Wikipedian Self-Governance in Action

Motivating the Policy Lens

Wikipedian Self-Governance in Action

Motivating the Policy Lens

Ivan Beschastnikh Travis Kriplean

Computer Science and Engineering
University of Washington

Joint with:

David W. McDonald

Information School
University of Washington

MAP OF ONLINE COMMUNITIES
AND RELATED POINTS OF INTEREST

GEOGRAPHIC AREA REPRESENTS ESTIMATED SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP

HARMONY
FRIENDSTER
THE LONELY ISLAND
BLURTY
OK CUPID
MYSPACE
CYWORLD
ORKUT
XANGA
LJ
FACEBOOK
BAY OF ANGST
NOOB SEA
THE SERIES OF TUBES
MYSPACE BANDS
ATTRACTIVE MYSPACE IMAGES
GULF OF YOUTUBE
PICZO
BROADCASTER
FLICKR
LAST.FM
DEVIANT ART
GAYS OF WEB 2.0
STRAITS OF WEB 2.0
SEA OF CULTURE
YAHOO GAMES
RUNESCAPE
UO
EQ
LINEAGE
WoW
FFXI
SECOND LIFE
THIRD LIFE
HERE BE ANTHROPOMORPHIC DRAGONS
4CHAN
2CHANNEL
OCEAN OF SUBCULTURE
ISLE OF SLASH
NUPEDIA
P2P SHOALS
FARK
DIGG
BAY OF TROLLS
SOMETHING AWFUL
YOUR BASE
REDDIT
VIRAL STRAITS
SPAAARTA (YTMND)
SOVIET RUSSIA
STUMBLE UPON
DEL.ICIO.US

PRACTICALS
FOCUS ON REAL LIFE
FOCUS ON WEB
INTELLECTUALS
IRL
.COM
THE COMPASS-ROSE-SHAPED ISLAND

THE BLOGIPELAGO
SULAWESI
THE WET SEA
BOINGBOING
TECHNORATI
THE WIKIPEDIA PROJECT
WIKI-PEDIA
USENET
MIT
STALLMAN'S AIRSHIP
SEA OF MEMES
IRC ISLES

(NOT A COMPLETE SURVEY. SIZES BASED ON BEST FIGURES I COULD FIND BUT INVOLVED SOME GUESSWORK. DO NOT USE FOR NAVIGATION.)

from XKCD

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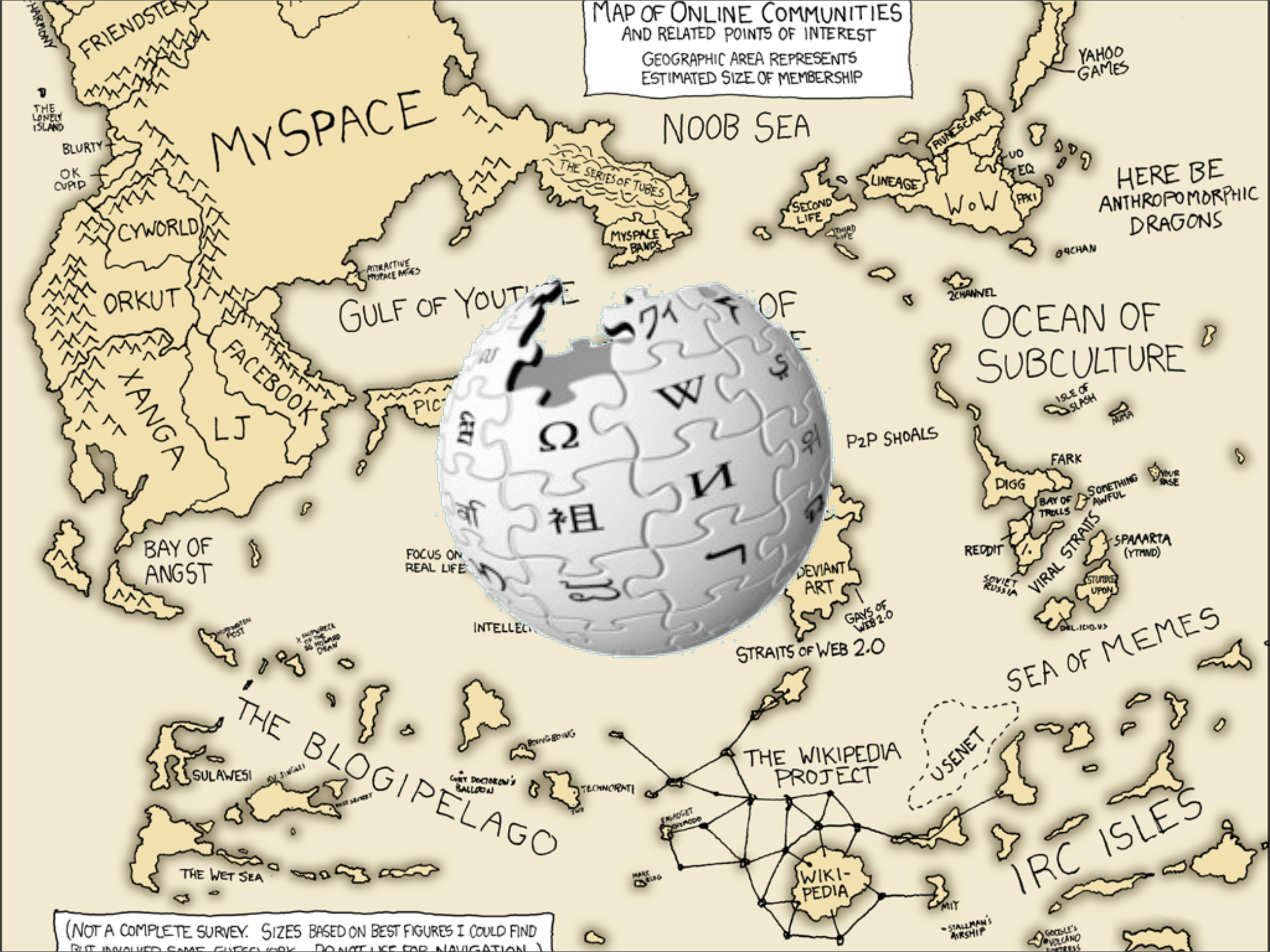
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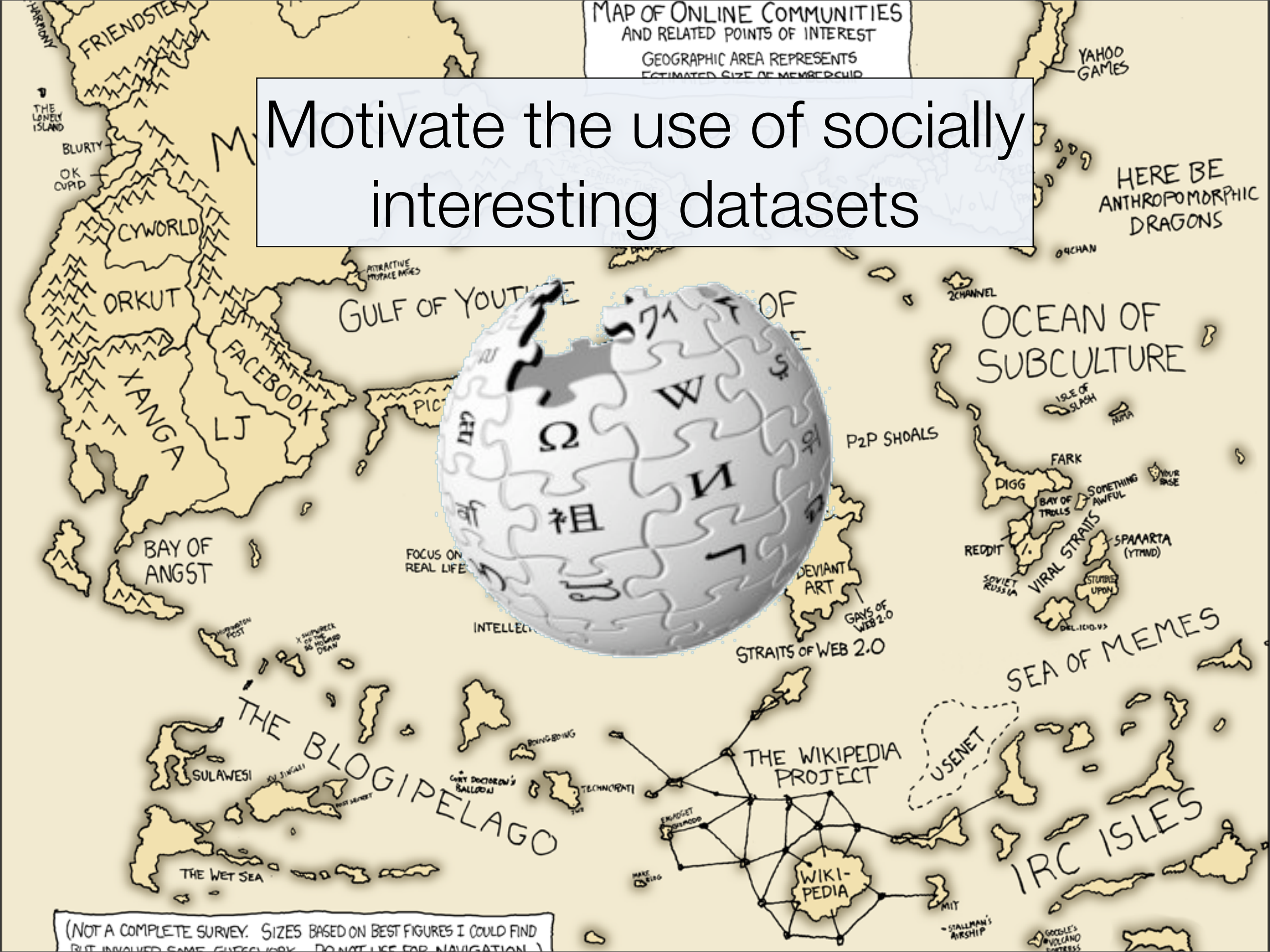
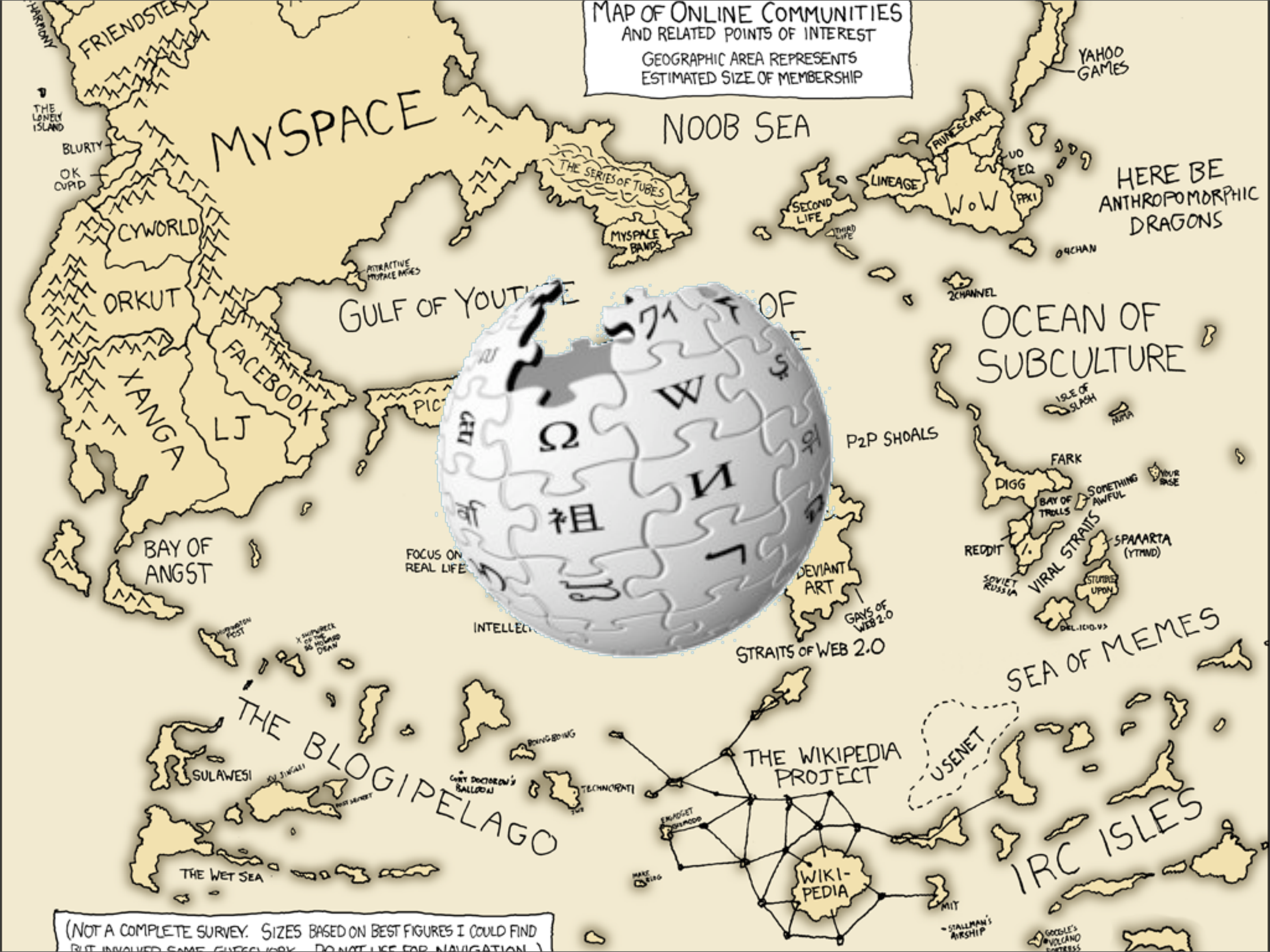
Motivate the use of socially interesting datasets



Motivate the use of socially interesting datasets

A quantitative account of policy citation practice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qualitative themes

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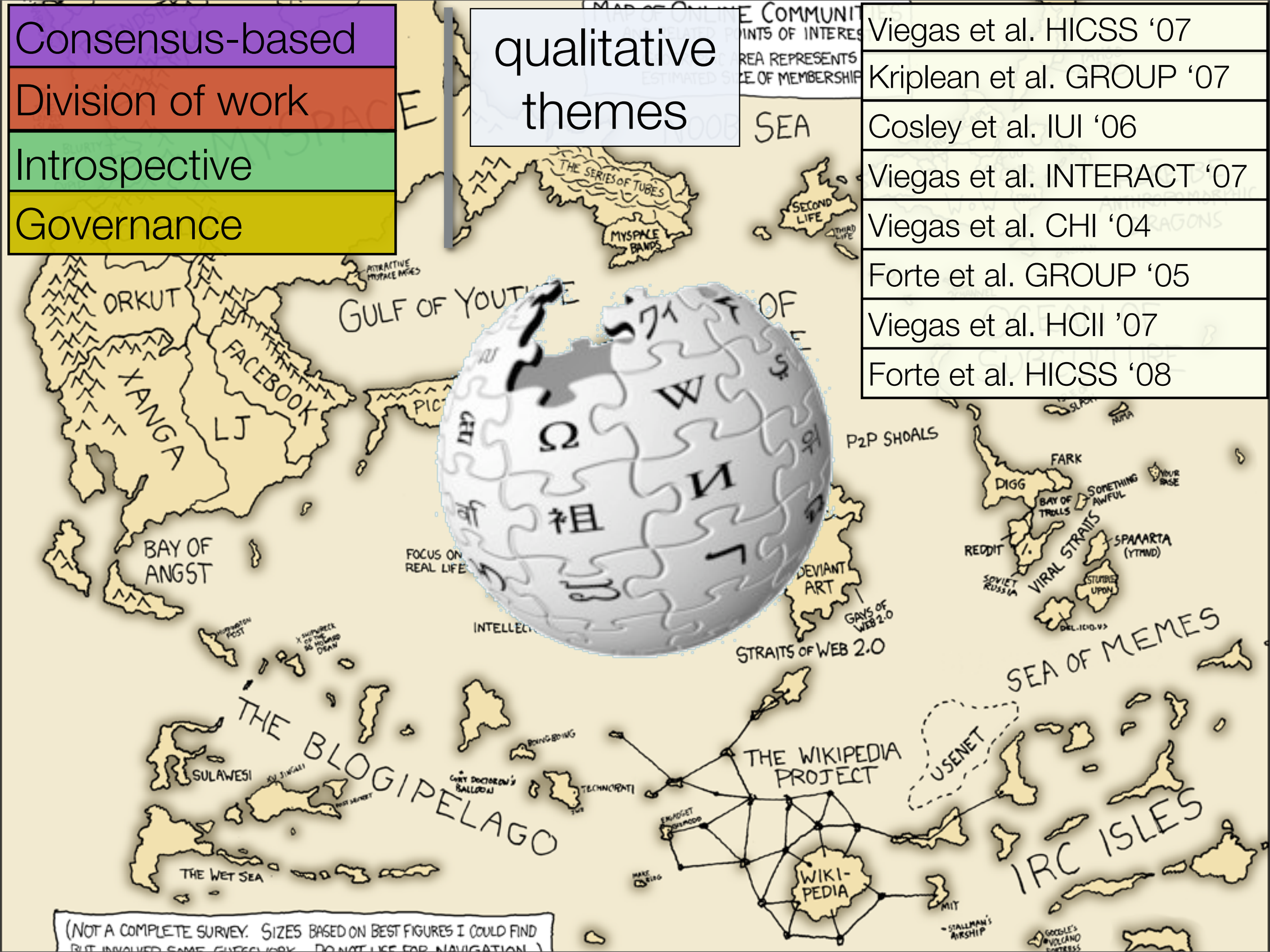

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Vandalism reversion

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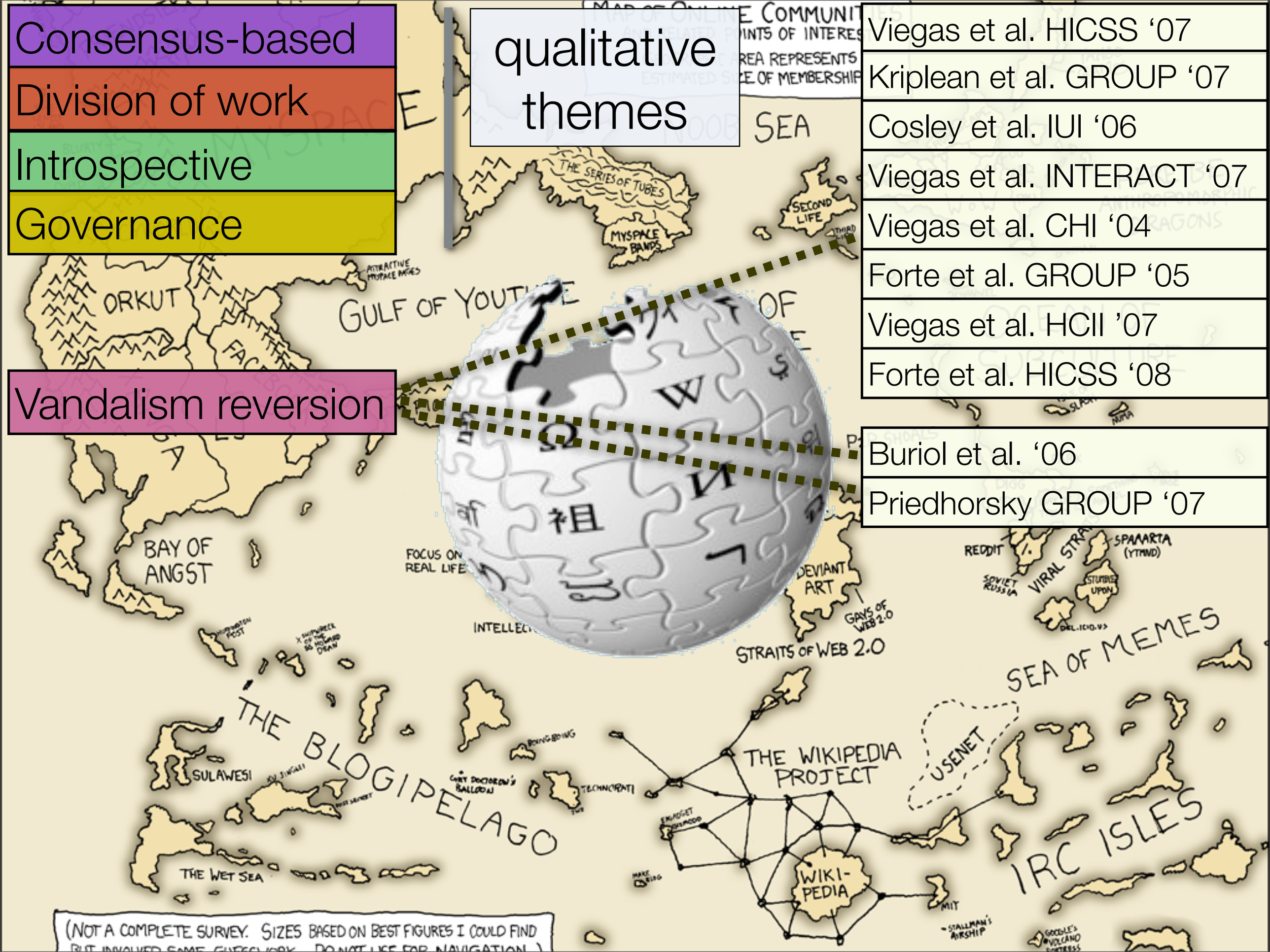

