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Participative Development Process for Singable Declarations

Applying the *Wikipedia-Wikimedia-WikiMusic* concept to constitutions

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Annex 1 of *A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* (2006)

Introduction

The main paper (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?*, 2006) develops the arguments for the value of music and song in rendering comprehensible, meaningful and memorable key complex legal texts such as international constitutions, charters, declarations or strategic initiatives. The questions asked are: Why should national legislation not be singable? Why should global strategies, like *Agenda 21*, not be singable? What is achieved by structuring policy so that its complex interdependencies are memorable only to the few and meaningless to those who depend on its viability?

These arguments emphasize the potential role of music and song not to give expression to texts developed through a legalistic mindset. It also emphasized the use of the harmonic riches of music and song to give form to even more innovative patterns of psychosocial relationships and constraints which it may otherwise be difficult, if not impossible to render meaningful in legalese.

In exploring these possibilities, it is important to distinguish the use of songs "**about**" institutional change -- whether in protest, in praise of enabling agreements, or in celebration of the values they express -- from their use to "**bring about**" such a change of pattern, or inhibit it. The challenge is to design a participative process to explore whether the complex harmonies of music can "bring into being" and "give form to" new patterns of cooperative relationship responsive to the challenge of the times. Specifically the concern is not with any form of "backing music" or "vocal backing" in affirmation of declarations but rather with how song or music can engender and sustain innovative patterns of relationship.

One significant possibility for such a process is an open-source musical equivalent to the *Wikipedia* process through which the parts of a song articulating a declaration or constitution are discussed and formulated for further discussion, but without closure.

Existing proposals

Variants of this possibility have already been proposed as an extension of the Wikipedia encyclopedia process in the MediaWiki environment under the term WikiMusic. Some clarifications:

- *Wikipedia*: This is a multilingual, Web-based free content encyclopedia project. Since its creation in 2001, it has rapidly grown into the largest reference Web site on the Internet. The content of Wikipedia is free, and is written collaboratively by people from all around the world. This Web site is a wiki, which means that anyone with access to an Internet-connected computer can edit, correct, or improve information throughout the encyclopedia, simply by clicking the edit this page link (with a few minor exceptions, such as protected articles and the main page). Variants exist in a number of languages.

- *Wikimedia Foundation*, Inc. is the parent organization of the Wikipedia, Wiktionary, Wikiquote, Wikibooks (including Wikijunior), Wikisource, Wikimedia Commons, Wikispecies, Wikinews, Wikiversity, and Meta-Wiki collaborative projects. It is a not-for-profit corporation based in St. Petersburg, Florida, USA, and organized under the laws of the state of Florida.

- *MediaWiki* is a wiki software package licensed under the GNU General Public License. It is written in PHP and uses either the MySQL or PostgreSQL relational database management system. It was developed to serve the needs of Wikipedia, a free wiki-based encyclopedia, but it has since become one of the most popular general wiki solutions. It is used by all projects of the Wikimedia Foundation, all wikis hosted by Wikia, and is freely used by many other third-party popular and large wikis. It has also been deployed by companies as an internal knowledge management solution, and as a content management system.

- *WikiMusic*: In principle, open content applies to all kinds of materials, not just words -- although most is indeed text-based. The basic problem is coming up with a framework that allows collaboration with other kinds of media. Various preliminary proposals have been made for the use of this process and software for music and song.

- *Wikimusic II* (11 January 2006) As a WikiMedia project, is has been proposed to create a wiki with: both score and text of a free piece of music, the music itself in a playable music file (in different versions, for example one version with trumpet, one with a whole orchestra, not MIDI), the sheet music in a wiki-text format, and information about the piece of music. The intention would be to make it user-friendly and not restricted to experts.
- *WikiMusic* (as proposed by Glen Moody, 16 September 2006): The idea here is collaborative asynchronous recording of music, wherein you record your parts to a music editing software file, then upload it for others to add to. Each version of the file can be left online, so that people can revert back to older versions. This concept has been further discussed in relation to social synergy [more], For earlier discussions, see effeietsanders-list
- *WikiMusic* (as discussed by various contributors on *ComunityWiki*): An open source multi-track music digital audio workstation program could be utilized, such as *Ardour*. All revisions could be saved, and a song could branch off into several directions, or it could maintain the same direction, or do both simultaneously. Furthermore, members of the community can convert each file to a file useable by many different digital audio workstation programs (like Sonar, Pro Tools, Cool Edit, etc). Also, participants could add music tracks, or mix and/or master files. So, one song could have the possibility of becoming many different different end products.
- **Other projects using the term WikiMusic**:
  - *WikiMusicGuide*: The music fan site that anyone can edit. If you have a passion for music, then you've come to the right place.
  - *WikiMusic.info*: A new open content encyclopedia initiative in Spanish on everything concerning music and musical instruments
  - *Wikimusic.de*: A German language open content for music criticism and news

- *WikiSong*: A prototype has been developed as a web-aided form of group lyrical improvement. The term describes not a style of song but a mechanism creation. WikiSong may involve solo or group singing, professional or untrained musicians, and music from any number of genres. Typically, the lyrics are not finalized (in some cases not written at all) at the time the song begins, but as performers are performing, others are working on lyrics yet to be sung.

Although these indicate current recent interest in the possibility in 2006, it is unclear at what rate this project might take form.

