Expert interview

Case: Translatewiki.net
Interviewee (IE):   Niklas Laxström
Interviewer (IR):   Anja Ebersbach
Date: 2020-04-16, 09:00am
Location: Skype

	[Greetings]
1	IR: Let's start. Have you read the questions? #00:00:50#
2	IE: Yes, I've read through them, there are some I didn't quite understand, but...we can clarify when we get to them. #00:01:03#
3	IR: Ok. Since when have you been in this whole topic, multilingualism, especially in the area of wikis? #00:01:13#
4	IE: I was here almost since the beginning. I studied language technology at university, so that kind of relates to multilingualism, and for wikis... #00:02:01#
5	IR: You study what? #00:02:19#
6	IE: I studied language technology. And for wikis... I think that was like I found Wikipedia at some point, and soon or later I started translating to Finnish, and building, what is now Translatewiki.net, so almost from the beginning, sometime 2005, or 2006, or 2007 #00:02:23#
7	IR: And first you worked in the Finnish Wikipedia, as an author as well? #00:02:54#
8	IE: Yeah, a little bit, I was never a prolific writer, but I did some clean-ups and handling vandalism and small fixes here and there #00:03:04#
9	IR: And then you engaged yourself in this topic to enable multilingualism in the software? #00:03:19#
10	IE: Yes, I had done some translation of open source projects around the same time I found Wikipedia, and I started translating MediaWiki to Finnish as well. It was very complicated so I wanted to make it easier and by doing that I created a tool that should help the people. #00:03:38#
11	IR: And how did it work before Translatewiki? #00:04:08#
12	IE: You had to edit PHP files and basically MediaWiki was still using Bugzilla at the time, so you had to make a patch, submit it to Bugzilla, and hope that someone would review that and put it back to the revision control system #00:04:14#
13	IR: And this is very complicated? #00:04:42#

14	IE: Yes, it's very easy to make mistakes, like to forget a semicolon, and then it would not work. I remember, I kind of broke Finnish Wikipedia by accident. #00:04:45#
15	IR: And then you decided to found Translatewiki? Which year was this? #00:05:04#
16	IE: I have a link for short history about Translatewiki, but to summarize: yes, I started to build a translating tool that works inside MediaWiki itself, and, at first, I used it myself, and at some point, I made it public, I invited some friends, and word-by-word more translators came to use it. The biggest benefit at that point was that if you translated messages on Wikipedia itself, the Wictionary in the same language would not get those translations, but if you translated on Translatewiki.net all the wiki projects would get those translations. #00:05:12#
17	IR: So you installed aMediaWiki, and you programmed Translate, the extension? #00:06:11#
18	IE: Yes. #00:06:20#
19	IR: And then you just started for yourself and the others joined you? #00:06:22#
20	IE: Yeah. #00:06:27#
21	IR: And why did you choose MediaWiki for this purpose, because probably there are many tools for localization for software projects, probably there are perfect tools to use, and it would be easier to use them, I don't know? Why did you stay with MediaWiki? #00:06:28#
22	IE: I think there were two reasons. One is that MediaWiki already had some kind of interface for making the translations local inside the wiki, so I started extending that into a general translation tool, and the other reason was that, I don't think there were so many web-based translation tools at the time. There were things like Gettext, it's a translation editor, but MediaWiki was using those PHP files, and no tool would support that format. So it was such like starting where it was easiest to start that thing. #00:07:00#
23	IR: And you are still satisfied with this choice? #00:07:48#
24	IE: Yes, I would say, I'm quite proud that we have a web-based tool that is easy to use and I think that are strength is that we are trying to hide the complexity of dealing with files and stuff from the translators, so they can be just focus on one skill, and not be technical people, which is just a common requirement in a lot of projects. #00:07:58#
25	IR: And which roles within Translatewiki have you taken on so far? Which means, what do you do or what have you done so far at Translatewiki? #00:08:32#
26	IE: I would say, a little bit of everything. Of course, I founded it, I developed the extension, I had run, I still run the server it runs on. Fun fact, it originally ran on my laptop, and yeah... community manager, helping translators, a little bit of marketing... anything that was needed to run it. #00:08:45#

27	IR: But it's not your main business? It's a totally volunteer position? #00:09:19#
28	IE: I would say it's been my kind of a pet project since the beginning. There are some volunteers that help running it, and I can spend some of my work time at Wikimedia Foundation to support Translatewiki.net, so it's not completely volunteer things for me #00:09:36#
29	IR: So you are employed by the Foundation? #00:10:02#
30	IE: Yes, I am. #00:10:09#
31	IR: Ok. And what for? For translation? Are you part of the language team? #00:10:11#
32	IE: Yeah, I'm in the language team, and our scope is both internationalization of both the software we have and translation tools, and for recent years main the focus has been on translation tools for Wikipedia articles, which is ContentTranslation, but I also maintain Translatewiki and Translate extension. #00:10:22#
33	IR: Ok. So, as you might have seen, I have grouped questions in different dimensions and I would like to start with content. What kind of content does the wiki deal with and where does it come from? #00:10:55#
34	IE: Main content is software interface messages, and they come from open-source software, and more specifically from their version-control repositories, which are then translated to different languages. #00:11:13#
35	IR: When you say mainly, are there exceptions as well? #00:11:34#
36	IE: Well, of course we have documentation pages, and talk pages and support desk... and there are some small manuals that are not really a part of the real interface, but closely related to the software, and we have had some things like experiment translating posters where we just translate the strings, and then there is some process that creates PDFs or images, but that is really on the minor side of things #00:11:42#
37	IR: The next question: how does the content differ in the different languages? I know it does not differ in Translatewiki. You get the texts in English, and it's just translated into different languages? #00:12:30#
38	IE: Yeah, basically all translatable things are in English, and the translation should be quite accurate so they don't differ. We do have a concept of assistant languages, so if you are not proficient in English, if you speak some other language, Russian for example, you can choose the Russian translation and translate from that. #00:13:08#
39	IR: Really? So, we also have our project BlueSpice in the Translatewiki, and we have to cope with a problem that our system texts are perfect in German, but we first have to translate it into English before we can enter Translatewiki, but that is not the case then probably? #00:13:43#
40	IE: I would say, for practical matters, you should have English strings when you come to Translatewiki.net, in theory someone could translate German strings to

	English, if they are missing, but that would mean that anyone else who does not understand German would be blocked until that happens. #00:14:12#
41	IR: Ok. #00:14:41#
42	IE: But yeah, in theory it's possible that you have German as the source language, but in practice it's not really done. #00:14:43#
43	IR: So, there are no projects where they start with another language? #00:14:54#
44	IE: Not really, I think there are very few small one, where the developer writes in his own language, but at the same time translates it to English for other people…but English is very dominant. #00:15:00#
45	IR: Is there a possibility to protect maybe the native language of the developers in this way? I ask you because we very often have the case, as I said, our German version is almost perfect because we are native speakers in German, so we put it in German and English or we put it in English there, but we get German translations back that maybe are not that perfect as ours? #00:15:26#
46	IE: Yeah, that can happen. You know, if you have multiple translators, they disagree on some things. Technically we can easily lock down any language so that it cannot be changed, and we do it for English, so that suddenly the developer realizes: oh, this string is something completely else. There are a lot of problems when someone accidentally translates English from another language, so... #00:16:14#
47	IR: Good, so next question: which forms of translations are used? Manual, automatic, are there bots? #00:16:50#
48	IE: I'm not aware of bots, and it's manual translation and we do have a translation memory available, and we have translation helpers including machine translation available, but everything should be manual. #00:17:05#
49	IR: And this translation memory, it's a learning system? #00:17:33#
50	IE: It's a very simple translation memory I have written. I think I have rewritten it couple of times, but it's still very simple. It just stores the translation and uses this edit distance to pick up suggestions, and it doesn't work well if you have paragraphs because it changes the unit and it's unlikely to find a match. But for software translation it works pretty well, because strings are usually very short. #00:17:42#
51	IR: Yes, I can imagine that. And it's for all languages you support? #00:18:18#
52	IE: Yes, the translation memory is for all languages #00:18:27#
53	IR: If I start a new project at your wiki, and I put the English system pieces, what happens then? What is the first thing? Which language is the quickest one, the biggest community, what can I expect? #00:18:32#
54	IE: In general, I think that - of course depends on the size of your project - but what we generally see that when a new project is started, within a day or two you will have translations in maybe 3-5 languages, and within a week you will probably have more than 10. If it's a big project, of course, it's not fully

	translated, but there are a couple of languages where, maybe one translator who is really active and translates everything, and then there is the long tail of more languages coming in. It is unlikely that new projects have as many languages as something like the MediaWiki core that has many languages, partly because if you want to have a Wikipedia in that language, you have to translate at least 500 messages, the language coverage there is very good. #00:19:14#
55	IR: Ok. Do you have a category system somehow? That is also multilingual? #00:20:30#
56	IE: Category in the MediaWiki sense? I think we have our documentation pages in categories per language, I'm not fully sure about this, but I think #00:20:37#
57	IR: I can look this up, ok. So, it's not vital in a way? #00:20:51#
58	IE: Do you mean, is it essential to our project? #00:21:01#
59	IR: Yeah #00:21:08#
60	IE: No, documentation is, of course, important, but I would not say it's vital #00:21:10#
61	IR: Media formats are translated, but it's probably not necessary, right? There are no media formats uploaded? #00:21:21#
62	IE: Not directly, I said there were few experiments of translating PDFs or posters, and if it's possible to extract the strings, and put them back together, it could work, but in translatewiki generally no media is being translated #00:21:33#
63	IR: Then, how about organization, how did the multilingual system evolve? We already had this question about organization in general, it's not a business platform? It's quite hard to find out which legal entity Translatewiki is, can you tell me something about that? #00:21:53#
64	IE: I don't think it's any legal entity at this point, it's been volunteering since the beginning pretty much. The recent change is that we applied for "software in public interest", which is an organization to US, which is kind of organization that supports projects that do not have their own entity, so we are now a associate project for them, which means they can hold our money if we have any, and contracts and some kind of things, but so far, we haven't really done much with that possibility, but that happened late last year, I think. #00:22:27#
65	IR: So, you don't have very big organizational overhead, in a way? #00:23:29#
66	IE: Definitely not. #00:23:40#
67	IR: Somehow you can get money, it's always a problem with such organizations, how can I get money for the platform, maybe for some tasks, some services you have to buy, this is solved somehow within this organization? #00:23:42#
68	IE: Yeah, our strategy was minimizing expenses. Our hosting is provided for free, sponsored by a German company actually, and the only costs right now are things like domain names and I think I pay little bit for one monitoring system, which I also use for my other work, so there are very little costs, and basically if

	we had to hand in money, it comes through someone personally, but now we can have money dedicated to the project under Software in public interest. #00:24:04#
69	IR: Is there a kind of owner of this platform? #00:25:04#
70	IE: From the social point of view, I feel like responsible for it, because I created it, and I'm also the contact person towards social and public interest, so I'm closest you can say to an owner, but it's a volunteer project and I hope people will participate... #00:25:12#
71	IR: Yeah, of course, as I said, it's really hard to find out what kind of organization there is behind, but for example if there are some delicate political messages on the platform and police comes to Translatewiki and they say someone must be responsible for this, you are the one which is formally responsible? #00:25:46#
72	IE: I am not a lawyer, so I don't know if formally, but in practice, they would come to me. #00:26:27#
73	IR: Let's talk about the choice of languages that are on the platform. Could it be that some weeks ago, I had a look at Translatewiki and there were more languages in the project then now, is that possible? #00:26:41#
74	IE: If you saw on the frontpage, I think it counts active languages in the last 30 days or so, so the number can fluctuate a bit. #00:27:05#
75	IR: Ah, that's why. #00:27:16#
76	IE: I think we should support close to 500 languages maybe, but of course, not all of them are really used at all. #00:27:19#
77	IR: So, the number at your front page, 178, depends on the active usage of these languages? #00:27:33#
78	IE: Yes. #00:27:45#
79	IR: You said the last … how many weeks or months? #00:27:47#
80	IE: I think it's last 30 days, I'm not fully sure. #00:27:52#
81	IR: Aha. That means some of them haven't been used for the last, as you said, some weeks? #00:27:59#
82	IE: There haven't been updated. Of course, the translations that already exist there, are in use by the users, but that means that there hasn't been any change to those languages in the past 30 days #00:28:18#
83	IR: So, it's really kind of an underestimation … those 178 languages. #00:28:38#
84	IE: Yeah, in Finnish it clearly says "active languages", maybe the German translation didn't fit something. #00:28:45#
85	IR: Maybe you should make the phase longer, something like the last year, then the number is bigger. #00:28:54#

86	IE: Yeah, well... #00:29:03#
87	IR: Ok. So, how is the language policy, how does a new language come up? How does it work? #00:29:08#
88	IE: I think the main source is Wikipedia. Main source is language communities that want Wikipedias in their language, and because some translations are required, that is one way we got requests to enable a new language, but like I said Wikipedia is so popular that it drives the language count up. For smaller projects we already support the languages they imagine, except in some special cases, like there was this Finnish project we had and they had translators to all the multi-languages in Finland, and for them we enabled some small semi-languages, for example for which we did not have a request before. #00:29:23#
89	IR: And this was within the Wikipedia project? #00:30:30#
90	IE: Not Wikipedia directly #00:30:37#
91	IR: Ok, but you don't have anything to do with Incubator wikis of Wikipedia, so if there is a new language version and it has to go through the procedure of application and so on, when does it start with you at Translatewiki, at which stage? #00:30:45#
92	IE: I'm not very familiar with incubator process, but as I said, there are many requirements for setting up a new Wikipedia, one part is the translation of the interface, and other part is having an active wiki in Incubator, so I guess both Incubator and translation at Translatewiki start early in the process. #00:31:15#
93	IR: So, if I have a minority language, and I say I have a big community, they would work in a new Wikipedia, and now we have to start the application process for the new Wikipedia, then we go to Incubator wiki and start, and now we have this localization problem, then Translatewiki is not involved already, they start later? Or can I, as a minority language supporter come to you and say: I just want to start the project, let's do it at Translatewiki as well. Is this possible? #00:31:46#
94	IE: You can definitely come to Translatewiki.net and ask: hey, can we enable this language that is not currently supported. We have some... well, principle is too strong, but guidelines that the language should have the standard language code and should be a living language, so we try to avoid dead languages, very small languages where it is just not enough speakers to support translations in those languages, and also, we don't have those created languages, like Toki Pona and such... #00:32:39#
95	IR: And those rules you talked about, they are written down somewhere? #00:33:36#
96	IE: It might be somewhere in our documentation or it may not, but if you read the recommendation of having standard language code, it has to be a living language #00:33:42#
97	IR: And then I can write to you, and you are the committee, or... who is we? You and...? #00:32:55#