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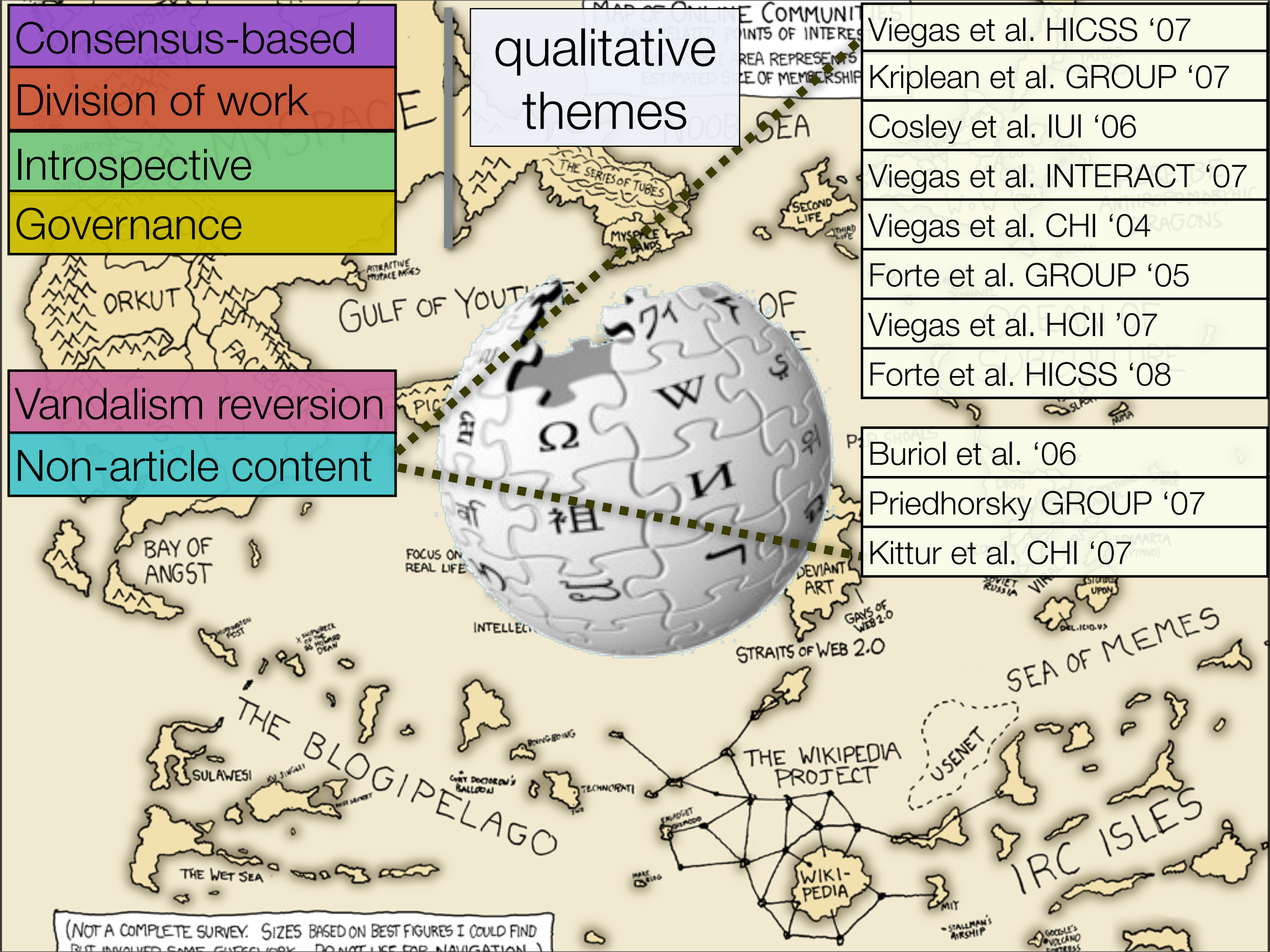

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Author activity predicts quality, controversy

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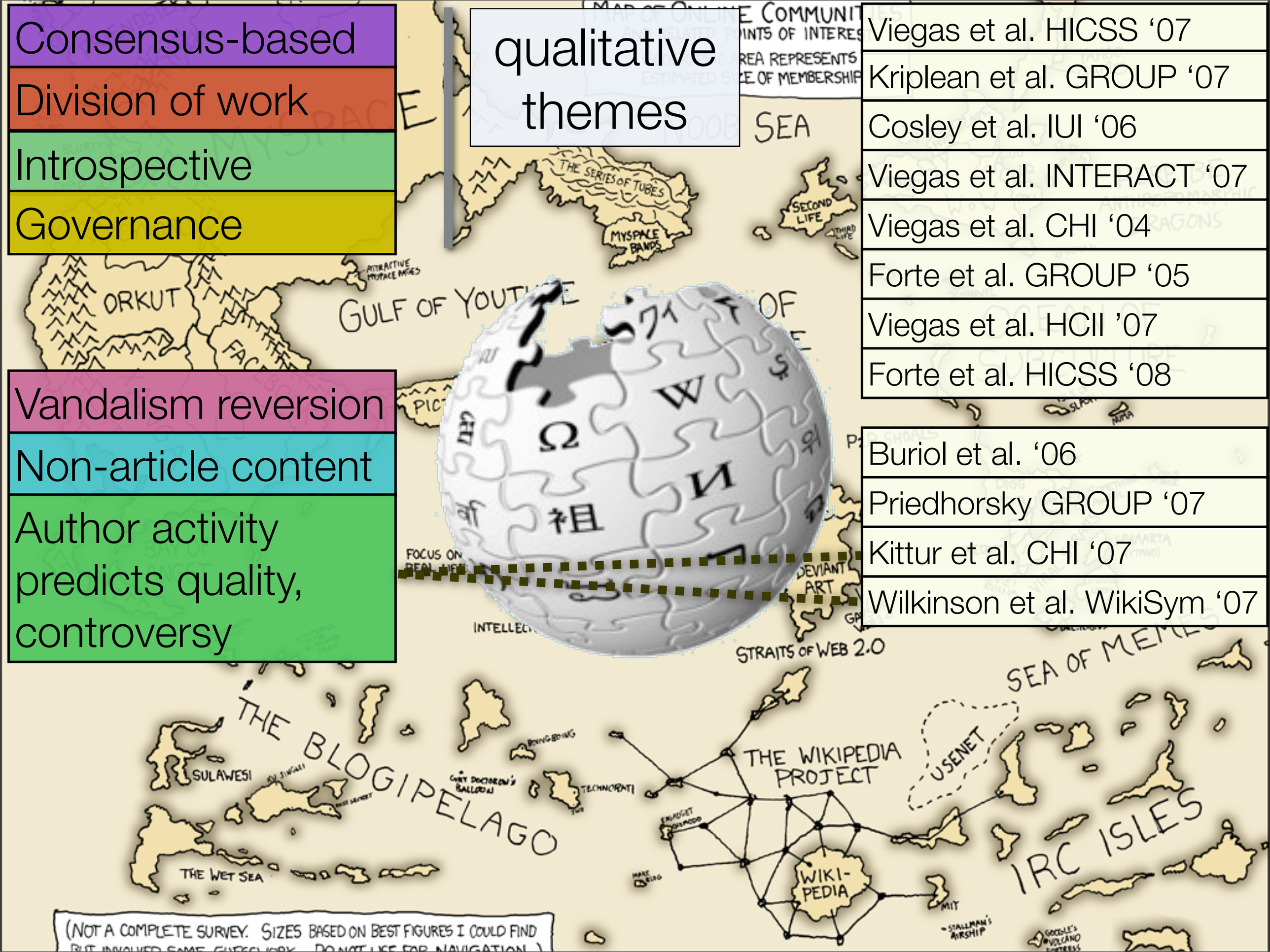

qualitative themes

- Consensus-based
- Division of work
- Introspective
- Governance
- Vandalism reversion
- Non-article content
- Author activity predicts quality, controversy
- User contributions

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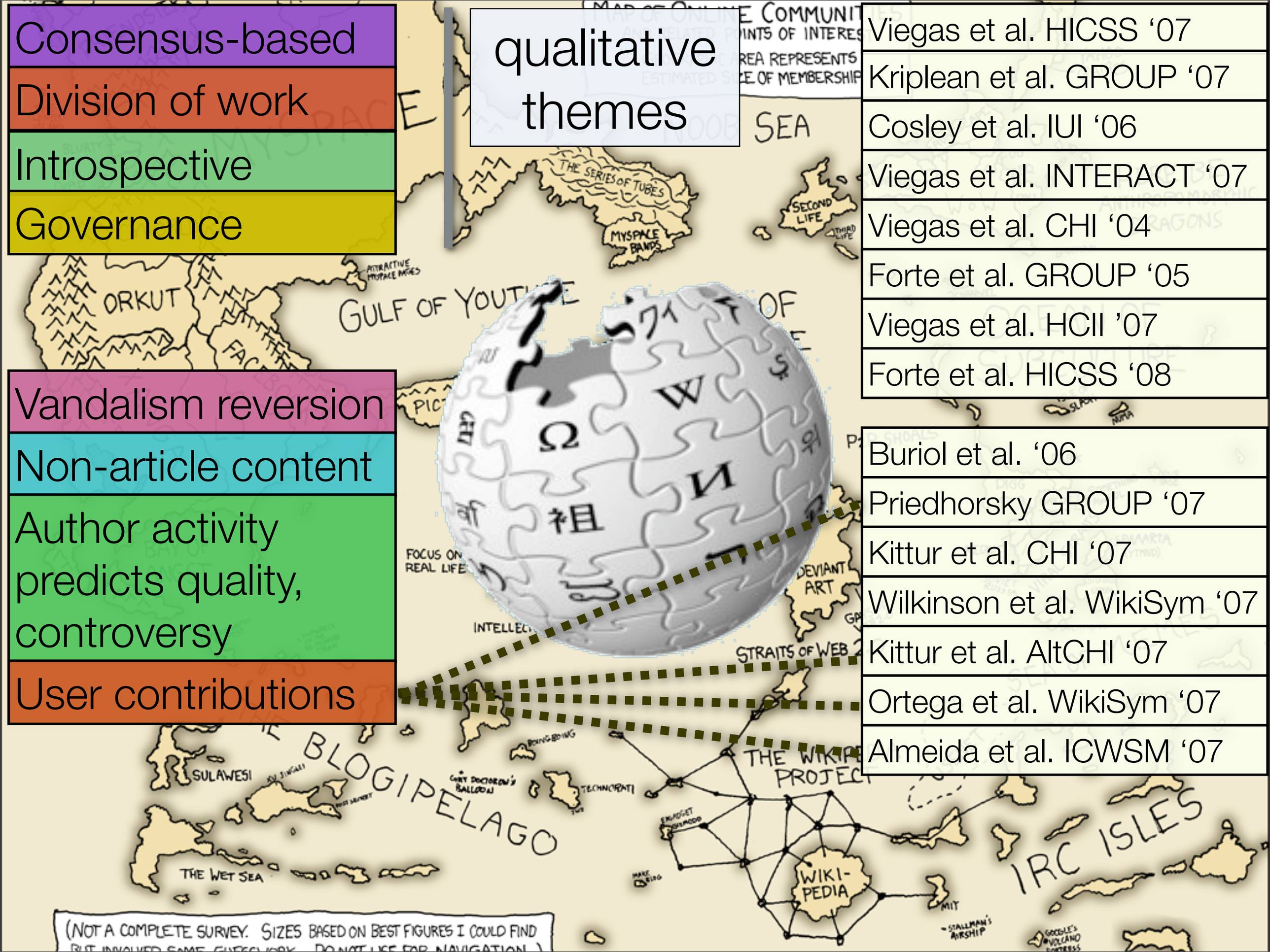

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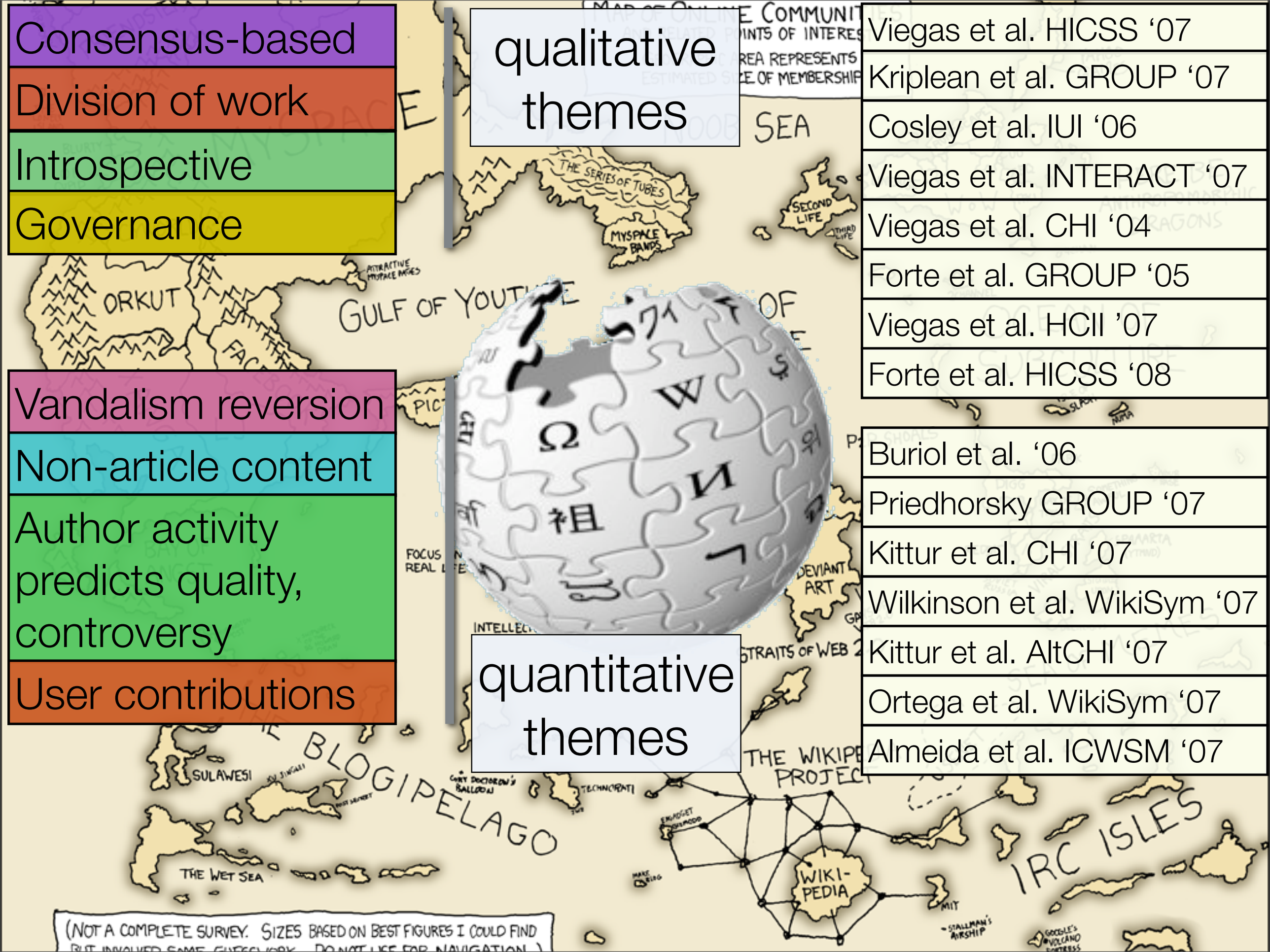

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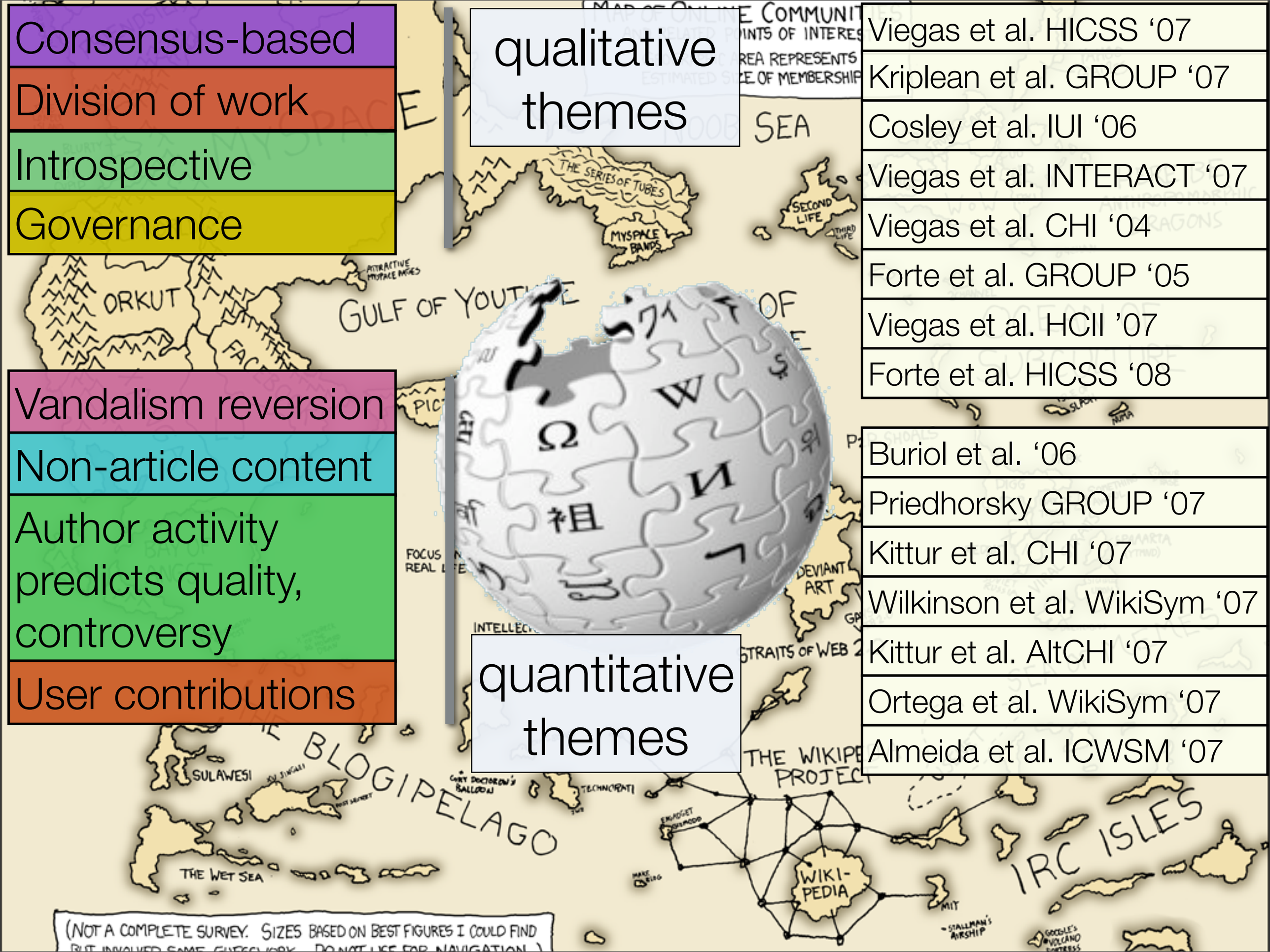

Affordances:
-nuanced data
-identify social structures

Challenges:
-temporal analysis
-generalizability

Qualitative methods
-interviews
-ethnography
-case studies
-grounded analysis

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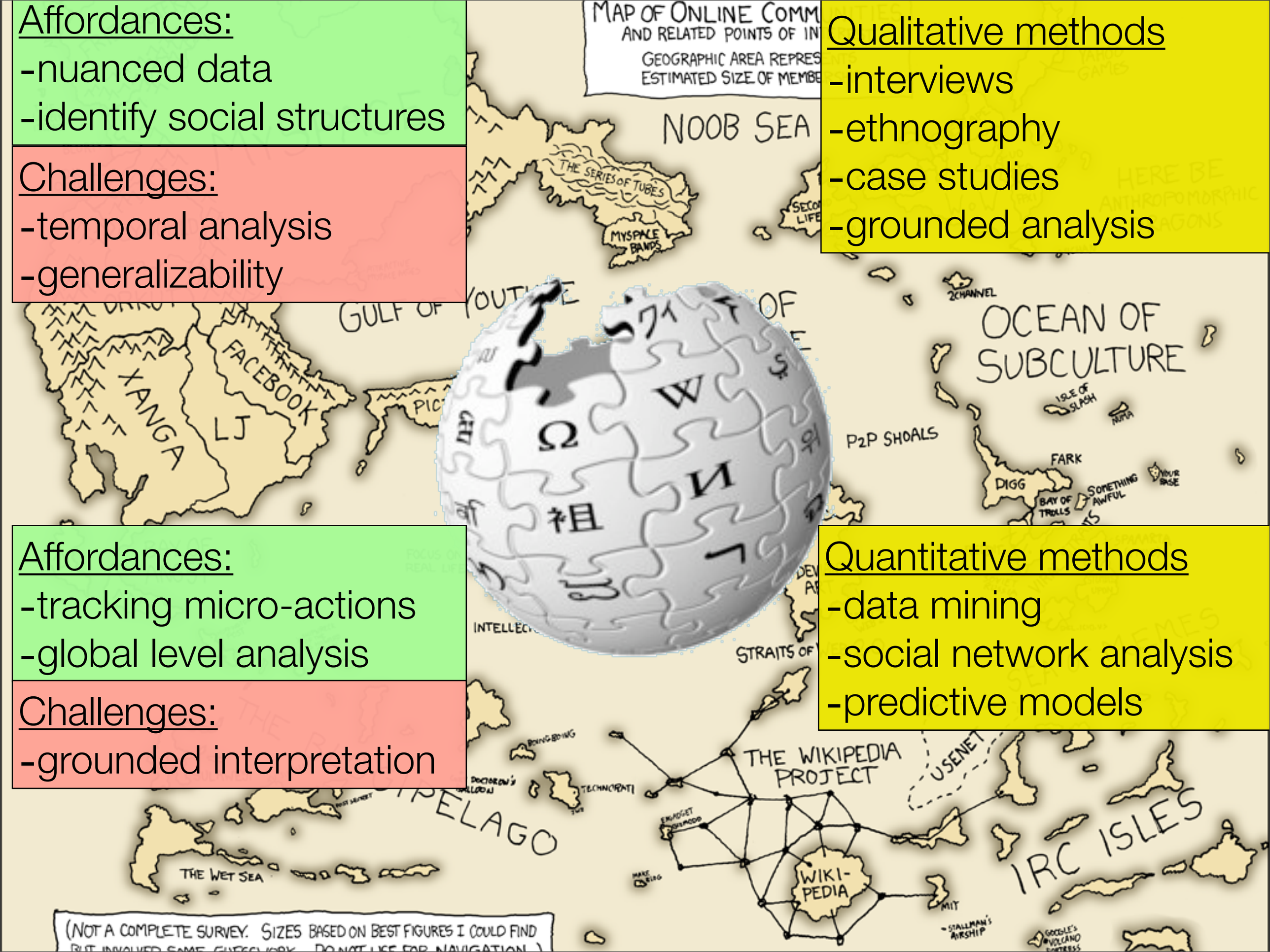

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Affordances:
-tracking micro-actions
-global level analysis

Challenges:
-grounded interpretation

Quantitative methods
-data mining
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-predictive models

Affordances:
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Actions of individuals & formation of institutions

Affordances:
-tracking micro-actions
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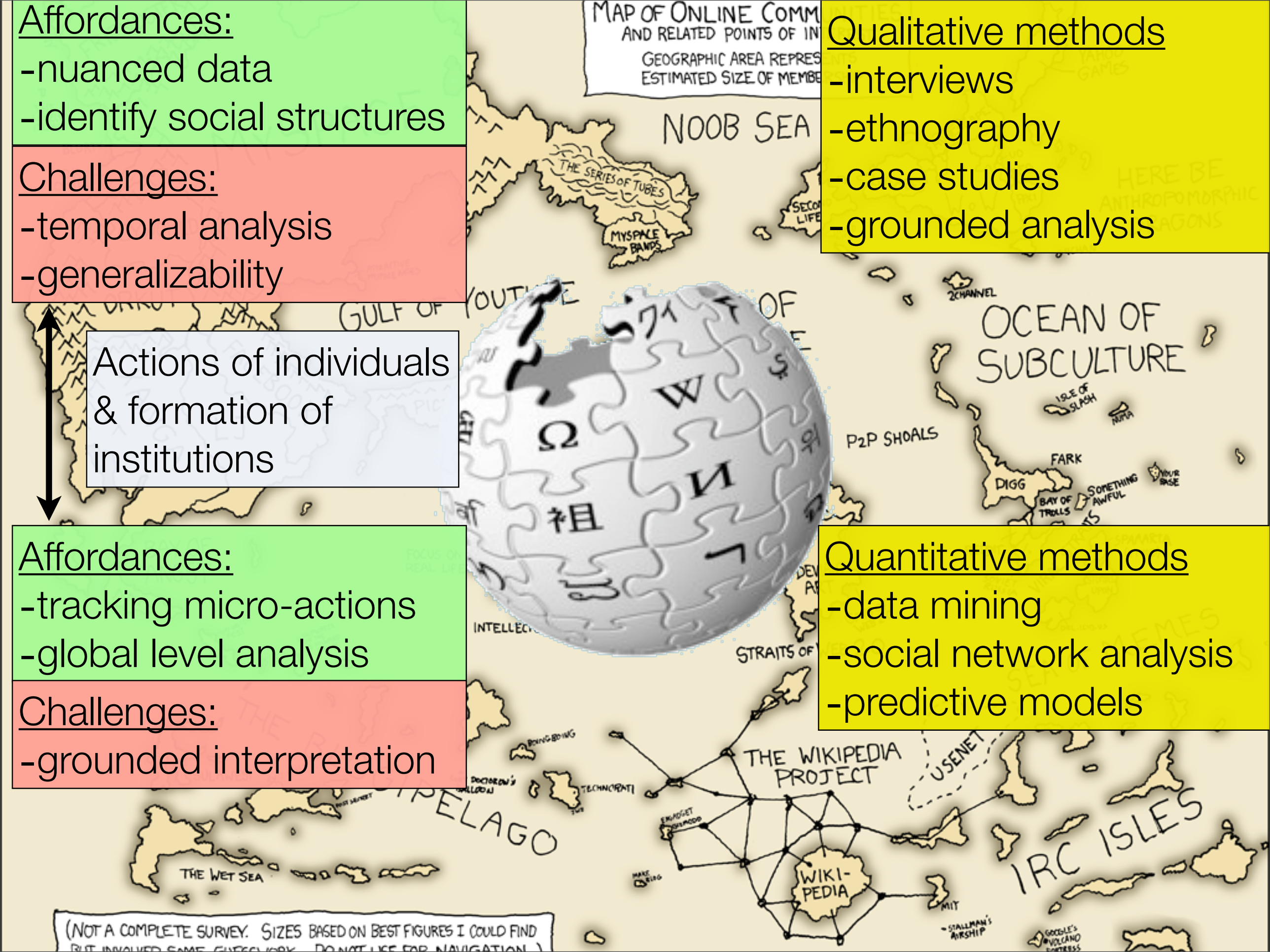

Quantitative studies have been…
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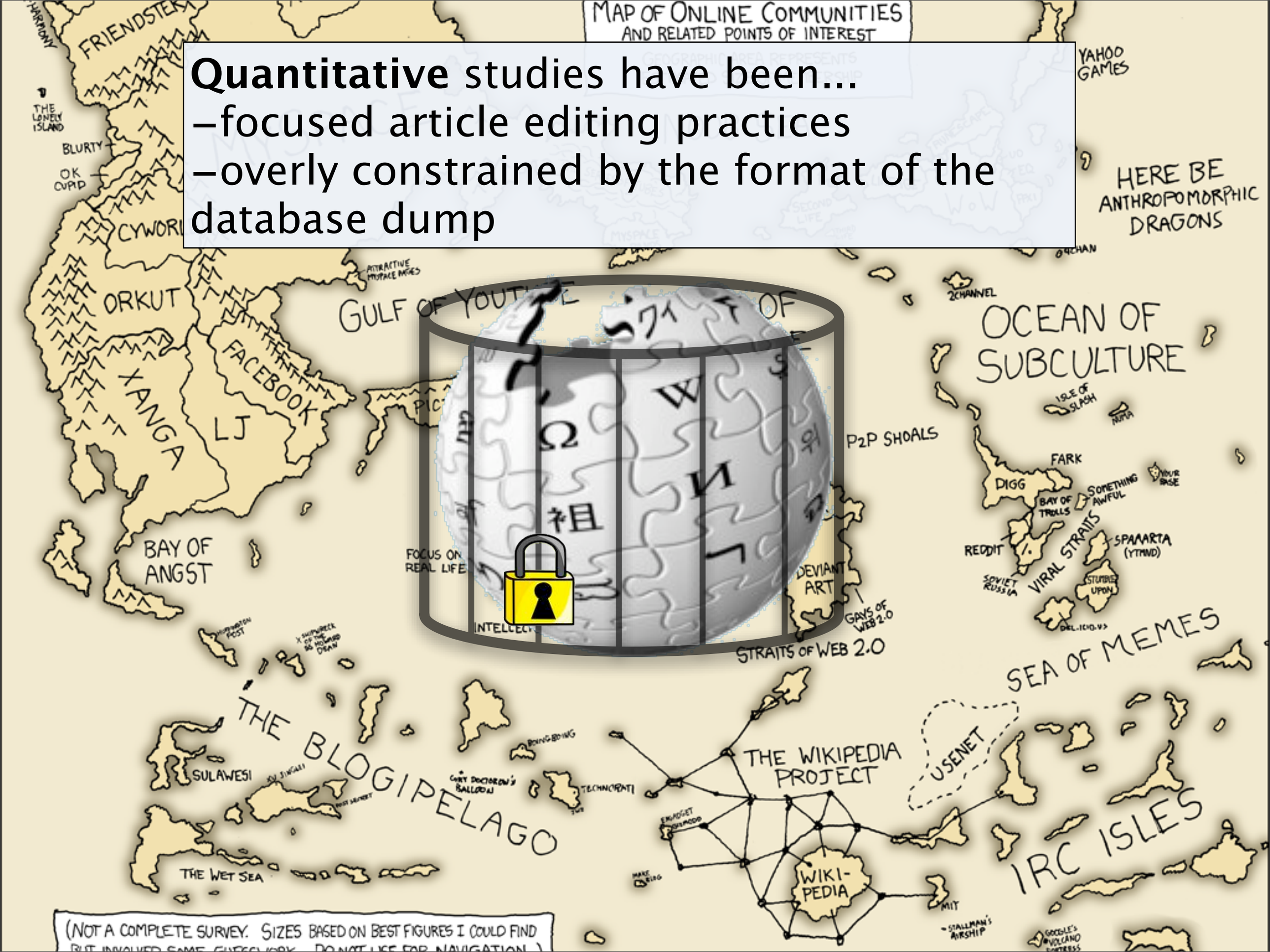
–overly constrained by the format of the database dump



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Jimmy Wales

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Jimmy Donal "Jimbo" Wales (born 7 August 1966[2] in Huntsville, Alabama[3][4]) is an American Internet entrepreneur known for his role in founding Wikipedia[5][6][7] and other wiki-related projects, including the charitable Wikimedia Foundation and the for-profit company Wikia, Inc.[8]

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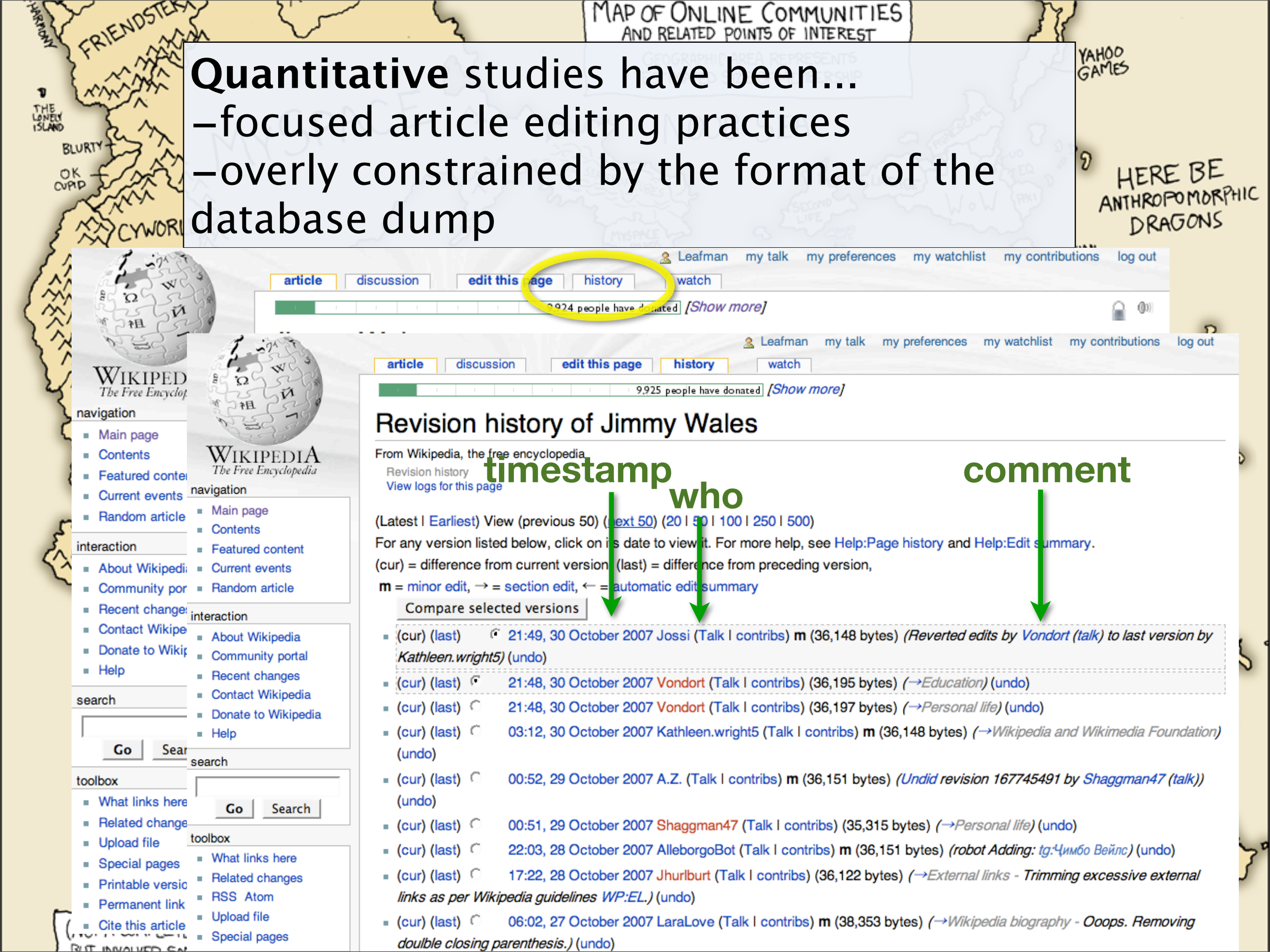
Personal life

[edit]

Jimmy Donal "Jimbo" Wales

Born	August 7, 1966 (age 41) Huntsville, Alabama, U.S.
Occupation	President of Wikia, Inc.; Board member and Chair Emeritus of the Wikimedia Foundation
Spouse	Christine[1]


MAP OF ONLINE COMMUNITIES
AND RELATED POINTS OF INTEREST
FRIENDSTER
THE LONELY ISLAND
BLURTY
OK CUPID
YAHOO GAMES
HERE BE ANTHROPOMORPHIC DRAGONS
Quantitative studies have been...
–focused article editing practices
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article discussion edit this page history watch
[Show more]
WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia
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Main page
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Donate to Wikipedia
Help
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(Latest | Earliest) View (previous 50) (next 50) (20 | 50 | 100 | 250 | 500)
For any version listed below, click on its date to view it. For more help, see Help:Page history and Help:Edit summary.
(cur) = difference from current version, (last) = difference from preceding version,
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Compare selected versions
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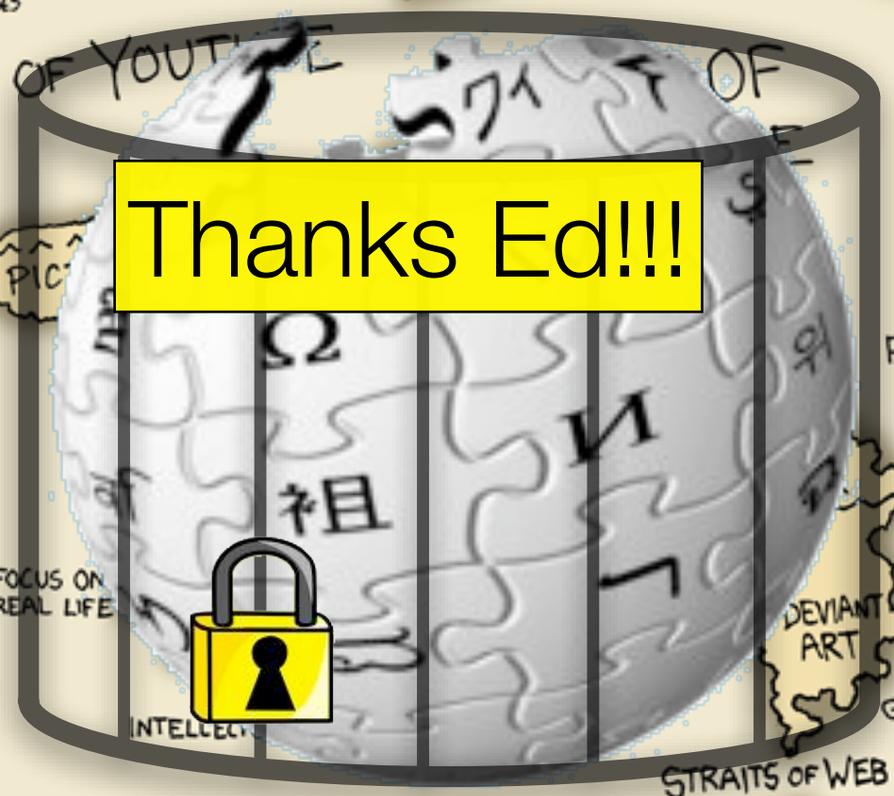
Thanks Ed!!!



MAP OF ONLINE COMMUNITIES
AND RELATED POINTS OF INTEREST

FRIENDSTER
THE LONELY ISLAND
BLURTY
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CYWORLD
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LJ
FACEBOOK
ATTRACTIVE MYSPACE IMAGES
GULF OF YOUTUBE
YAHOO GAMES
HERE BE ANTHROPOMORPHIC DRAGONS
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2CHANNEL
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ISLE OF SLASH
NUPEDIA
P2P SHOALS
FARK
DIGG
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BAY OF TROLLS
YOUR BASE
REDDIT
SPAAARTA (YTMND)
VIRAL STRAITS
SOVIET RUSSIA
STUMBLE UPON
DEL.ICIO.US
BAY OF ANGST
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SULAWESI
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TECHNORATI
THE WET SEA
THE WIKIPEDIA PROJECT
USENET
WIKI-PEDIA
MIT
STALLMAN'S AIRSHIP
IRC ISLES
GOOGLE'S VOLCANO FORTRESS

(NOT A COMPLETE SURVEY. SIZES BASED ON BEST FIGURES I COULD FIND

Quantitative studies have been...
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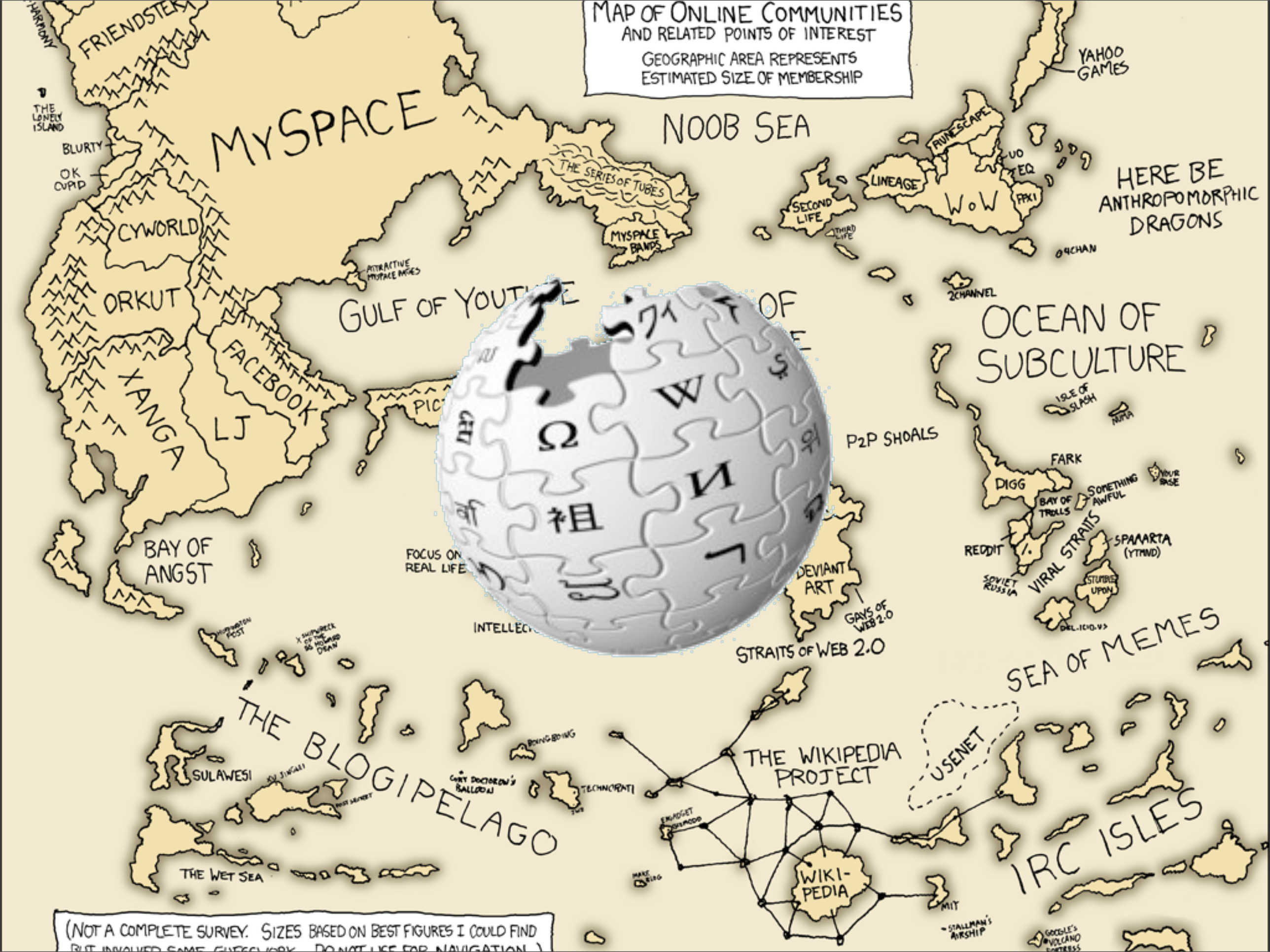
...but to understand **social structure**, must:
–focus on conditions of production
–content-driven, rather than edit-driven
–engage with qualitative findings


MAP OF ONLINE COMMUNITIES
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ESTIMATED SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP
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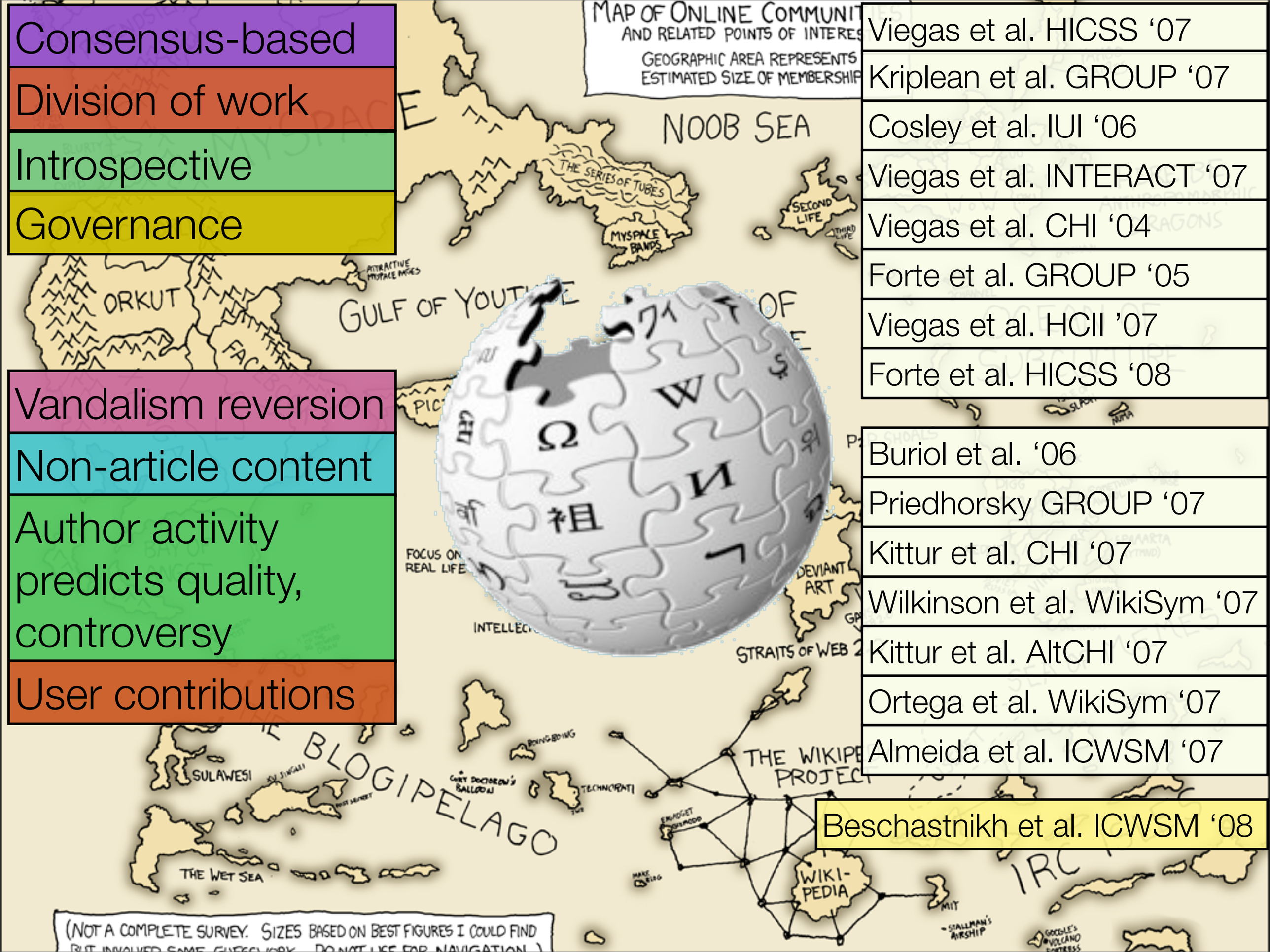
Consensus-based
Division of work
Introspective
Governance
Vandalism reversion
Non-article content
Author activity predicts quality, controversy
User contributions
Viegas et al. HICSS ‘07
Kriplean et al. GROUP ‘07
Cosley et al. IUI ‘06
Viegas et al. INTERACT ‘07
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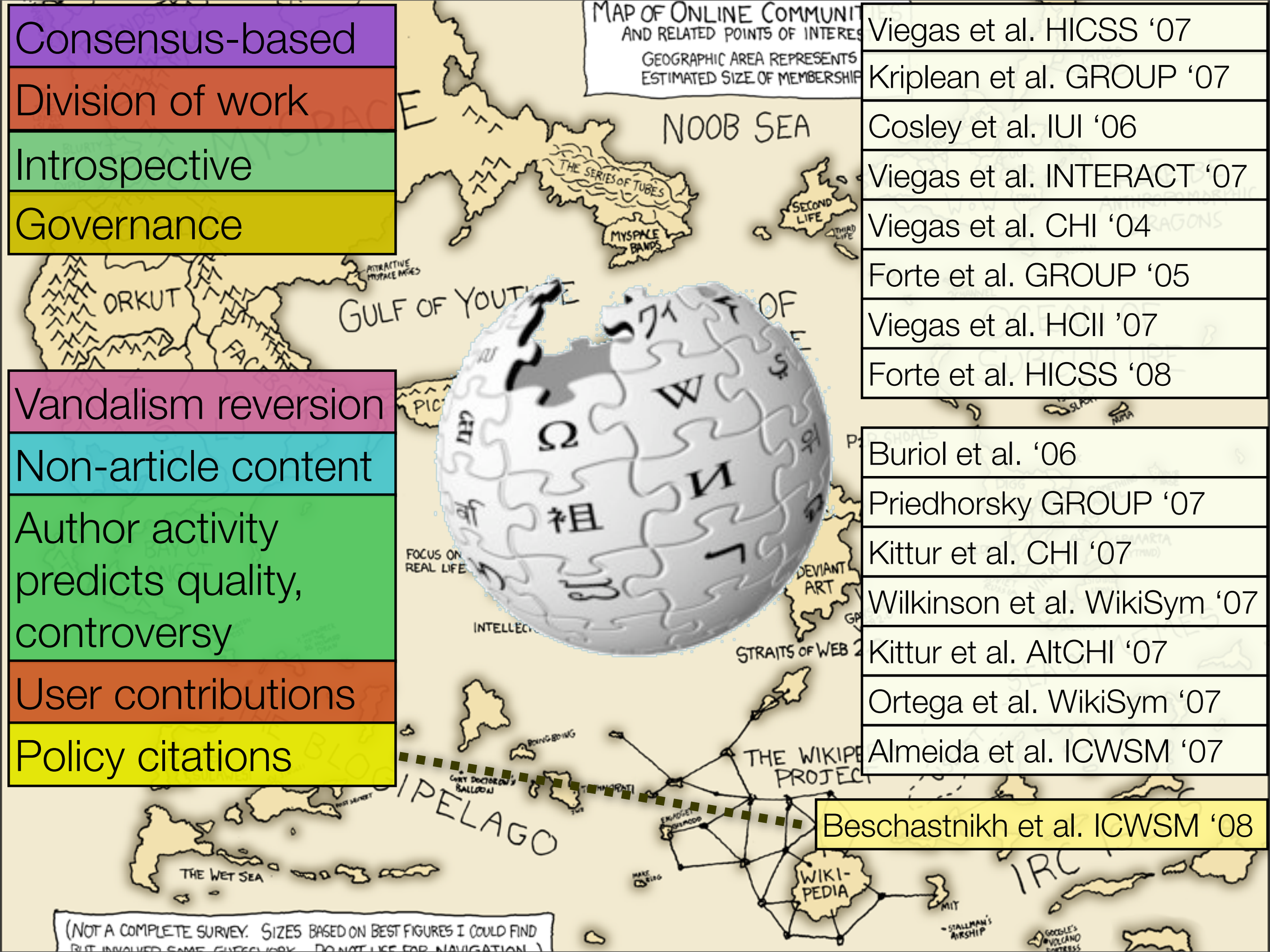

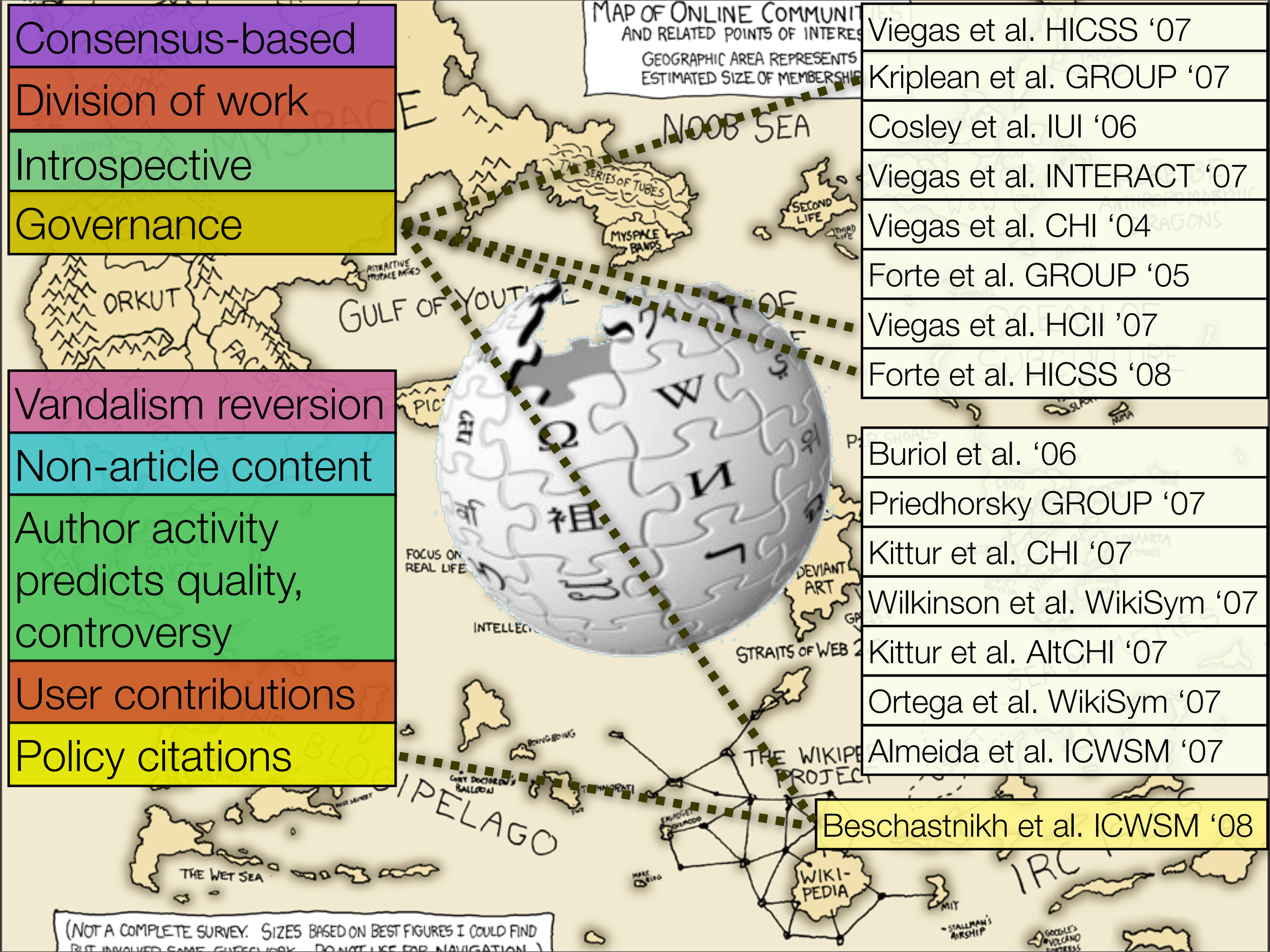

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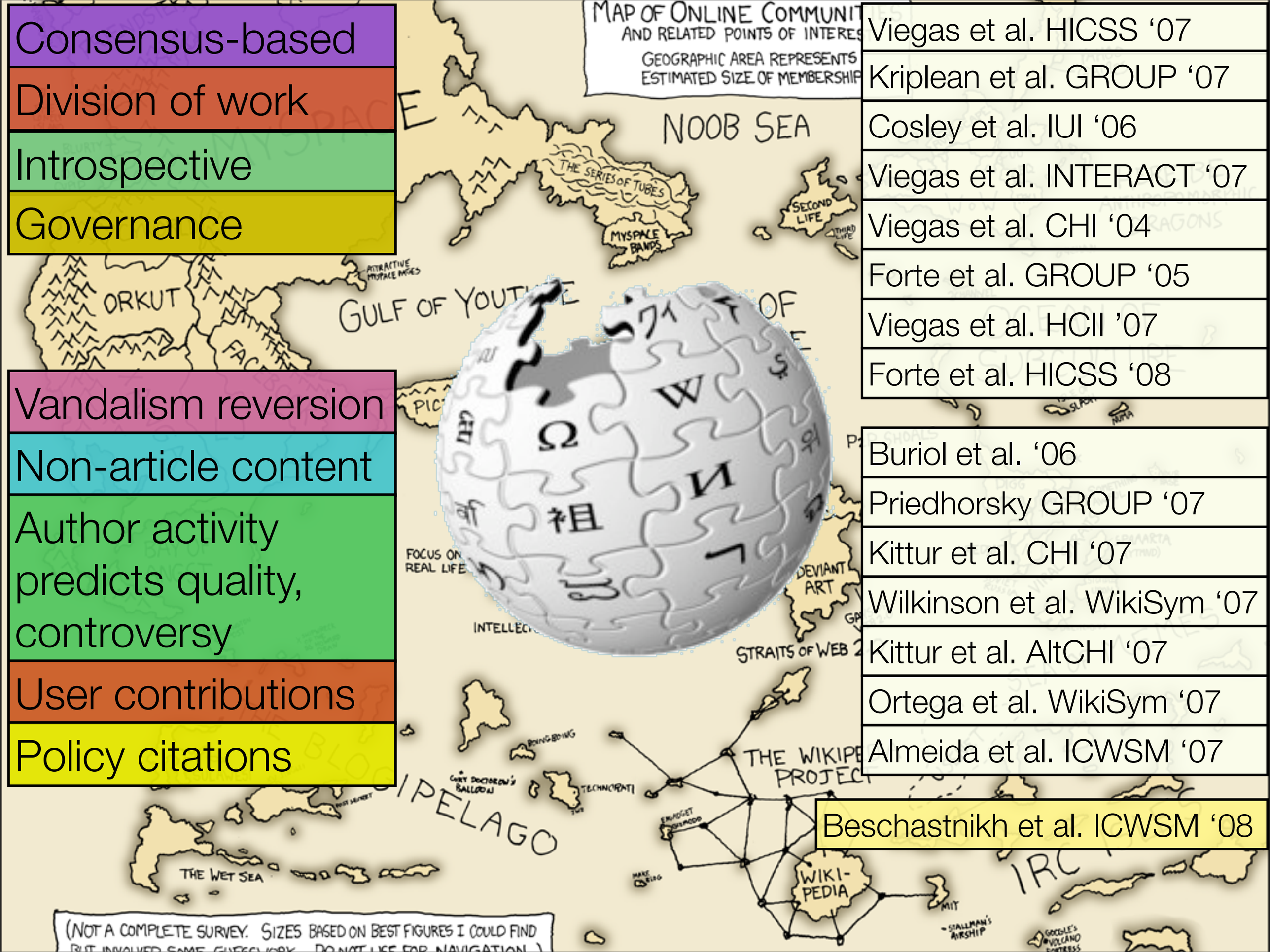
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Introspection

Coordinated action

Governance

Dispute resolution

Quality control

Power and authority

Outline

✓ Study motivation

- Wikipedia anatomy
  - namespaces: main, ta
  - policy & governance
- Policy citation investig
- Discussion

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- ✓ Study motivation
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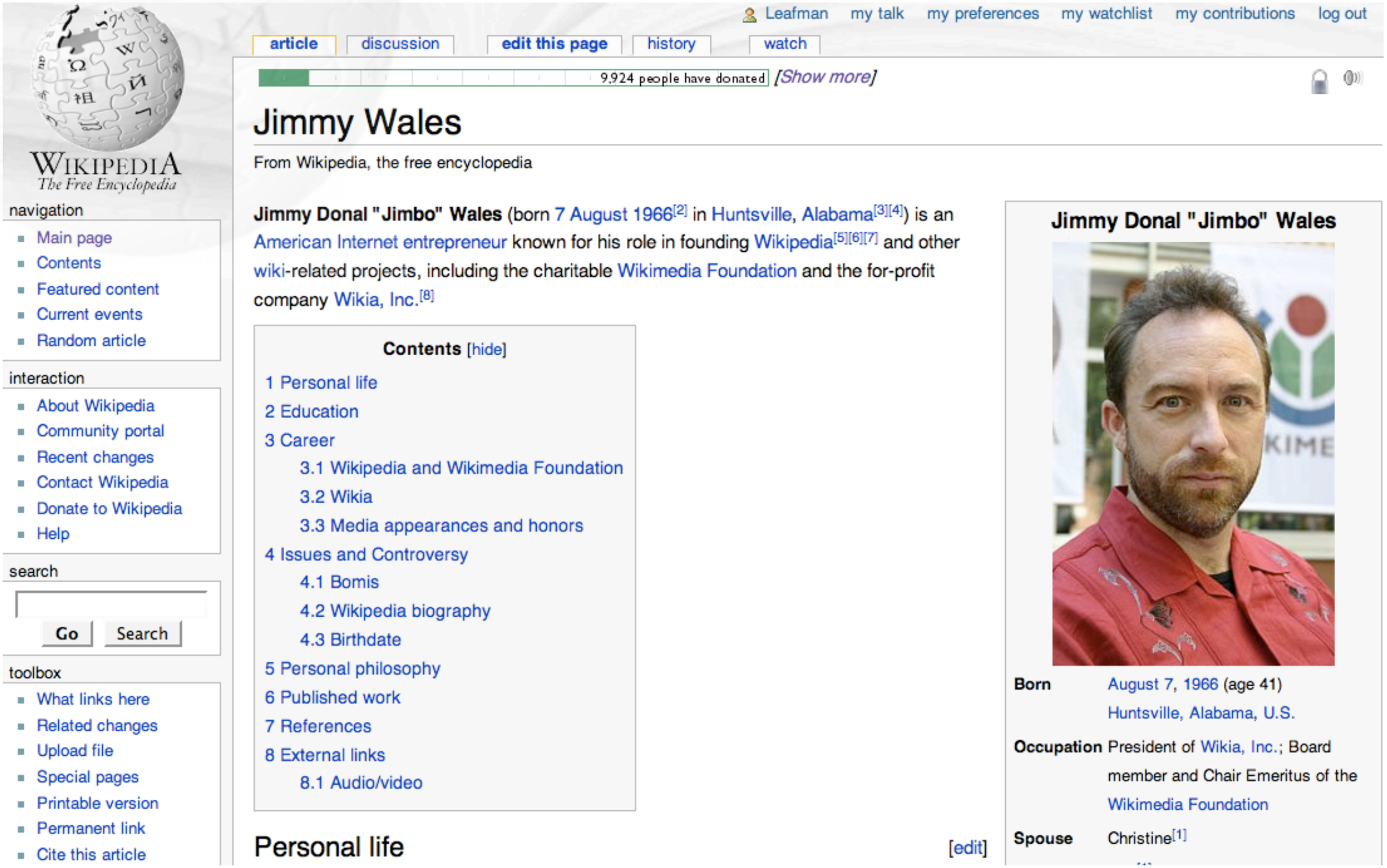
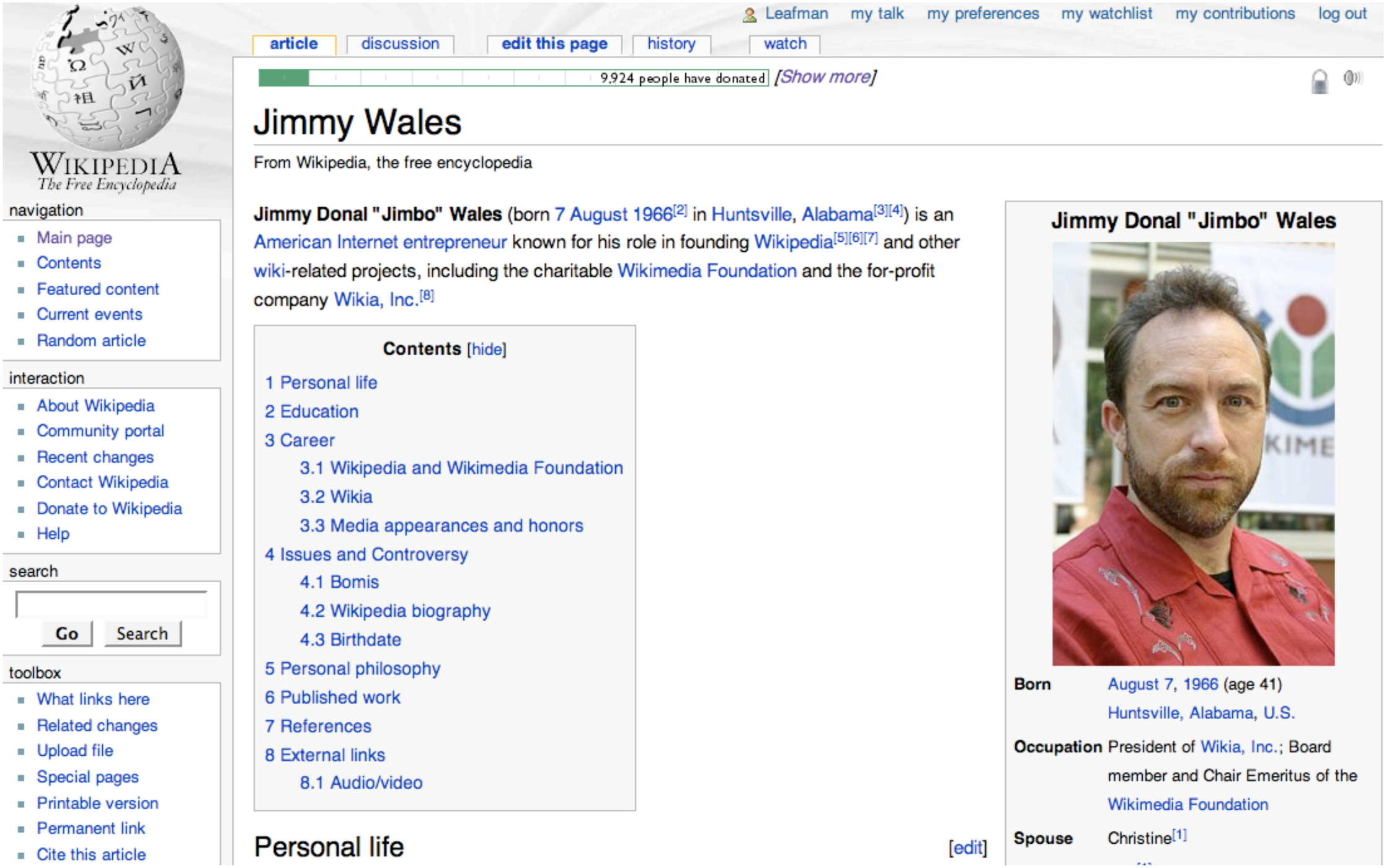
Anatomy: article pages



Anatomy: article pages



Anatomy: article pages

Talk page

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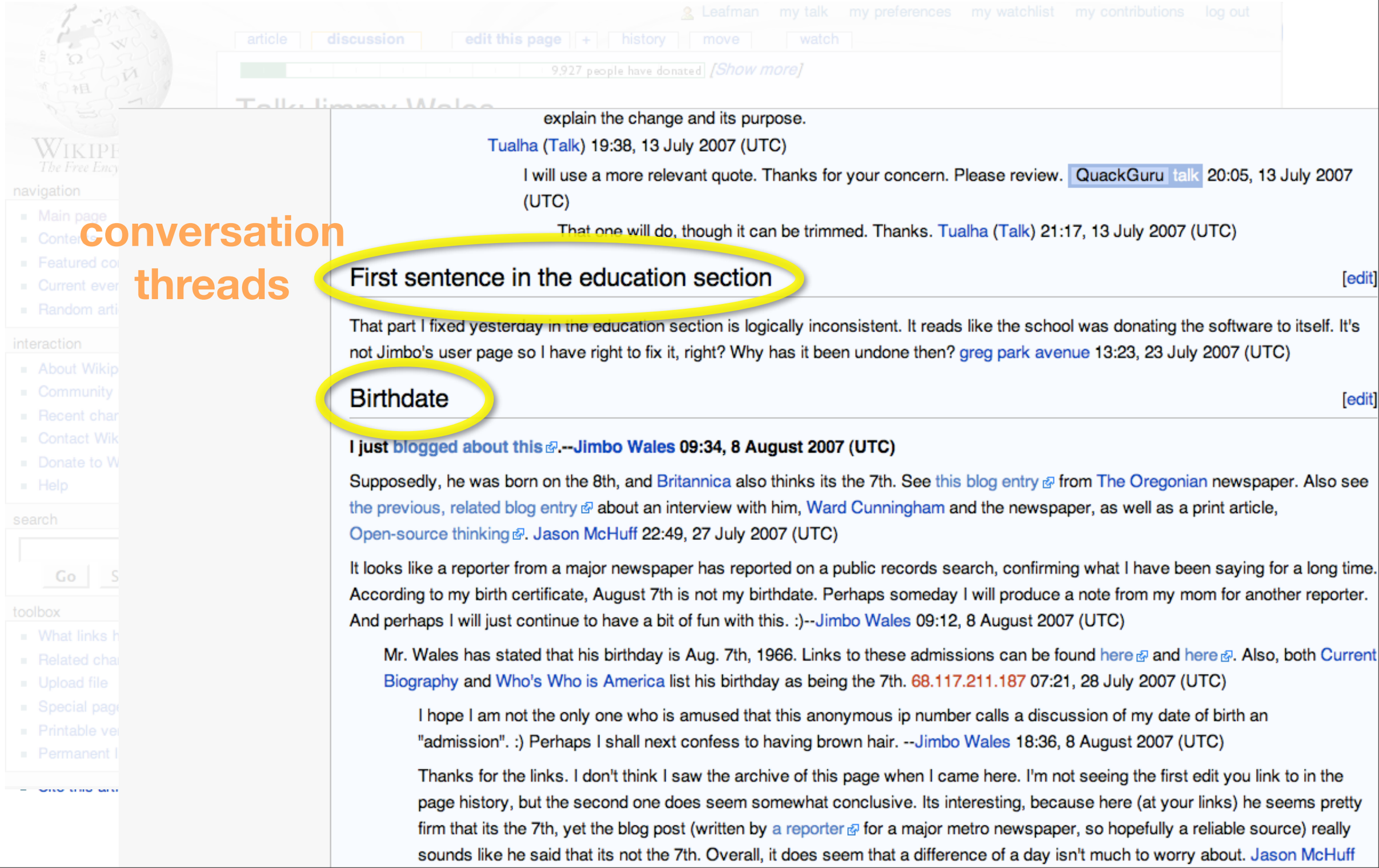

Anatomy: talk pages

Per Wikipedia policy, Wales' statement cannot be used as a source. See Wikipedia:Verifiability, "Articles and posts on Wikipedia may not be used as sources." This certainly includes statements in user space. Quatloo (talk) 00:34, 3 March 2008 (UTC)

> We can adhere to the letter of the policy and pretend that they aren't seperated, even though there is clear evidence that they are. Or, we can recognize that sentence as being a measure to prevent people from posting OR and then sourcing it elsewhere, and accept the man's statements about his life as definitive. I prefer the latter. -Amarkov moo! 00:45, 3 March 2008 (UTC)
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> > There is no need to pretend anything. We can adhere to the policy by not addressing the matter, since it is not important and doesn't need to be in the encyclopedia. If it were important, there'd be a WP:RS. There is not. Quatloo (talk) 01:38, 3 March 2008 (UTC)
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> Also, your argument seems to be "I want this poorly sourced statement, which violates both WP:Verifiability and WP:BLP, to remain in Wikipedia to prevent someone from possibly adding original research to the encyclopedia." I suggest that this is not a very good argument to justify a violation of policy. Quatloo (talk) 01:44, 3 March 2008 (UTC)

Anatomy: talk pages

hyper-linked **policy citations**

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Structure negotiation of article content [1,2]

- provide a common language and strategies of action
- policies require interpretation
- often enacted in ***power plays***
- similar to FAQ citations in Usenet [3]

[1] Viegas et al. HICSS ’07
[2] Kriplean et al. GROUP ’07
[3] Kollock & Smith ‘96

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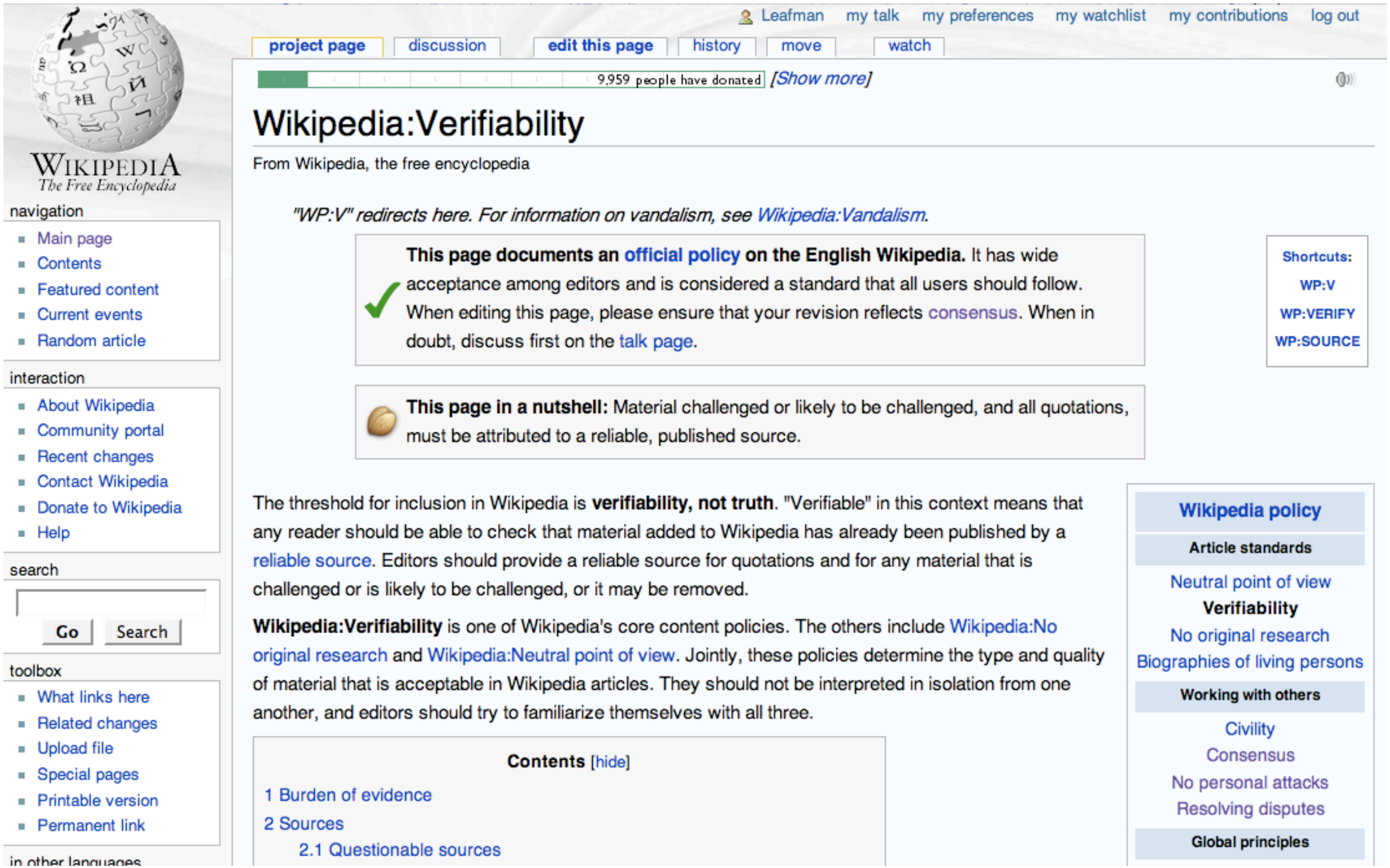
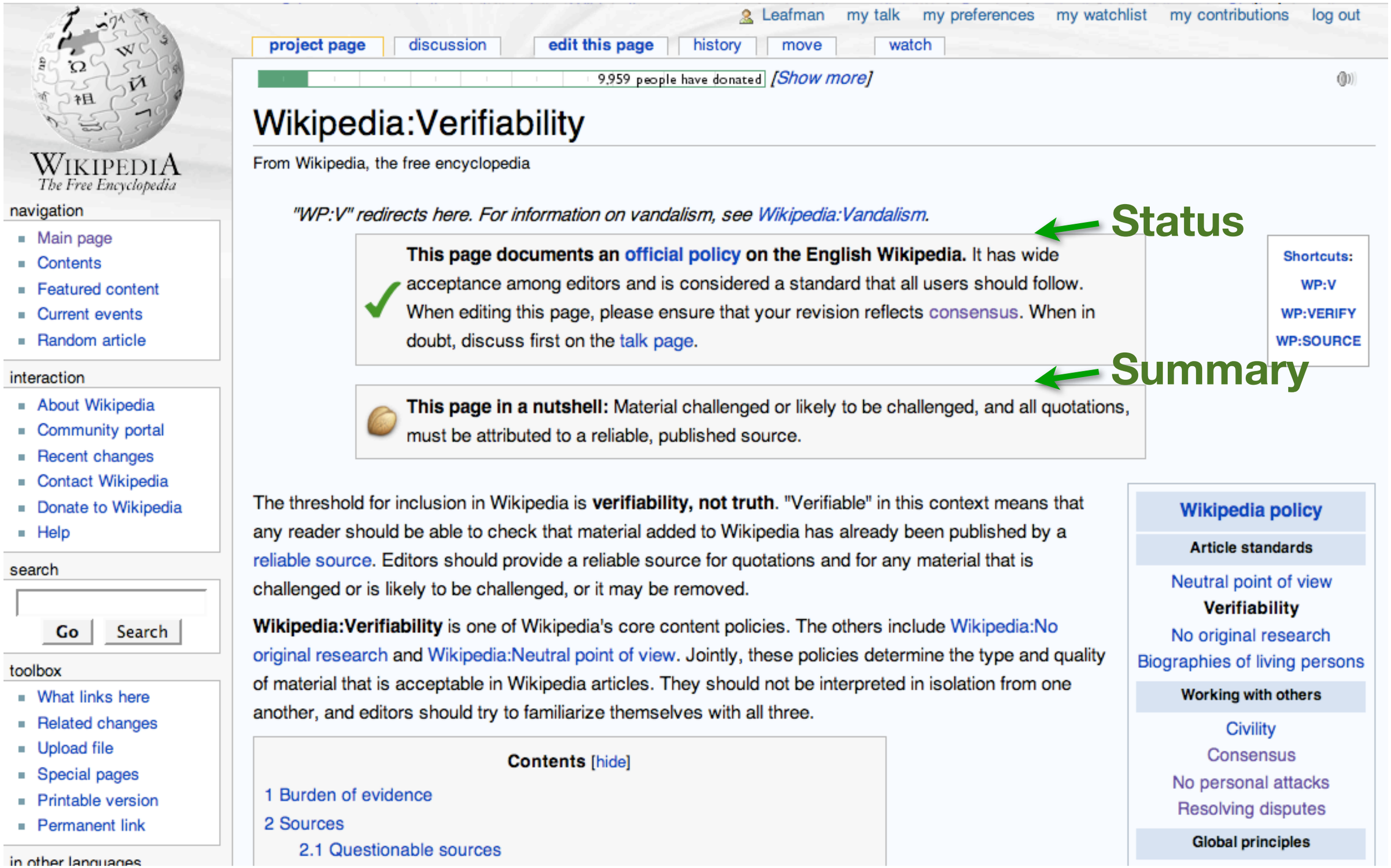
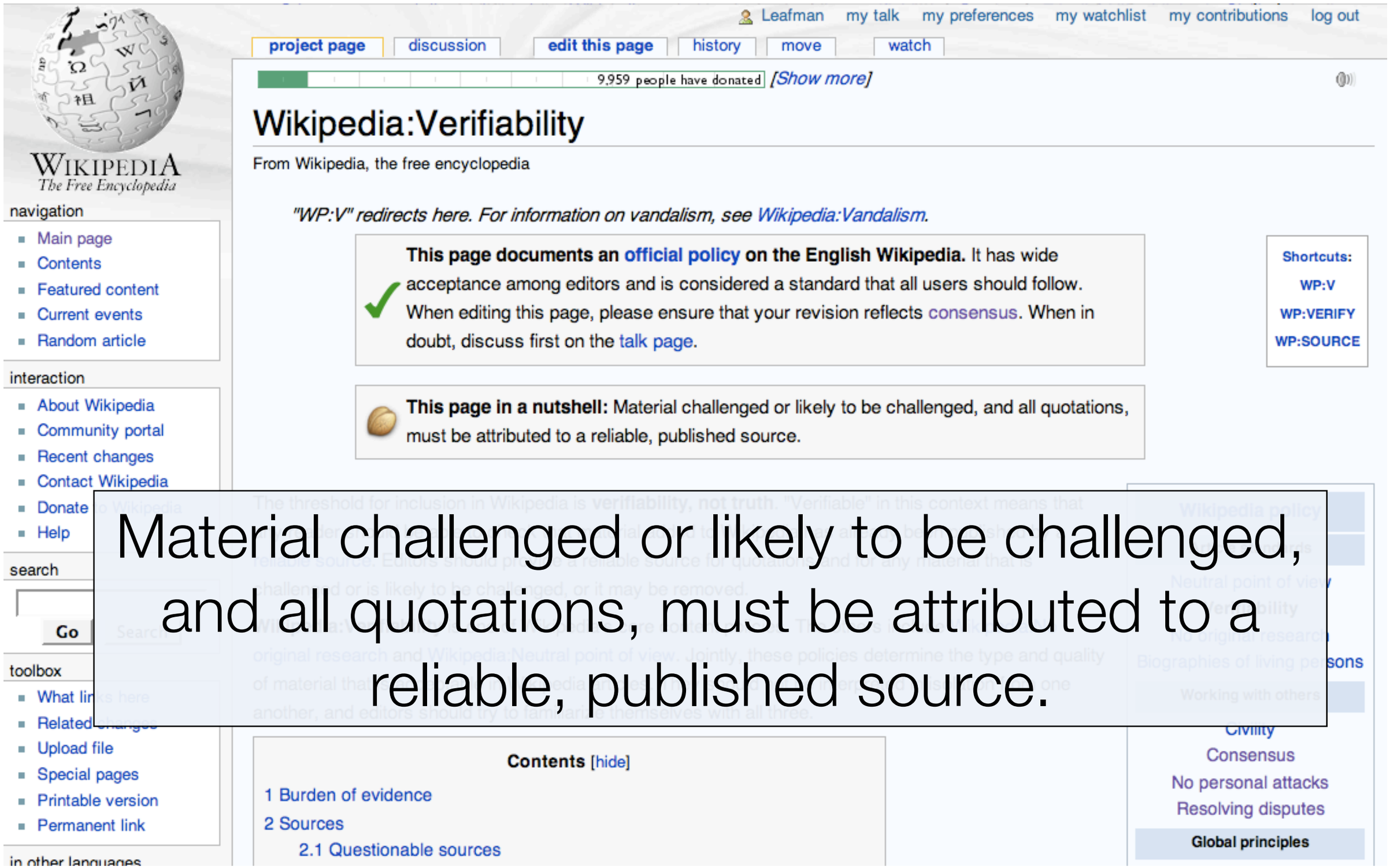
Anatomy: policy environment