Constraints may be imposed to prevent abuse. Relevant to this approach is the *Musipedia: the open music encyclopedia* [more] where some involved have discussed a WikiMusic concept [more]

Specifics of a declaration variant

The proposal for a declaration variant could have distinctive features, essential in some cases to the value of the initiative. In no particular order, the ability to:

- hold in page-segmented format any **legal or declarative text** which is the stimulus for a particular declaration initiative. This would enable such text to be used in modified form for lyrics without losing direct links to the specific portions of the text which the lyrics are endeavouring to render comprehensible

- **cluster or segment content** (lyrical and/or musical) where there is a requirement either to make it:
  - specific to a particular declaration or
  - valuable for generic use in a variety of declarations

- experiment with **alternative instrumentalisations** or musical styles

- allow **singers to contribute** (voluntarily) their own voice renderings

- associate **video content** with lyrics and voice renderings

- have **alternative lyrical formulations** (possibly with associated with alternative musical formulations) for the same declaration theme ("article" or "clause"):
  - in **one language** (say English), reflective of the experimental nature and stylistic preferences of creative contributors
  - in one or more **alternative languages** (say languages of the EU), reflective of cultural preferences. Namely the possibility of using different "voices" or *leitmotivs* to reflect perspectives of national or cultural groups, notably minorities. This would be especially interesting in order to reflect international **minorities** not associated with national boundaries or conventional languages. For example, how might any or all of the following be appropriately reflected in musical/lyrical form in a comprehensive declaration: youth, elderly, gypsies, gays, fundamentalists,libertarians, etc?

- allow a sequence of selected "pages" to be played (with or without lyrics) to encompass the declaration in its entirety. Namely use of a **meta-page to cluster the sequence of selected pages** that represent one preferred rendering. There might be many such meta-pages according to alternative compositional preferences.

- use a *Google*-type algorithm to **rank highest the most selected meta-pages** for a particular declaration

- distinguish lyrical content which goes (creatively or abusively) **beyond the legal formulation** in some way:
  - facility to handle proposals to additional constitutional amendments, namely the challenge of an "Article 31" of the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the light of musical innovation

- facility for holding and developing proposals for "alternative treaties" (cf *The NGO Alternative Treaties*, Global Forum, Rio de Janeiro, 1992)
- facility for the parallel possibilities of a *Universal Declaration of the Rights of Human Organization*

- selectively **restrict or lock development** of particular pages, especially in the case of a meta-page that has achieved a certain degree of consensus

- benefit from the learning of open software projects in **collaborative work** on very specific "routines" (algorithms) in order to improve the performance of the whole. How can improvement of lyrics or melodic sequences be handled in a mode where reliance is placed on musical skills to work collaboratively -- as in face-to-face improvisation

- identify, document and highlight **compositional devices** appropriate to musical or lyrical rendering of features typical of declarations, namely different thematic variants of: human values, social problems, strategic initiatives, etc. This would provide an environment within which to build up a vast repertoire of musical/lyrical content of value in giving (potentially highly innovative) form to collective initiatives, bring them into being, and sustaining their coherence thereafter

- benefit from insights into conventional use of **backing music or vocal backing** in relation to lyrics through which a declaration could be presented. This focus could extend to the challenge of access to such resources and the manner in which they are made available over the web. Clearly copyright issues also need to be considered in connection with any open content project

- benefit from insights into conventional use of **sound sampling in creative music composition** and how this might relate to individual "pages" in *WikiMuse*. This focus could also extend to the challenge of access to such resources and the manner in which they are made available over the web. Again copyright issues also need to be considered in connection with any open content project

- allow **selection or designing of theme music by social initiatives** (as meta-pages), with or without song, for purposes other than declarations, such as: conference theme, website theme, organization theme, strategic theme, etc. This would enable groups to distinguish their web pages and initiatives by the lyrical and musical accompaniment. This could notably be of value for the visually challenged and the functionally illiterate

Here the concept is of an evolving song (or songs) in which work is constantly being done as a collaborative effort on the parts and their relationship to each other -- allowing a song to be sung at any time as a "work in progress". This approach could suggest a new interpretation of "com-position". It could also be related to the possibility of widespread downloading of current versions or segments as MP3 files.

Such a variant of any *WikiMusic* initiative might perhaps be termed *WikiMuse*, in recognition of the traditional role of the Muses in remembering the law.

The *WikiMuse* resource would have particular advantages:

- evoking involvement by the musically creative with their special communication skills
- evoking popular interest in the content of lyrics and their adequacy to the challenges and opportunities, notably making such facilities available to schools
- providing an interface between those with politico-legal priorities, those with communication skills, and those whose active interest and engagement is sought (to counteract the democratic deficit)
- providing a resource on which collectivities at every level could draw to give musical/lyrical expression to their values, concerns and initiatives
- enabling collectivities, notably at the international and regional level, to use a common musical/lyrical resource pool without having to resolve any politico-legalistic problems to their relationships (whether mutually indifferent or actively antagonistic)
- providing an opportunity to render key legislation and legislative initiatives comprehensible, especially important given its quantity, length and complexity and that "ignorance of the law" is not considered to be a valid plea
- providing an opportunity to give comprehensive cultural expression to key legislation (such as the proposed EU Constitution) as with such cultural epics as the *Kalevala* or the *Mahabarata* -- to which people relate with pride, comprehension, a sense of relevance and exemplification of identity

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