98	IE: Well, in more detail, you would register at the wiki if you haven't already, and post a message on our support page, and then it depends, on our volunteers. They would check the request and implement it. It's not necessarily me, it could be someone else, they might ask other people: hey, what you think, but they might not, there is no mandatory committee process for that. #00:34:04#
99	IR: Ok. Do you have a special language policy, in a way that you say that you say: we support minority languages very much, or all languages are equal to you? #00:34:43#
100	IE: I would say, all languages are equal, and as much as we would want to support other languages, I don't think there is much we can actually do to support them, other than not preventing them from translating. #00:35:01#
101	IR: Good. Who also plays the role in the project, maybe the same essential role as you do? Is there a kind of inner group, administration group, which have a very special relation to Translatewiki, just like you have #00:35:25#
102	IE: Kind of. It's hard to quantify who is in and who is out in an open-source volunteer project, but there are certain people who have been active for a long time, may have some special privileges and are generally trusted and for the software in public interest, I think we define this concept of.. I don't remember the exact name... I think just like core members who can like... if I go missing, they can vote for a new contact person. #00:35:59#
103	IR: Ok. And they are all volunteers #00:36:52#
104	IE: I would say yes. I mean, I do some non-volunteer work, another person in the language team is now also helping, but I think everyone else is doing it completely outside their required work. #00:36:57#
105	IR: And are those others all Wikimedia/Wikipedia people or are there people from other projects as well? OpenStreetMap for example? #00:37:26#
106	IE: I think the people that are very close to the project, very active, they have at least the origin in the Wikimedia world. #00:37:44#
107	IR: And how do you communicate? #00:37:59#
108	IE: It kind of depends... we keep a news page for general announcements for new projects and stuff, a lot of one-on-one communication, depending what the matter deals with... #00:38:05#
109	IR: Per telephone, skype, google meet you said? #00:38:28#
110	IE: For this other person in the language team helping, we use work tools for that chat a lot, for other volunteers I use IRC if they are there or just email or messages in the wiki itself.
111	It depends, there is no very organized place to discuss matters, although there is our support desk, but that is like... more like user faced, not necessarily discussing organizational matters so much. #00:38:38#
112	IR: And you communicate in English, of course? #00:39:24#

113	IE: Yeah, English is lingua franca here as well. #00:39:30#
114	IR: Ok. Good. So, are there special rules for dealing with multilingual content? #00:39:36#
115	IE: It is one of the questions I didn't quite understand, and what it could mean in our context? #00:39:44#
116	IR: You said you have a translation memory. Is it obligatory to use it, or have you fixed rules for terminology or how free are the translators, in a way? Can they use other translation systems, like DeepL or something like that, or do they have to learn certain competence before they translate this system text, do they have to read a manual of the project so they grow accustomed to the product in a way, or can one just start to translate the system texts out of the blue? #00:39:54#
117	IE: Ok, so first of all, we try to keep the variations as low as possible, while giving as much help as possible for the translators, in practice, you need to sign up, and for that we ask you to do like about ten example translation, and main purpose is to keep spam-bots out. After that, you are free to translate anything. We try to provide translation memory, and other translation aids, and you can use it, or you cannot. You can use some external tool, we don't even know if you do that, we can't prevent it. It's not really a limitation, but we do have this kind of, not grammar, but syntactic check on translation, so if there is a variable, you can check if it is also in the translation. If not, we can put a warning or even prevent the translation, so in that way we do restrict that translations are syntactically valid from the software perspective. And for plural rules we check that they have the correct number forms provided and so on... but yeah, it's very free, you don't need to read the documentation or history of the project, but we try to provide as much information as possible, so you can use it as you need for a good translation. #00:41:13#
118	IR: And beginners, they don't get some kind of training or something like that? #00:41:59#
119	IE: No. #00:43:08#
120	IR: And is there special quality assurance, for example, for the beginners? #00:43:11#
121	IE: Well, apart from the syntactic validations, we do have this proof-reading feature, which is like... other translators can check your translation and mark it as ok or correct it, but it of course, depends on people doing that, so.... it's not mandatory, it's just an optional part to ensure quality...and I have something else on my mind...no I guess not. #00:43:20#
122	IR: You can write to me if it comes back to your mind. Does the community exchange their problems with the translation... Are there discussion rooms where they deal with certain problems, technical documentation... something like that? #00:44:07#
123	IE: So, one big thing we have is the message documentation concept, which is that the developers add more information, that is a bug or not, maybe there is a screenshot or not or anything like that. Close to that, there is a button, which

says: "I ask a question" and that basically means that if you are not sure about how to translate it, you can use that feature to write what your question is and that will go to our central support page, and other people can reply, and maybe notify the developers if there is something wrong with the string, which can also happen. And that response will also go back, either as change of the English string, or updating of the message documentation, and for some languages, there are portal talk pages where they can discuss a little more general topics, that are not necessarily about one message, like terminology. But that is only some active languages that do that, most of them don't. #00:44:43#

