's not a rule, what it is, basically, is an attempt to explain community consensus, because that will be useful. This is natural, in light of Wikipedia:ignore all rules; if the guideline isn't useful or doesn't reflect consensus, then by default, it'll just be ignored. There is a lot of disagreement and uneven arguing in AFD debates about academics (look through some of the precedents if you want to see evidence). The best outcome here is to find consensus, whatever it is, and let people know about it. And I do think academics articles make a quirky little corner of the wikipedia to because there tends to be lots of verifiable information about academics, even everyday"

The netnographic result is categorized into four themes or phases because the discussions indicate a sense of chronological order. However, this chronologic feature should not be taken as a strict pattern.

Who is notable enough?	What is a good guideline?	Why is the guideline needed?	Proposed => Accepted
Academic criteria; Position; Publication; Social groups; Awards; Prestigious university; Peer review; public figure; Too inclusive; Too exclusive; Tenure;	Not an indiscriminate site; General and reasonable; Respect to differences; Understandable to ordinary users; Consensus backed; Give positive not negative;	Inherently POV; Bogus concept; WP:V WP:NPOV is good enough; Used in AfD; Ensure fairness and consistency; Positive effect on community; Allow personal interpretation;	'Inactive' tag; Topics died down; Discussion in Pump Village; Dispute tag; Consensus;

3. Appendix C: Overview themes, category and subcategory

In the discussion sector, the data is divided five themes based on the theoretical perspectives.

Subcategory	Category	Themes
Accessibility	The unknown and balkanized spaces	Public Sphere
Availability & Publicity	WP is not an indiscriminate site	
Atomized individual to Collective work	Shifting from self-seeking individual to public-spirited collectivity	Participation
Passive audience to active participants		

Conflicts to consensus	The driving force of deliberation	Deliberation
How & Who No Voting & No IP address		
Prior rules	Sticking to the main policy	Institutionalisation (Procedural-deliberation)
Policies & Guidelines		
Background knowledge	A do-able activity	Civic culture
Substantive and procedural values		
Thin trust		
Space and communication		
Identity as Wikipedians		

4. *Appendix D: Glossary of Wikipedia Slang*

AfD Abbreviation for ‘Article for deletion’, where Wikipedians discuss whether an article should be deleted. Articles listed are normally discussed for at least seven days, after which the deletion process proceeds based on community consensus. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Articles_for_deletion

Arbitration Committee the panel of editors responsible for conducting the Wikipedia arbitration process. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arbitration_Committee

Talk Pages Talk pages (also known as discussion pages) are administration pages where editors can discuss improvements to articles or other Wikipedia pages. When viewing an article (or any other non-talk page), a link to the corresponding talk page appears on the "Talk" tab at the top of the page. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Talk_pages

Help:Page history A page history shows the order in which changes were made to any editable Wikipedia page. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Page_history

Wikipedia:Administrators Administrators, commonly known as admins or sysops (system operators), are Wikipedia editors who have been granted the technical ability to perform certain special actions on the English Wikipedia. See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Administrators>

Wikipedia:Avoid instruction creep Instruction creep is often a result of editors producing too much instruction, resulting in very long, complicated pages. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Avoid_instruction_creep

Wikipedia:Consensus Decisions on Wikipedia are primarily made by consensus, which is accepted as the best method to achieve Wikipedia's goals, i.e., the five pillars. Consensus on Wikipedia does not mean unanimity (which is ideal but not always achievable), neither is it the result of a vote. See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Consensus>

Wikipedia:Etiquette Principles on how to work with other on Wikipedia. See also: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Etiquette>

Wikipedia:Five pillars The fundamental principles of Wikipedia may be summarized in five "pillars": Wikipedia is an encyclopedia, Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view, Wikipedia is free content that anyone can use, edit, and distribute, Wikipedia's editors should treat each other with respect and civility, Wikipedia has no firm rules. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five_pillars

Wikipedia:Polling Abbreviation for [Wikipedia:Polling is not a substitute for discussion]. Wikipedia works by building consensus. When conflicts arise, they are resolved through discussion, debate and collaboration. While not forbidden, polls should be used with care. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Polling_is_not_a_substitute_for_discussion

Wikipedia:Village pump The discussion forum of Wikipedia. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Village_pump

Wikipedia:Wikipedians Wikipedians or editors are the volunteers who write and edit Wikipedia's articles, unlike readers who simply read them. See also: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedians>

WP: AWARD The Wikipedia Awards comprise the honour system of Wikipedia. Many of them are considered part of the Kindness Campaign and are meant to promote Civility and WikiLove throughout Wikipedia. See also: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Awards>

WP: BIO Abbreviation for [Wikipedia:Notability (people)]. On Wikipedia, notability is a test used by editors to decide whether a given topic warrants its own article. For people, the person who is the topic of a biographical article should be "worthy of notice" or "note"—that is, "remarkable" or "significant, interesting, or unusual enough to deserve attention or to be recorded" within Wikipedia as a written account of that person's life. "Notable" in the sense of being famous or popular—although not irrelevant—is secondary. See also: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability_\(people\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability_(people))

WP: IGNORE Abbreviation for [Wikipedia:Ignore all rules]. If a rule prevents you from improving or maintaining Wikipedia, ignore it. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ignore_all_rules

WP:COI Abbreviation for [Wikipedia:Conflict of interest]. Conflict of interest (COI) editing involves contributing to Wikipedia about yourself, family, friends, clients, employers, or your financial and other relationships. Any external relationship can trigger a conflict of interest. That someone has a conflict of interest is a description of a situation, not a judgement about that person's opinions, integrity, or good faith. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Conflict_of_interest

WP:NOT Abbreviation for [Wikipedia:What Wikipedia is not], Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia and, as a means to that end, an online community of individuals interested in building and using a high-quality encyclopedia in a spirit of mutual respect. Therefore, there are certain things that Wikipedia is not. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:What_Wikipedia_is_not

WP:NPOV Abbreviation for [Wikipedia:Neutral point of view], all encyclopedic content on Wikipedia must be written from a neutral point of view (NPOV), which means representing fairly, proportionately, and, as far as possible, without editorial bias, all of the significant views that have been published by reliable sources on a topic. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view

WP:POLSILENCE Abbreviation for [Wikipedia:Silence does not imply consent when drafting new policies]. To lessen the chance of instruction creep, a policy or a guideline proposal must be exposed to, and discussed by, a broad community of editors. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Silence_does_not_imply_consent_when_drafting_new_policies

WP:V Abbreviation for [Wikipedia:Verifiability], verifiability means that other people using the encyclopedia can check that the information comes from a reliable source. Wikipedia does not publish original research. See also: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability>