



Wikimania 2010

History in Wikipedia: towards processes explanations, rather than simple data

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Antecedents

- Empirical experience on Wikipedia editions since 2006.
- Taking a local experience like a example for best practices in history articles.
- Wikipedia as more large project of human collaboration.





Rethinking western knowledge structure

- Critical point of view on social sciences rethinking and rewriting theories and concepts.
- More strong after Second World War and emancipation movements in Asia and Africa, on postcolonial nations.
- Search of more density in human event explanations.





¿Facts as they were?

- Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm searching certainties, deterministic and universal validity.
- Positivism school: search and comprobatation of exact historic data, scientific comprobatation of facts “as they where”.
- Relentless collector of data or antiquarian search of past news
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Unique and unrepetable

- Historicism: search and comprobatation of unique and unrepeatabe facts and characters of the past. Historic imagination.
- Literary and erudit history.
- Pursuit of accuracy^a without social dimensions and search of historicism on history terms, ruled actually the Spanish Wikipedia articles





Critic and NPV

- History events viewed as a complex processes, with political, economical an social causes and consequences, still in a secondary source of information.
- References for history based on basic monographs, school books, supporting NPV.





More contemporary approaches

- Trough old or basic references, pass on out of date values in countless articles.
- Erudition and accuracy on data, more valued in Wikipedia articles.
- Inclusion of complex human past, new concepts, unorthodox topics: daily life, ambiental history, subaltern studies.





“Brush history against the grain”*

- Critical history: questioning eurocentric bases, inserting groups and characters eliminated by official history.
- Overcome historical exclusions, eurocentric conventions, ethnonyms.
- Specific contexts and historical events from excluded, gives a counterpart of traditional interpretations, ergo, more enriched articles.

*Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*



Wikipedia opportunity

- First time in history for make a free knowledge repository, without requiring privileges, and that they really be readed for a larger audience.
- Neutrality builded by all point of view.



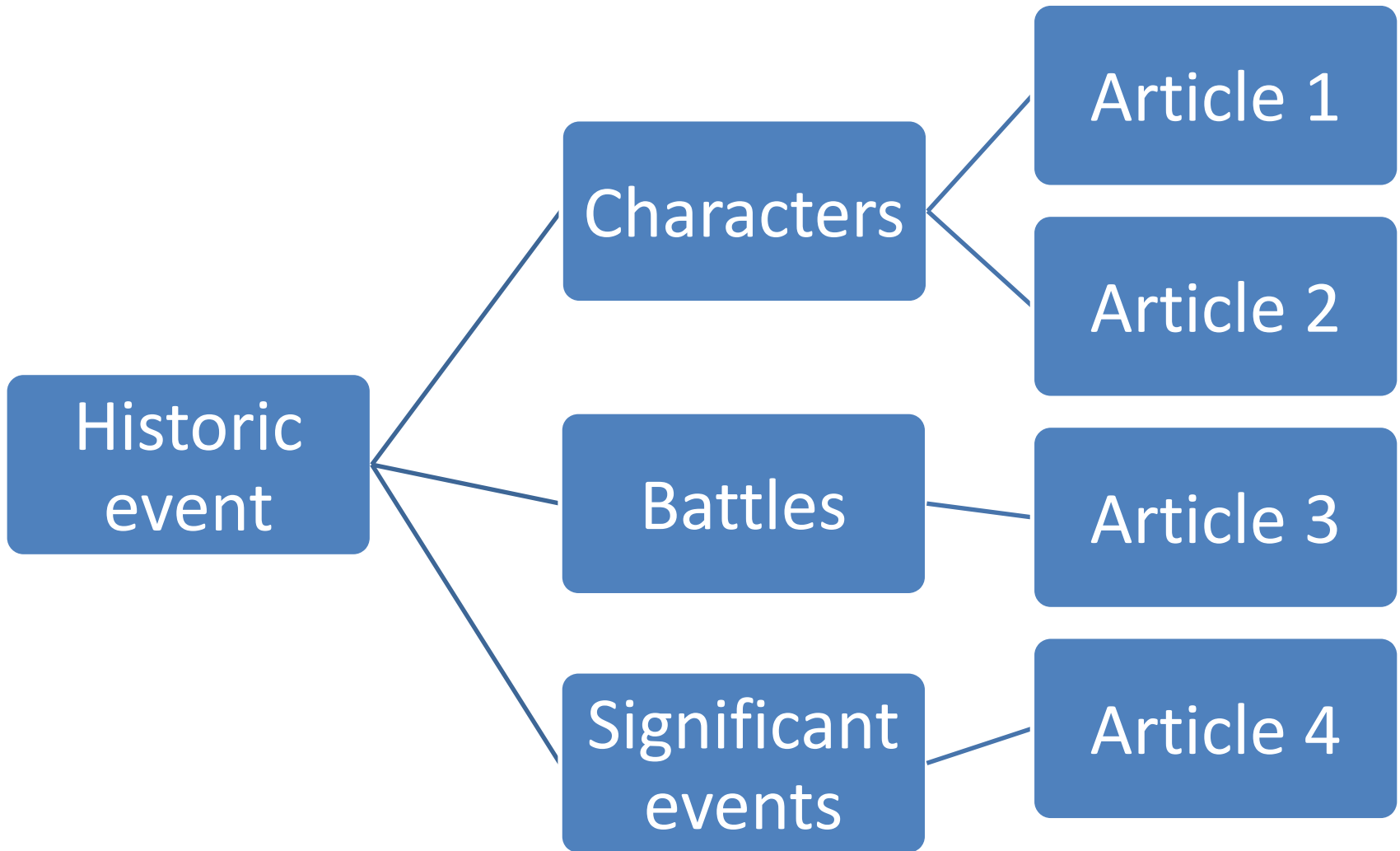


Proposals

- 1. Improve writing and research of key historical articles, focused in explanation of **processes**, rather than simple factual descriptions. The inclusion of multifactor explanations necessarily improves the quality and growth in the number of articles on the same topic and related.

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- 2. The inclusion of critical explanations of historical processes in Wikipedia, like unconventional historical subjects (geographical contexts, historical regions), collective characters excluded from traditional historiography (subaltern groups, ethnicities missing) and a permanent questioning to the Eurocentric assumptions in explanations of postcolonial local histories.





Proposals

- 3. Criticism and questioning of the supposed truths derived from official or nationalists histories. Thanks to the dissemination of basic reference texts approved by government education systems, historical myths and falsehoods fed as verifiable sources articles on Wikipedia.
- 4. Update to thesis, concepts and contemporary accounts of historical events, thereby posing no inclusion of original research.





**¿Questions?
¡Thank you!
¡Gracias!**

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