124 IR: Do you have the feeling that the versions, they kind of standalone, or are there effects, maybe Italian, or Spanish concerning terminology that they say: ok, those technical things must be quite the same in Italian and as well as in Spanish language, are there connections somehow that could help? There are some languages that are very similar, especially if it's about technical documentation. Are there effects that Spanish translators can say: well, we looked at Italian version because it's very similar to ours, or something like that? #00:46:15#

125 IE: I guess that can happen to some extent, with an assistant language feature, so you can see the translation in the other language you are interested in, but in terms of active collaboration I'm not really seeing that across languages. #00:47:18#

126 IR: But one can have a look at the Italian version very quickly? You said an assistant, how does that work? #00:47:39#

127 IE: There is an option, in your user preferences, you can add a list of languages, and when you do that, when you translate, we have the two-column view, on the left you have English string, and where you type your translation, and on the right, we have all the help for the translators, we have the message documentation, translation memory, machine translation and also assistant languages if you have them set. Actually, I was working on a prototype this week where you can choose target language, which you can do now, but you can also choose a source language, or kind of intermediate language... The real source is, of course, English, but if you choose some other language, you will see the text in that language, where you would see the English text now. #00:47:50#

128 IR: That is great. Ok. Technology... I don't think we have to talk about the technical system which is the base, because it's MediaWiki. We talked about the Translate extension which is also used in Metawiki, I think? #00:49:05#

129 IE: It's used in quite a few Wikimedia wikis, so there is Meta, Commons, Wikidata, to name the biggest ones #00:49:26#

130 IR: Ok, but it was made for Translatewiki originally? #00:49:37#

131 IE: Yeah. Main thing there is that... the original purpose was to translate interface messages, which are defined outside of the wiki, but I added a page that makes it so you can translate pages inside the wiki and this is the part of the extension that is used on Wikimedia wikis. #00:49:44#

132 IR: You are the one that obviously develops it further, the Translate extension? #00:50:09#

133	IE: Yes, I'm the main developer, but officially, it's made by the language team. #00:50:22#
134	IR: So the main goal of Translate is still the use case of Translatewiki, or do you sometimes think maybe it could be good as well for other purposes, maybe technical documentation, something like that, or maybe for Wikipedia context as well, normal Wikipedia context, and then you make special features, or does it all target Translatewiki? #00:50:30#
135	IE: I would say, ok let's think of three kind of content: software interface messages, is really core to Translate, then we have kind of technical documentation, which I would call all of the Wikimedia wikis using Translate is some kind of technical documentation, things that are translated pretty accurately, like one-to-one in meaning. That is the second main part of Translate, and I think they are pretty much equal, but the third part which is like translation of Wikipedia articles, where one-to-one mapping is not really a thing. You can easily change the content, summarize, add your own things, that is the field where the Translate extension is not planning to go, for that we have the ContentTranslation extension. #00:51:11#
136	IR: Ok. We have some customers that use Translate extension as well, in their wiki, and you are right, it's really only for the exact translation. #00:52:29#
137	IE: That's the scope really. #00:52:49#
138	IR: Do you use other extensions especially for the language area, for multilingualism? #00:52:53#
139	IE: Sorry, I have to leave the room, so it might be a little bit noisy, but I will continue. #00:53:08#
140	IR: I can hear you. #00:53:10#
141	IE: Other extensions, the UniversalLanguageSelector is, of course, also there. It gets a little technical, but there is CLDR extension for language names, and some small things, the MainPage is a separate extension... but for multilingualism, I'm not sure actually... well the Babel extension... #00:53:13#
142	IR: Ok. Good. There is no automatic linking of the language version, we talked about that already, no bots or something like that? #00:53:58#
143	IE: Well, no bots, but of course, messages you can translate, you can easily find translation in other languages as well, so in a sense they are linked. #00:54:06#
144	IR: Ok. How is the translation technical supported... We talked about that already. Automatic translation, you said before, maybe people use it, but you cannot track it anyways, you don't know, so... #00:54:16#
145	IE: Well, I could track... we do support some machine translation providers, we could track that, but we don't. If people like to go to some other site and copy-paste translation there, that we cannot track. #00:54:37#
146	IR: Last question about technology... How do you find translation errors? Is there some kind of technical support in a way, which helps you to track... or is there a