Anatomy: policy environment



Anatomy: policy environment



Anatomy: policy environment

Anatomy: policy environment

Policy is collectively authored [1,2]

- not imposed top-down
- consensus-driven
- reflective of practice
- repository of experiential knowledge

[1] Forte et al. HICSS ’08
[2] Kriplean et al. GROUP ’07
[3] Viegas et al. HCII ‘07

Anatomy: policy environment

Policy environment bounds legitimate activity

- content, behavioral, enforcement, deletion, legal
- ~40 **official policies**
- hundreds of less strict **guidelines**
- informal **essays**

[1] Forte et al. HICSS ’08
[2] Kriplean et al. GROUP ’07
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Anatomy: policy environment

Embedded in a governance structure [1, 3]

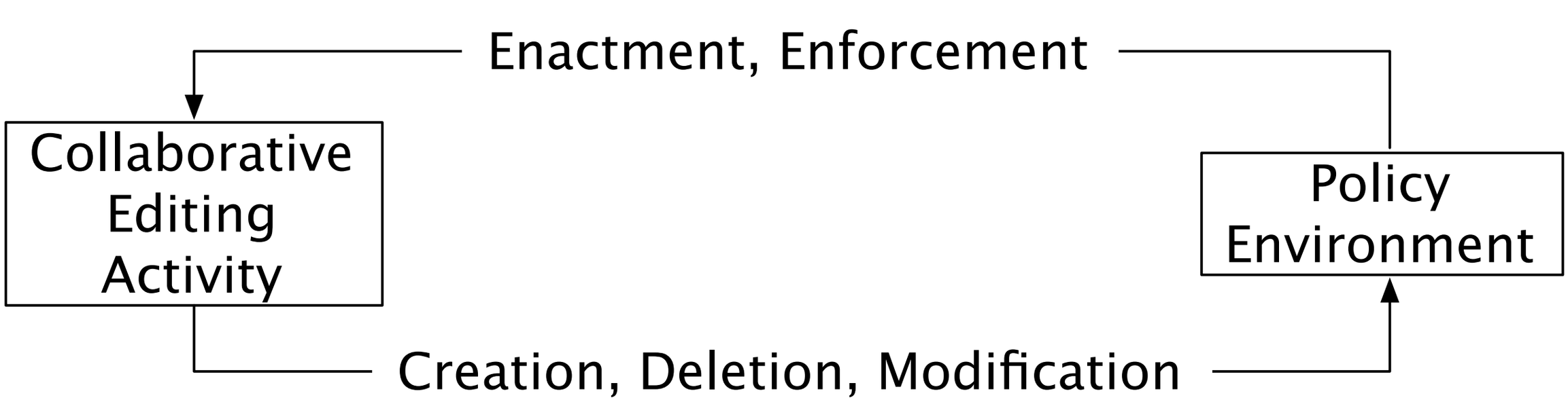
- formal processes, judicial bodies, etc.
- violators of policy may be subject to sanction

[1] Forte et al. HICSS ’08
[2] Kriplean et al. GROUP ’07
[3] Viegas et al. HCII ‘07

Self-governance in action

Self-governance in action

Policy citations are a micro-macro link between everyday actions and the governance structure



Outline

- ✓ Study motivation
- ✓ Wikipedia anatomy
- Policy citation investigations
  - tracking community concerns
  - changes in community attention
- Discussion

Fraction of cumulative policy citations

1
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0

2003
2004
2005
2006

Year

Top 50

Verifiability

Neutral Point of View

No Original Research

Signatures

Notes
- november 2006 dataset
- first policy citation in Jan. 2002
- cumulative relative proportion
- ordered vertically by total citations
- aggregate last 150 policies/guidelines

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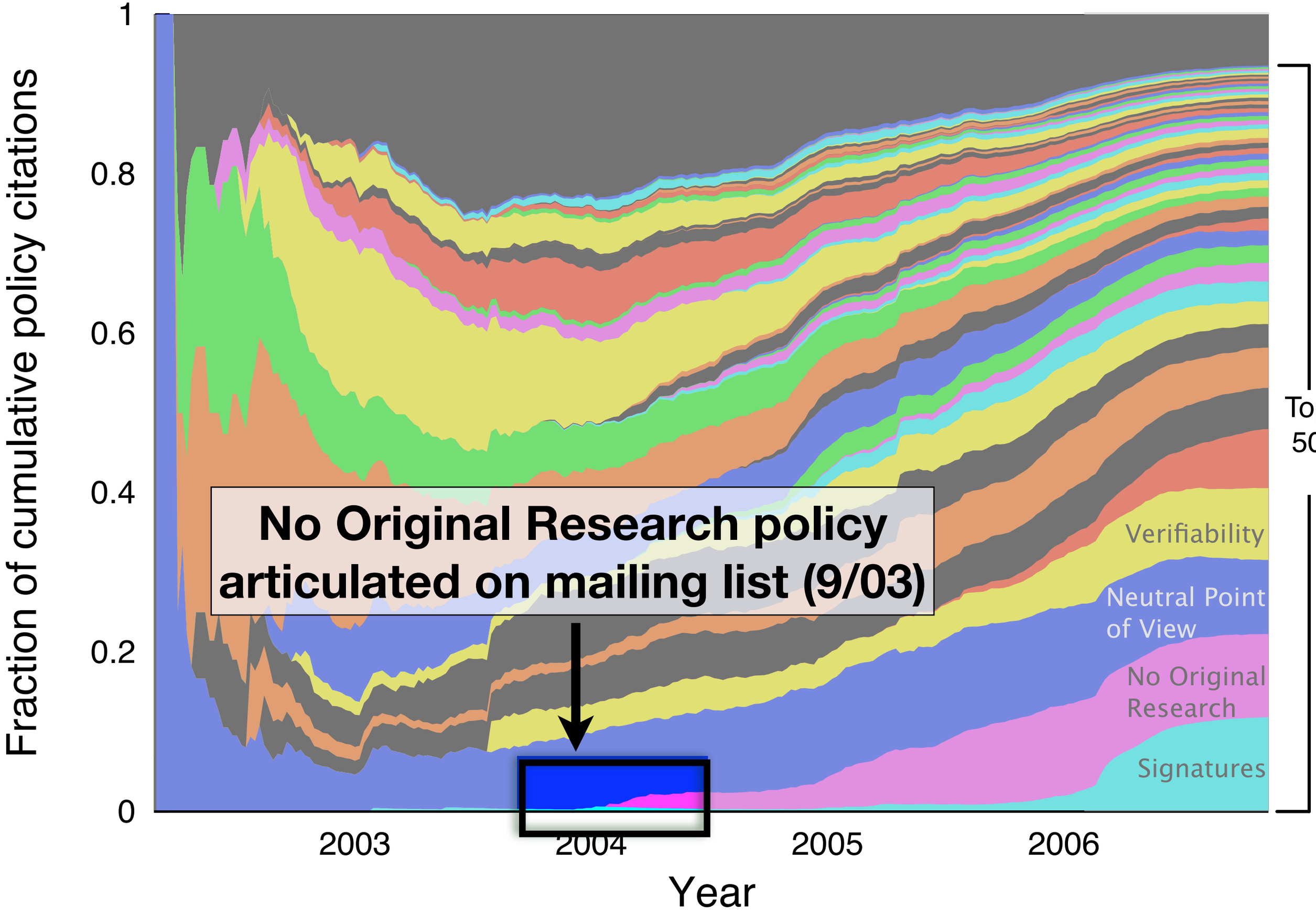
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2004
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No Original Research policy articulated on mailing list (9/03)
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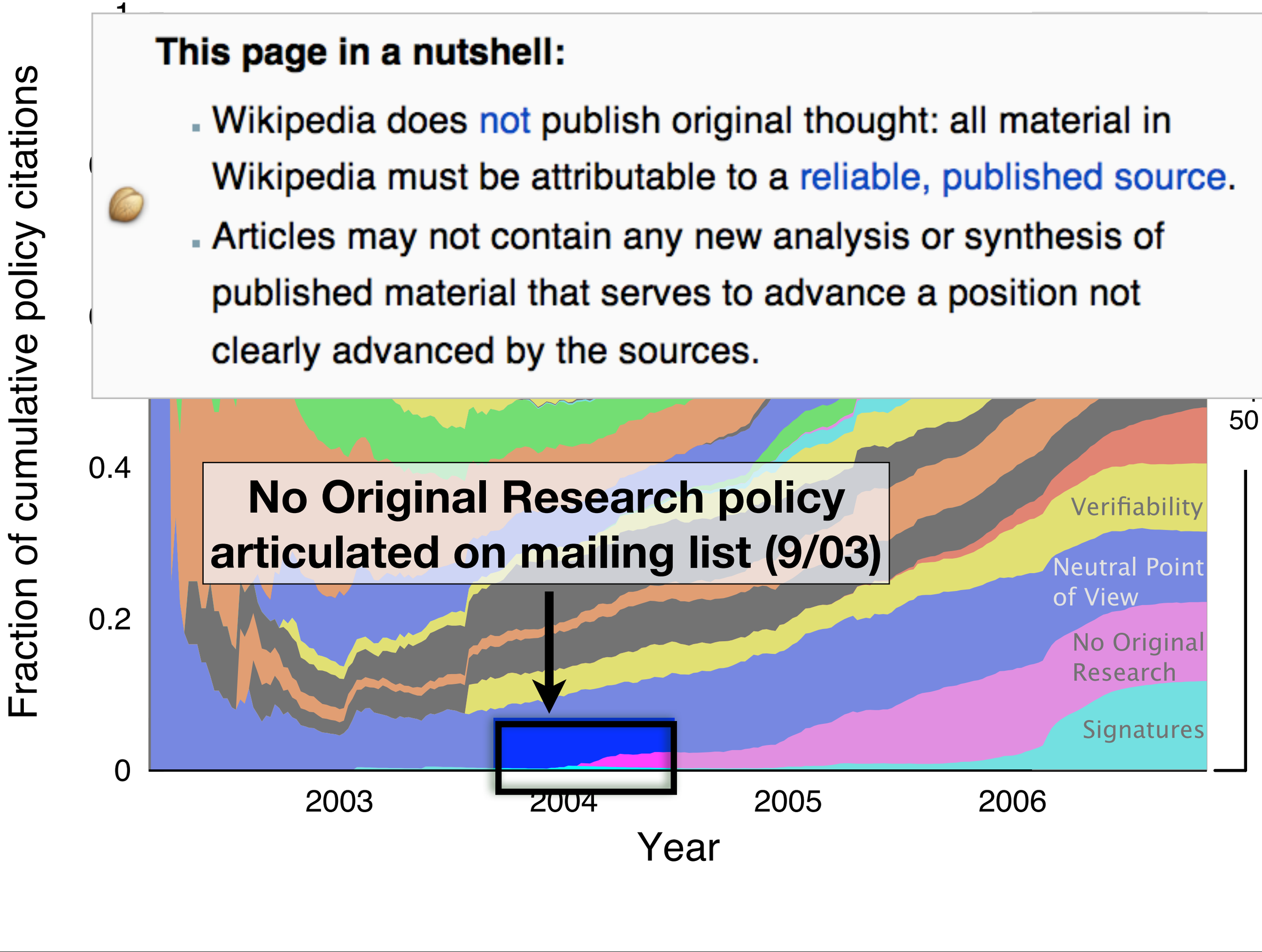
This page in a nutshell:

- Wikipedia does not publish original thought: all material in Wikipedia must be attributable to a reliable, published source.
- Articles may not contain any new analysis or synthesis of published material that serves to advance a position not clearly advanced by the sources.



Governance connection #1:

"stickiness" of policies

[Forte et al. HICSS '08]

No Original Research policy articulated on mailing list (9/03)

Fraction of cumulative policy citations

1

0.8

0.6

0.4

0.2

0

2003

2004

2005

2006

Year

Top 50

Verifiability

Neutral Point of View

No Original Research

Signatures

Fraction of cumulative policy citations

1
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0

2003
2004
2005
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Top 50

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Biographies of Living People policy Impact of Sieganthaler Controversy (12/05)

Posted 11/29/2005 7:12 PM

USA TODAY

A false Wikipedia 'biography'

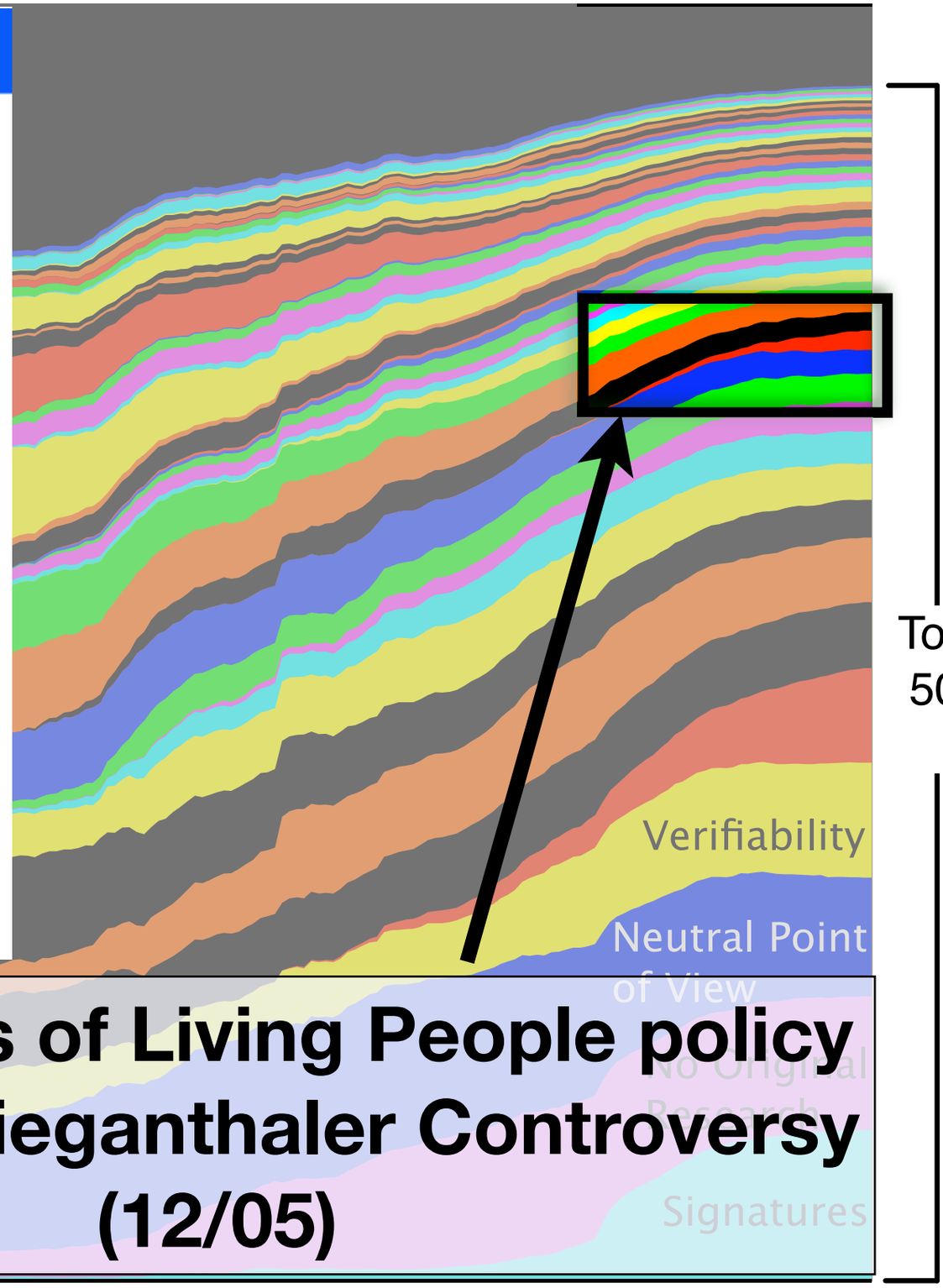
By John Seigenthaler

"John Seigenthaler Sr. was the assistant to Attorney General Robert Kennedy in the early 1960's. 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."

— *Wikipedia*

This is a highly personal story about Internet character assassination. It could be your story.

I have no idea whose sick mind conceived the



Biographies of Living People policy Impact of Sieganthaler Controversy (12/05)

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— Wikipedia

This is a highly personal story about character assassination. It could [illegible]

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Governance connection #2:

Shift toward quality control

[Forte et al. HICSS '08; Viegas et al. HCII '07]

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2003
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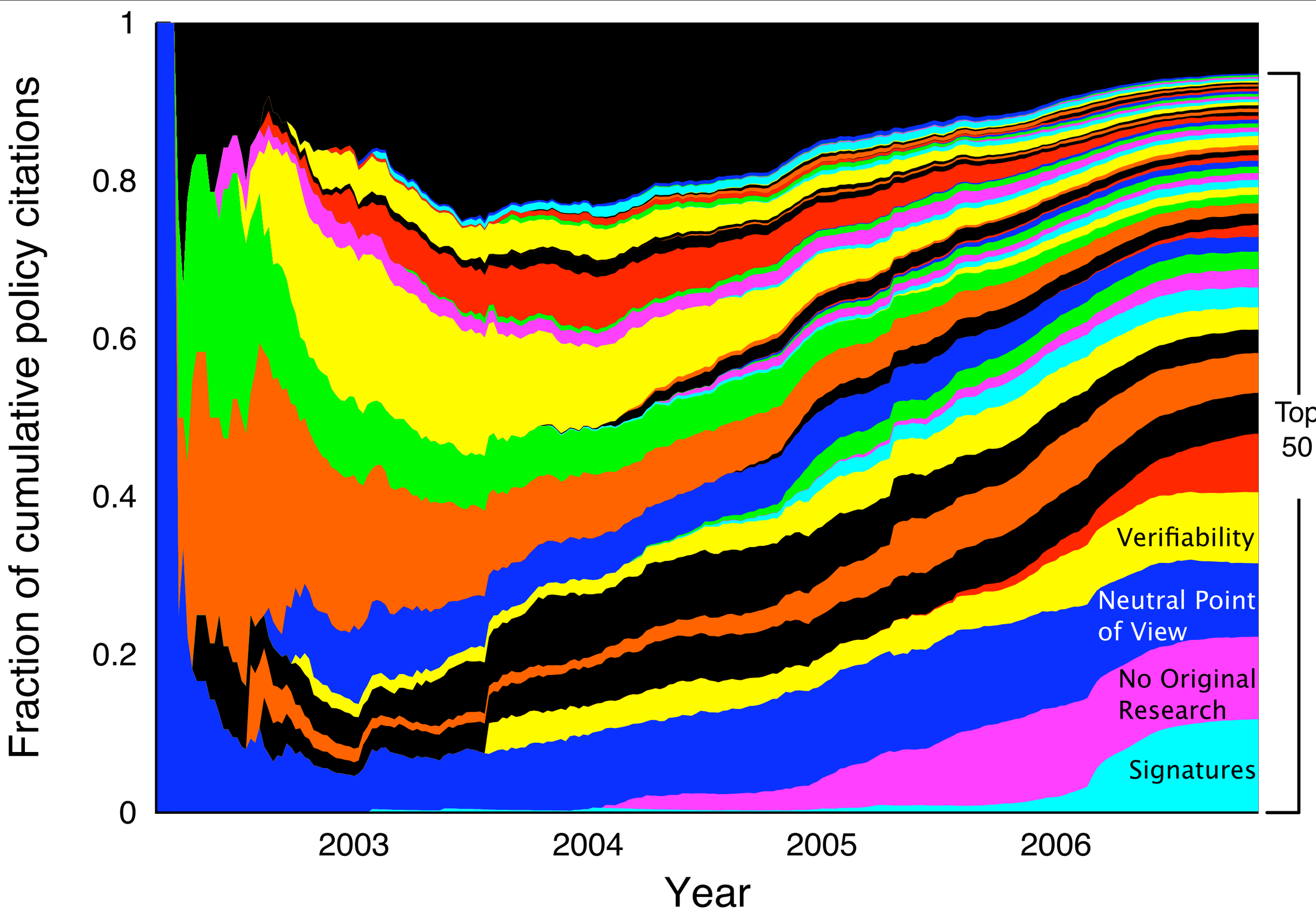
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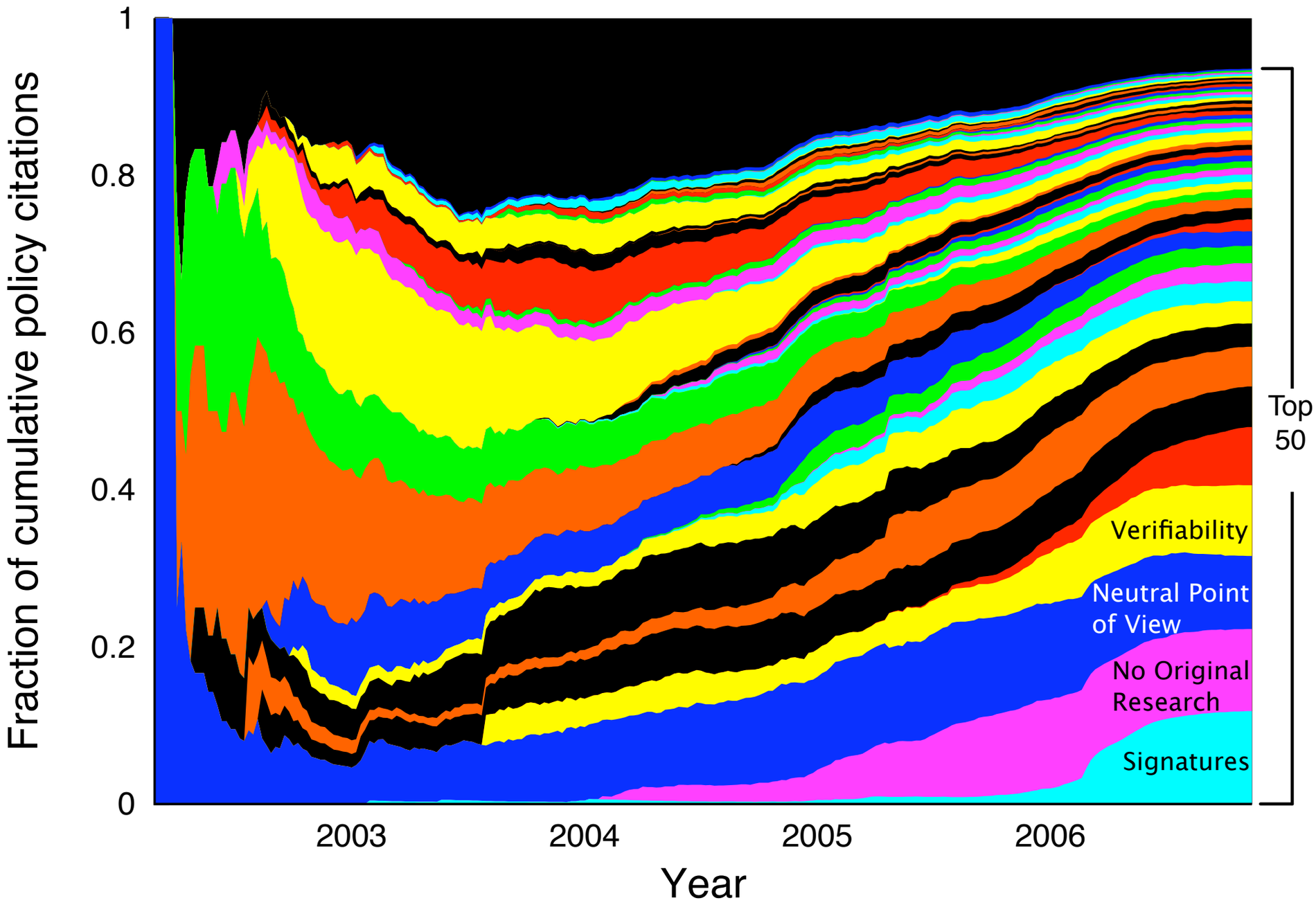
Investigation: identifying changes in practice



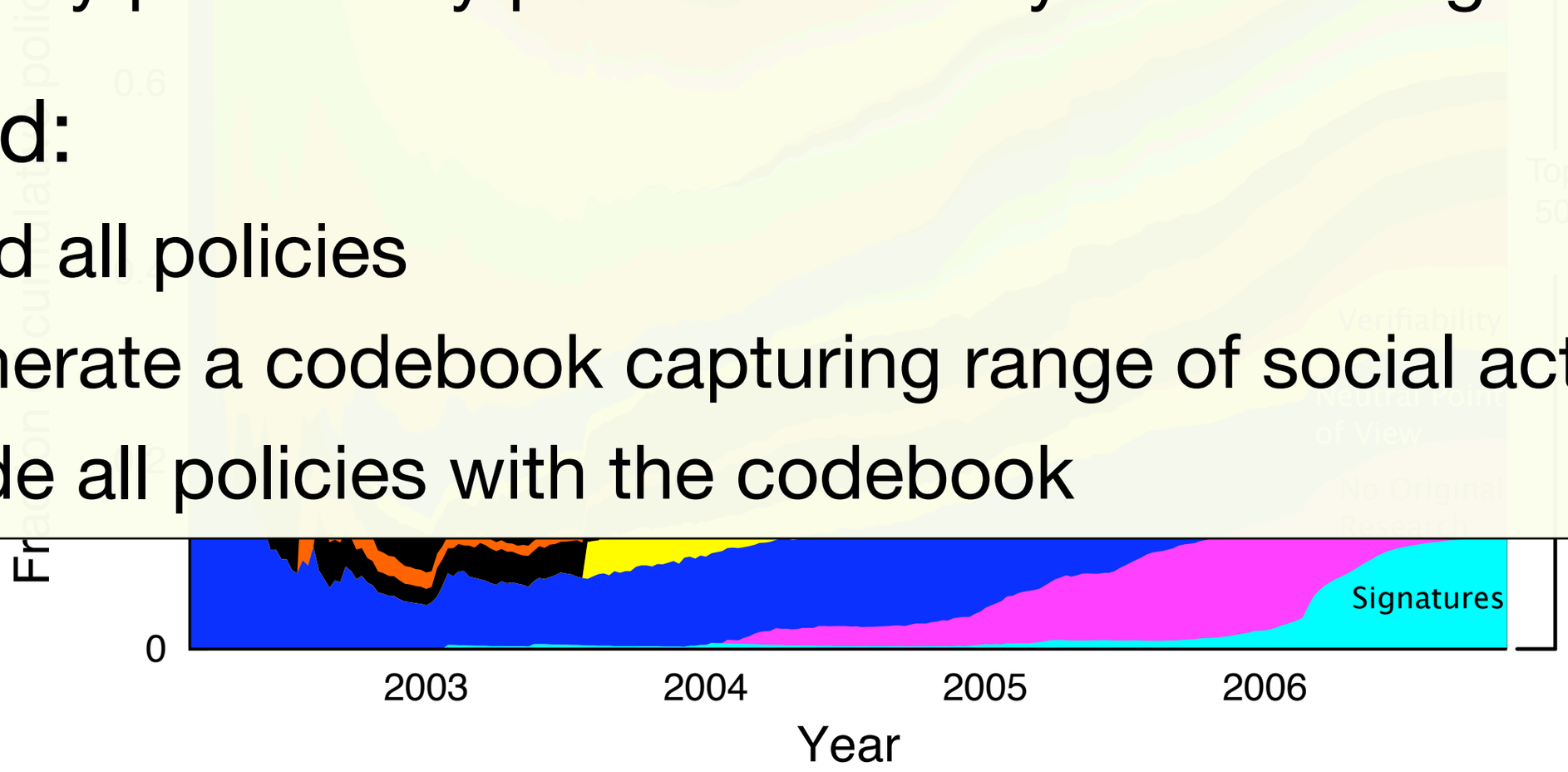
Investigation: identifying changes in practice

Apply **Grounded analysis**

- interpret policies from the perspective of the community
- classify policies by probable activity surrounding a citation

Method:

1. read all policies
2. generate a codebook capturing range of social activity
3. code all policies with the codebook



Investigation: identifying changes in practice

Code	Social signal
attribution	citing references
genre	defining Wikipedia
inclusion	deciding what content should be included
consensus	legitimacy of negotiation process
disposition	regarding user actions and intent
bias	neutrality of content presentation
legal	legality of content or user actions
writing style	grammar, language, organization