	kind of system that every edit must be checked by two people or something like that? #00:55:00#
147	IE: No, I mean, translation syntactic validation, which is automatic, there is this proof-reading thing which is optional, and translation search, which you can use as a mini terminology where you can search some term in English and see how it is translated in your languages, or you can search for some term which you want to change... that kind of thing. #00:55:40#
148	IR: Good. Do you know your community, do you know the people who work at Translate wiki? Or how many are there first of all? #00:56:18#
149	IE: Do you mean like... #00:56:43#
150	IR: Like personally... not only the avatar or the name, but personally somehow, or have you spoken to them? #00:56:49#
151	IE: Yeah, you mean like the supporters or translators... I guess I do know many people because I have seen them in Wikimedia events. For other people not so much. #00:57:03#
152	IR: How many users do you have? #00:57:29#
153	IE: It's the question of active vs. how many we have registered. #00:57:32#
154	IR: Can you track that? #00:57:40#
155	IE: The Main page says we have 1200 translators, and if I remember stats correctly, we have something like 300-400 active each month. #00:57:43#
156	IR: Ok. Can you trace the nationality or for which languages they work, is there statistics for that maybe? #00:58:04#
157	IE: Yeah, we do have statistics where you can see, quite a lot actually, you can see activity in language, who translates in those languages, we have a map of translators, and translators have usually Babel boxes on their user page to define which languages they speak. #00:58:16#
158	IR: So, it's all open and all transparent? #00:58:44#
159	N: Yeah, pretty much. #00:58:48#
160	IR: Good #00:58:51#
161	IE: I don't have any hidden statistics, if I have something I will publish it. #00:58:52#
162	IR: Do you know why people contribute to your platform? What is motivation? #00:59:02#
163	IE: I think quite a few have similar motivation to myself, that I want to make the software, in this case Wikipedia, available in that language, supporting my language community. This is especially for the smaller languages; I think some people just enjoy translating... and it was also good learning for me to translate myself. I mean, supporting that and supporting their own language are probably the main motivations. #00:59:14#

164	IR: Ok. Do they somehow meet in a way, are there teams? #01:00:02#
165	IE: Not that I know of. #01:00:10#
166	IR: Ok, so they are individual workers? #01:00:13#
167	IE: Yeah. Closest we have, are those Translation hackathons at some Wikimedia events, where some translators meet and there are new translators as well there. #01:00:16#
168	IR: And they have the motivation to translate other projects as well, as far as they are open-source projects, obviously? #01:00:38#
169	IE: To some extent, yeah. I see people who will only translate MediaWiki, and there are people who translate some other projects, and then there are people that translate all the projects that are there, so it varies. #01:00:51#
170	IR: Ok. Thats funny. In which language they communicate... ok they don't communicate to each other, so I don't have to ask that... #01:01:15#
171	IE: Well... in some occurrences, they do in the wiki, and its either English, or their own language they speak to other translators. #01:01:23#
172	IR: And I can also find those places at Translatewiki probably, at discussion pages or something like that? #01:01:33#
173	IE: Yeah, there are talk pages and then check the portal, language portal talk pages. #01:01:41#
174	IR: I will do that. How do you recruit users, do you do that or do they have to come to you somehow? #01:01:50#
175	IE: We don't really do super active recruiting. In the early times we have invited our friends, said: come translate here, but after that it has been a lot of word by mouth, people learn about this thing. If they just want to translate a project we support, they will of course direct them to us, but... and of course, there are translation workshops in hackathon event, then we might have some new people who will become translators, but other than that, I don't think we do active recruiting. #01:02:01#
176	IR: Ok. probably the female part is very low? #01:03:02#
177	IE: I have not measured that. There are the user preferences with the gender option, but I did not look at the stats. It's probably safe to assume that most of them are male. #01:03:13#
178	IR: Are there conflicts at your platform somehow? Like in Wikipedia. #01:03:33#
179	IE: Yes, translators often disagree. #01:03:47#
180	IR: Really? #01:03:50#
181	IE: Yeah, and they can be very strong about their position, or sometimes there can be edit wars in translations and... yeah. #01:03:52#