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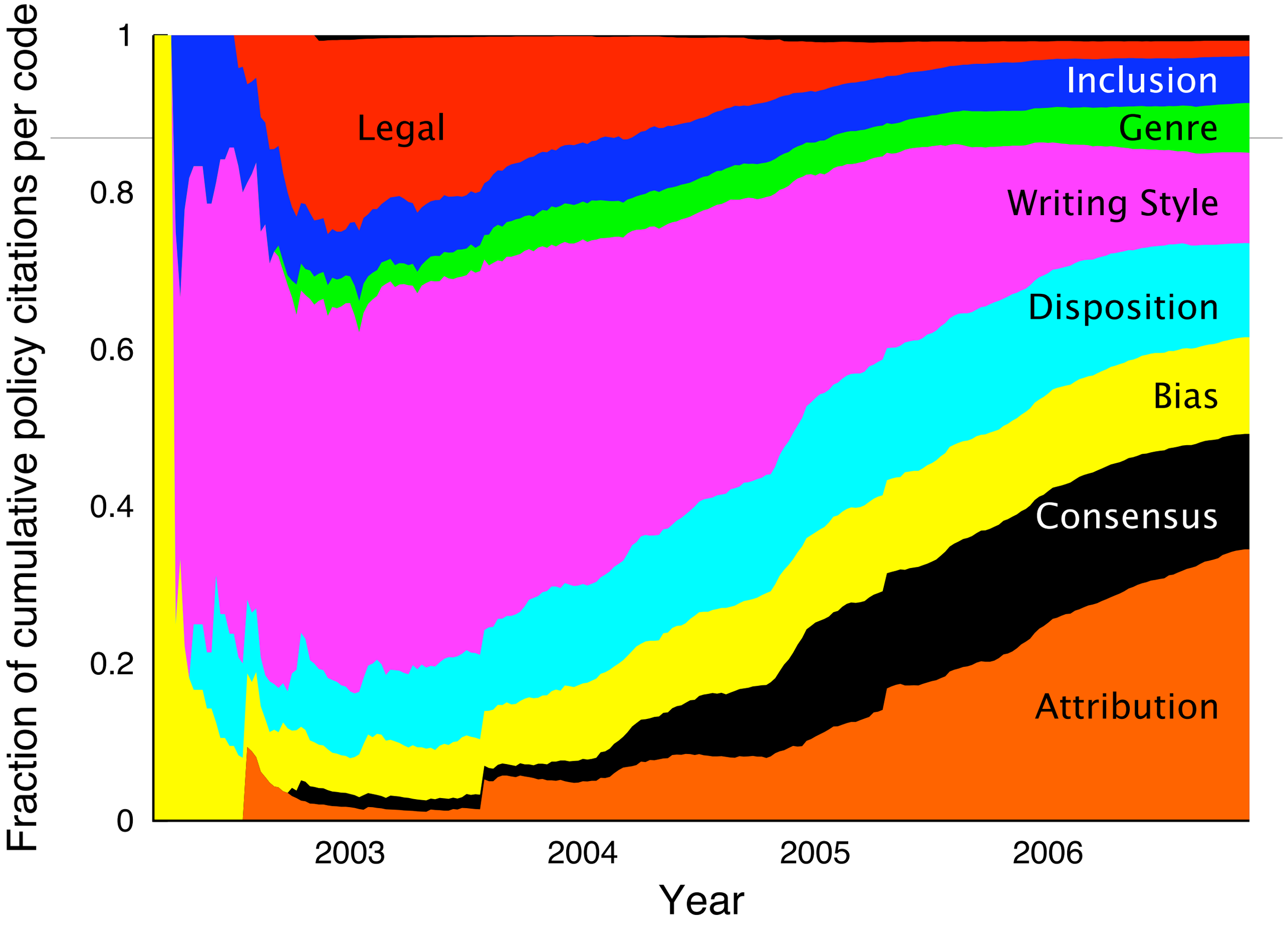
Fraction of cumulative policy citations per code
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Bias
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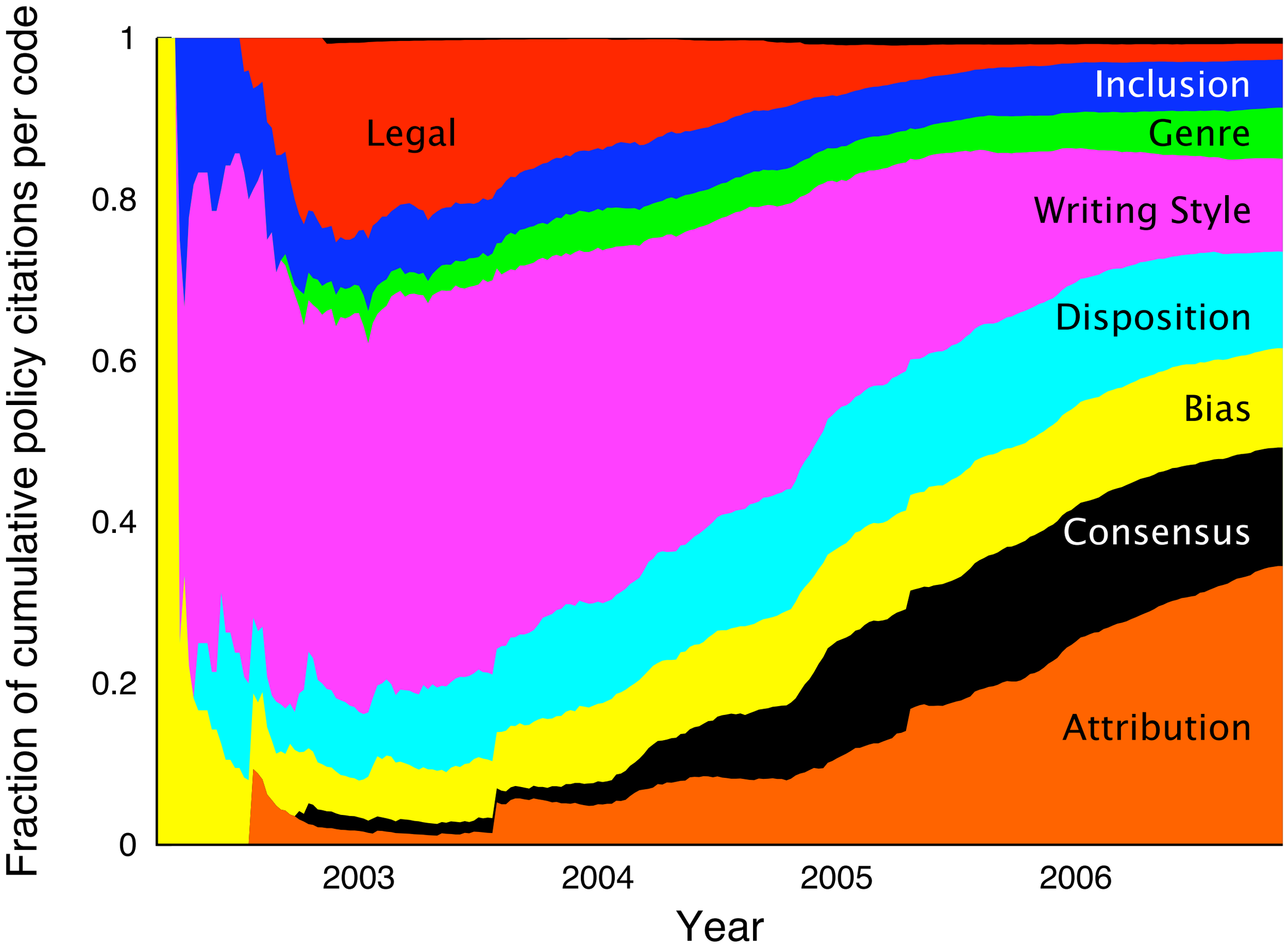
2006
Year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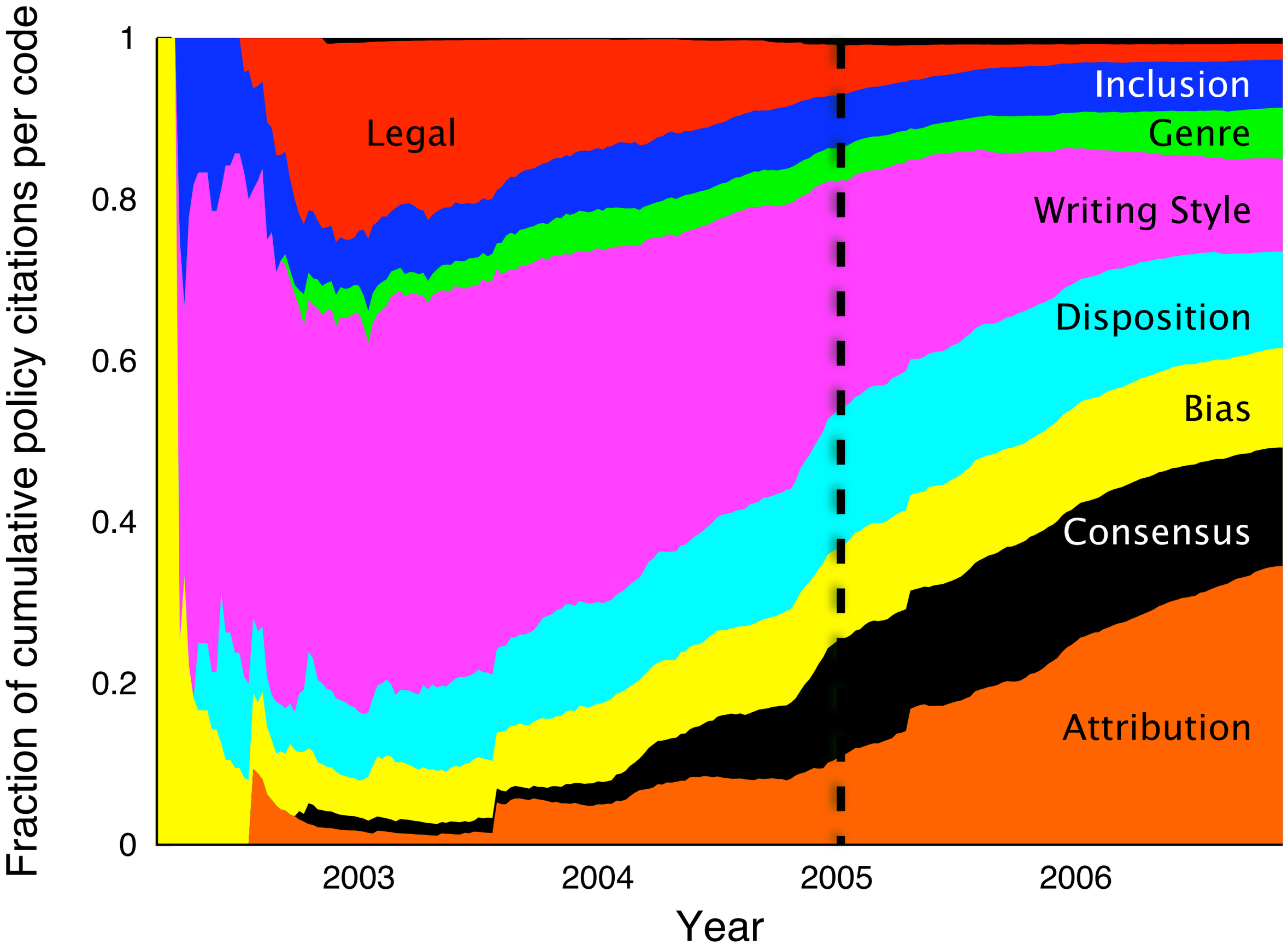
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2004
2005
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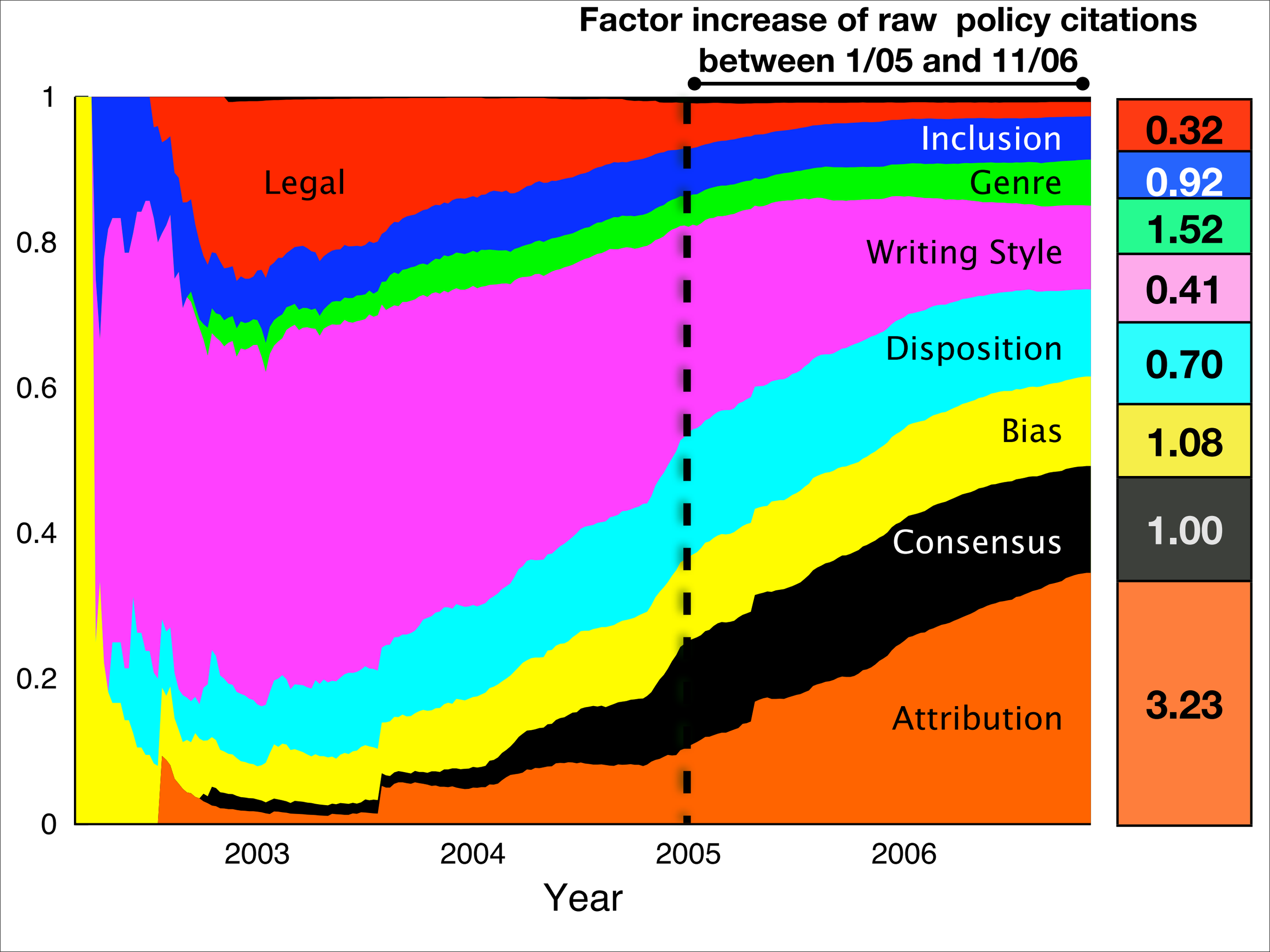
Year


Factor increase of raw policy citations between 1/05 and 11/06
1
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0
Legal
Inclusion
Genre
Writing Style
Disposition
Bias
Consensus
Attribution
0.32
0.92
1.52
0.41
0.70
1.08
1.00
3.23
2003
2004
2005
2006
Year

Factor increase of raw policy citations between 1/05 and 11/06

1
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0

Legal
Inclusion
Genre
Writing Style
Disposition
Bias
Consensus
Attribution

But what about aggressive policy citers?

0.32
0.92
1.52
0.41
0.70
1.08
1.00
3.23

2003
2004
2005
2006

Year

Unique citers to date

Factor increase of raw citations

Increase	
9.20	0.32
24.05	0.92
16.93	1.52
8.04	0.41
15.14	0.70
16.85	1.08
19.28	1.00
31.14	3.23

Legal

Inclusion

Genre

Writing Style

Disposition

Bias

Consensus

Attribution

1

0.8

0.6

0.4

0.2

0

2003

2004

2005

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Year

Unique citers to date

Factor increase of raw citations

Increase	
9.20	0.32
24.05	0.92
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15.14	0.70
16.85	1.08
19.28	1.00
31.14	3.23

Legal

Inclusion

Genre

Writing Style

Disposition

Bias

Consensus

Attribution

Factor increase of registered users who have left a message on the talk page between 1/05 and 11/06

7.5

1

0.8

0.6

0.4

0.2

0

2003

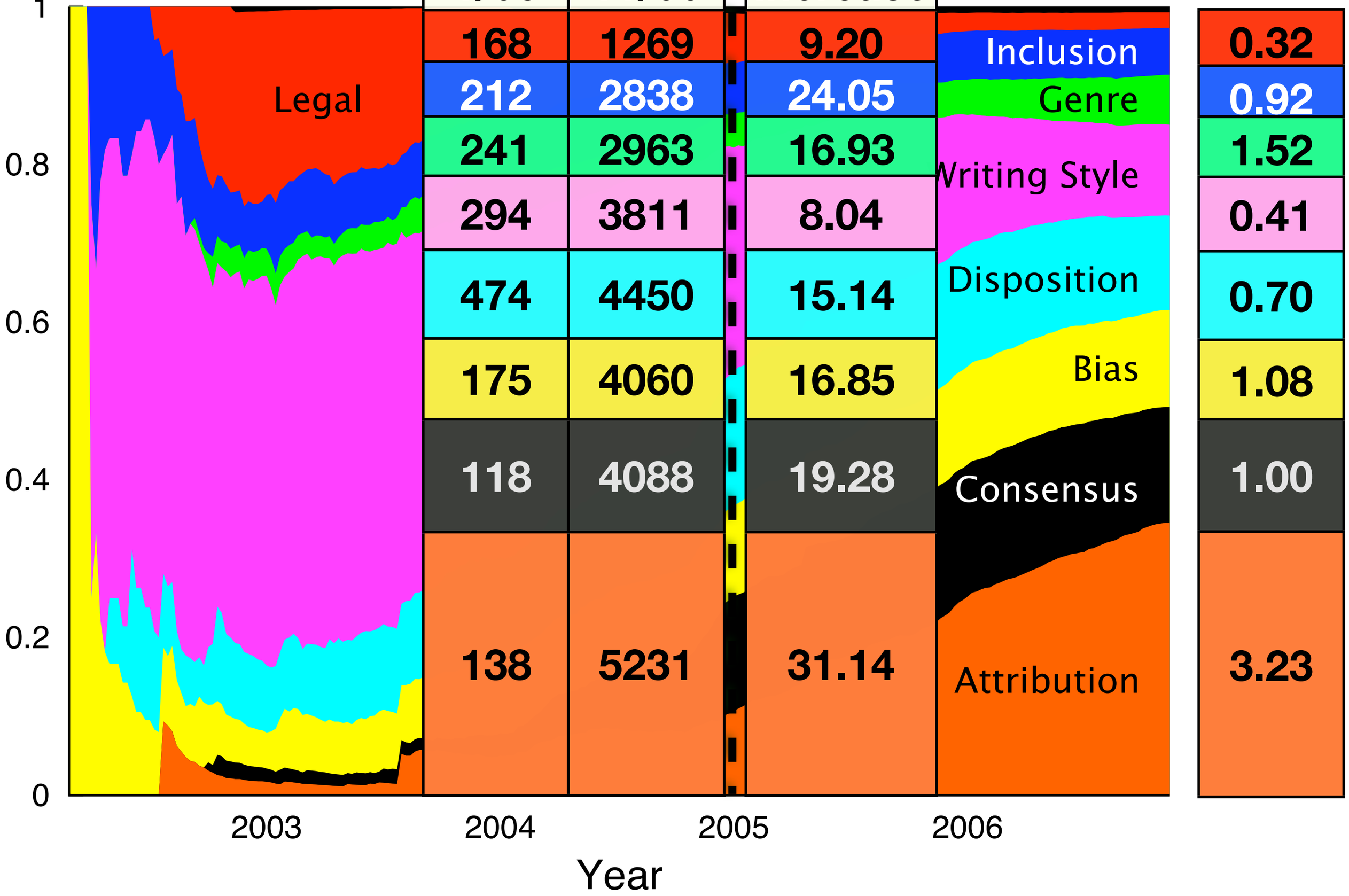
2004

2005

2006

Year

	Unique citers to date			Factor increase of raw citations
	1/05	11/06	Increase	
Legal	168	1269	9.20	0.32
Inclusion	212	2838	24.05	0.92
Genre	241	2963	16.93	1.52
Writing Style	294	3811	8.04	0.41
Disposition	474	4450	15.14	0.70
Bias	175	4060	16.85	1.08
Consensus	118	4088	19.28	1.00
Attribution	138	5231	31.14	3.23



Unique citers to date

1/05	11/06	Increase	Factor increase of raw citations
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212	2838	24.05	0.92
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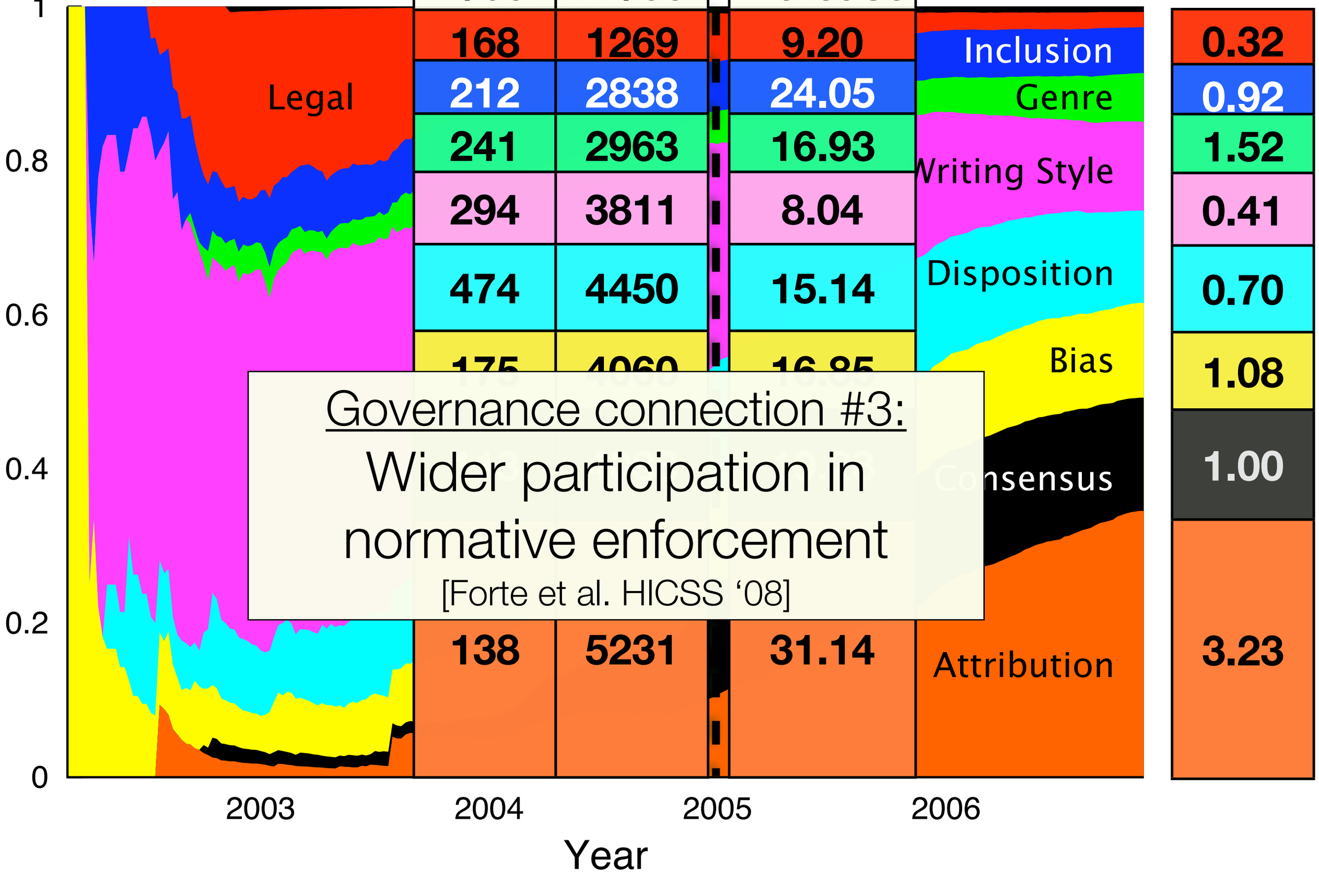
294	3811	8.04	0.41
474	4450	15.14	0.70
175	4060	16.85	1.08
			1.00
138	5231	31.14	3.23



Governance connection #3:

Wider participation in normative enforcement

[Forte et al. HICSS '08]

Conclusions

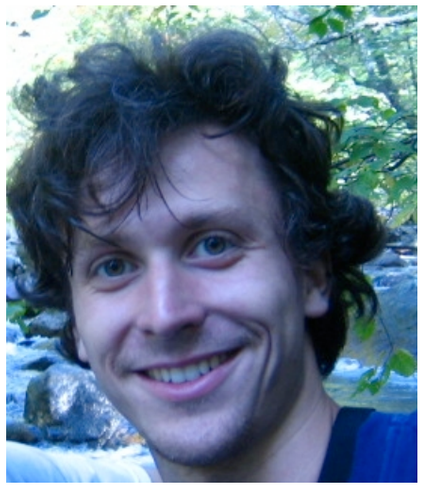
- The arrangement of institutions structures of a community
  - protection against from malicious activity *(e.g. arbitration committee)*
  - content evaluation *(e.g. featured article process)*
  - dispute resolution *(e.g. requests for comment)*

- Quantitative research can bridge social structure & dynamics
  - how do institutions form, evolve, and dissolve?
  - however, need to examine socially meaningful activity...

- We profiled the use of Wikipedian *policy* by contributors
  - only scratches the surface
  - no predictive models, etc.

Research opportunities

- Interpreting data about an evolving practice
- Transplantability of policy environment to other communities
- Tracing activities across different social spaces
  - articles + talk pages
  - talk pages + user talk pages
  - policy usage + policy authoring



Ivan Beschastnikh

David W. McDonald

Travis Kriplean

Questions?

Acknowledgements:

Eytan Adar, HP's Information Dynamics Lab (esp. Scott Golder and Bernardo Huberman)