182	IR: So, you have the same problem as Wikipedia? #01:04:05#
183	IE: Kind of, yeah, between translators in some language. It's similar. #01:04:09#
184	IR: So, you need administrators as well... I don't know how it is in English, in German it's Schiedsgericht... you know what I mean? When someone decides who is right? #01:04:28#
185	IE: Oh yeah, that's the least enjoyable part of running this project, but of course, sometimes we do get the reports of translators doing bad translations and trying to investigate, in some case, it's someone using machine translation directly and not fixing, and if we can see that, we can block them temporarily or permanently. We try to encourage translators who speak the same language try to talk to other people and try to resolve it. If that does not help and they keep reverting each other, usually the only option for us is to block both of them until one party loses interest in the fights. But, when we don't speak the language, and even if we did, it's not possible to always figure out our tools right, so not much we can do other than stop the fight forcefully if needed. #01:04:49#
186	IR: Do you have a recommendation where I can have a look at a typical conflict? #01:06:05#
187	IE: If you look at our support page history, you can probably find a couple of threads where we were handling conflict. #01:06:15#
188	IR: Your platform appears so calm, so I cannot imagine there are so many conflicts, like in Wikipedia. #01:06:34#
189	IE: Well, it's hard to work out the magnitude, we have had a couple of cases per year where we had to block someone, so it's not a lot of conflicts, but some of them are very difficult to stop. #01:06:45#
190	IR: I understand. Do you have stats on the development of the platform, about the growth over the years, something like that? #01:07:09#
191	IE: Well, the extension is in openHub, which gives some statistics there, and Wikimedia has some, I think they have something called Biterg, which also has some stats. I haven't looked at that recently, but they usually keep things like how many contributors there are, how fast things are reviewed... #01:07:24#
192	IR: Ok, also at Translatewiki? #01:08:07#
193	IE: With Translatewiki, do you mean the wiki or some code supporting it, or... #01:08:12#
194	IR: I especially mean Translatewiki, for me it's interesting how it has grown, in projects, users, languages, since ... was it 2006? #01:08:22#
195	IE: Yes, I can give the history page, which has some information, but not necessarily statistics in detail you are looking for, but still very interesting. I did some blog posts... checking how many translators got signed up or something, which might be interesting, but... #01:08:49#
196	IR: Yeah, I have also seen some of your presentations at Wikimania, but... it's a lot of pieces of the puzzle. #01:09:25#

197	IE: Yeah. #01:09:39#
198	IR: So, could you send me the link to the history page? #01:09:42#
199	IE: Yup. #01:09:48#
200	IR: Ok. So, what are the plans for Translatewiki, or are there plans? #01:10:50#
201	IE: Yes, I've been working for at least a year now, on something I call successor plan, but it basically means that documenting our roles and processes and who has access to the services that we use, and with the idea that it would be easier for new people to start helping on areas where we currently lack enough people, ensuring that loss of one person does not mean that the project is gone, in a kind of sense. Also, there is software in public interest, which is in this same area that tries to ensure that the project at least stays running in the future, hopefully growing. In terms of features, current focus areas are better matching the needs of our projects, GitHub integration with pull requests, maybe looking at other projects, what they do and if we are missing something, and making easier to set up new projects, will probably ask a little bit marketing to highlight what is our strength, like community of translators, no technical expertise needed and so on, which would hopefully make it so that more projects would choose to come to use. Answering the project goals, not preparing focus growth... #01:09:57#
202	IR: Ok, so let's finish the interview, do you know if there are studies on Translatewiki? I have seen some that have some scholar studies, who have Translatewiki as a topic, but maybe you can recommend some of them to me, which tell a lot about Translatewiki. #01:11:34#
203	IE: I have to confess, I don't think I have ever seen research which mentioned Translatewiki, even in passing. Actually, if you have seen something, please send it my way. #01:12:07#
204	IR: Yeah, I can do that. #01:12:22#
205	[Goodbye]