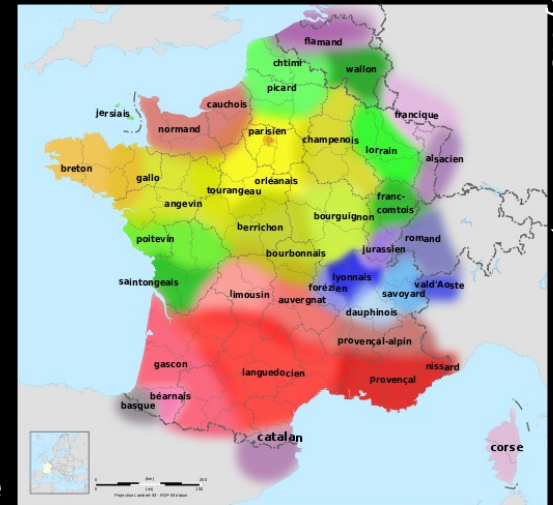# What place for the « small languages » on Wikimedia projects ?

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Basic facts and philosophy

Few facts to explain the reason to build projects about languages

- In april 2011, the « General Department of french language and languages of France » asked us to product a report about french language on the Wikimedia projects

- We did the report, and the report was included in the annual report about french language sendto all the french parliament

- In the 2011 summer, meeting with the digital manager of the General Department and his team to discuss about the rôle of Wikipedia and Wiktionary for languages on internet

- We were invited to participate to the « General Estates of Multilinguism in the Overseas » in French Guyana in december 2011, to explain the importance of the Wikimedia projects and encourage people to contribute on Wikipedia in french and in native language (France has more than 70 languages spoken in its territory, including Breton, Corse, Alsacien, Occitan, and a lot of native languages in the Overseas like indian languages, Kanak, Creole etc.
- We product a second report, about Wikipedias in small languages of France (only 2 wikipedias!)

- The conference in French Guyana was a success : we have the opportunity to make outreach for people who don't know they can edit Wikipedia and create a Wikipedia in their language

- On a other side, we start other projects related to give access to Wikipedia with offline solutions in West and Central Africa, where most people speak french (Afripedia project)

- This project give us contacts with people who speak often an other language, even french language is the language used in universities, administration etc.

- We know that African content, Overseas content etc. is not very present on french Wikipedia (some cities in Africa with dozen thousand of habitants doesn't have an article, instead of some villages with 70 habitants in mainland France have...)

- 70% of the contributors on the french Wikipedia are from France (but not from the Overseas) and more than 90 % of the contributors are from occidental countries (France, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland)

Wikimédia France wants to :

- help to create content about the cultural areas of these languages on French Wikipedia

- Promote Wikipedia in french AND in the french territories

- Give our strength to help Francophonie with a multilinguism focus

- increase the community in these areas
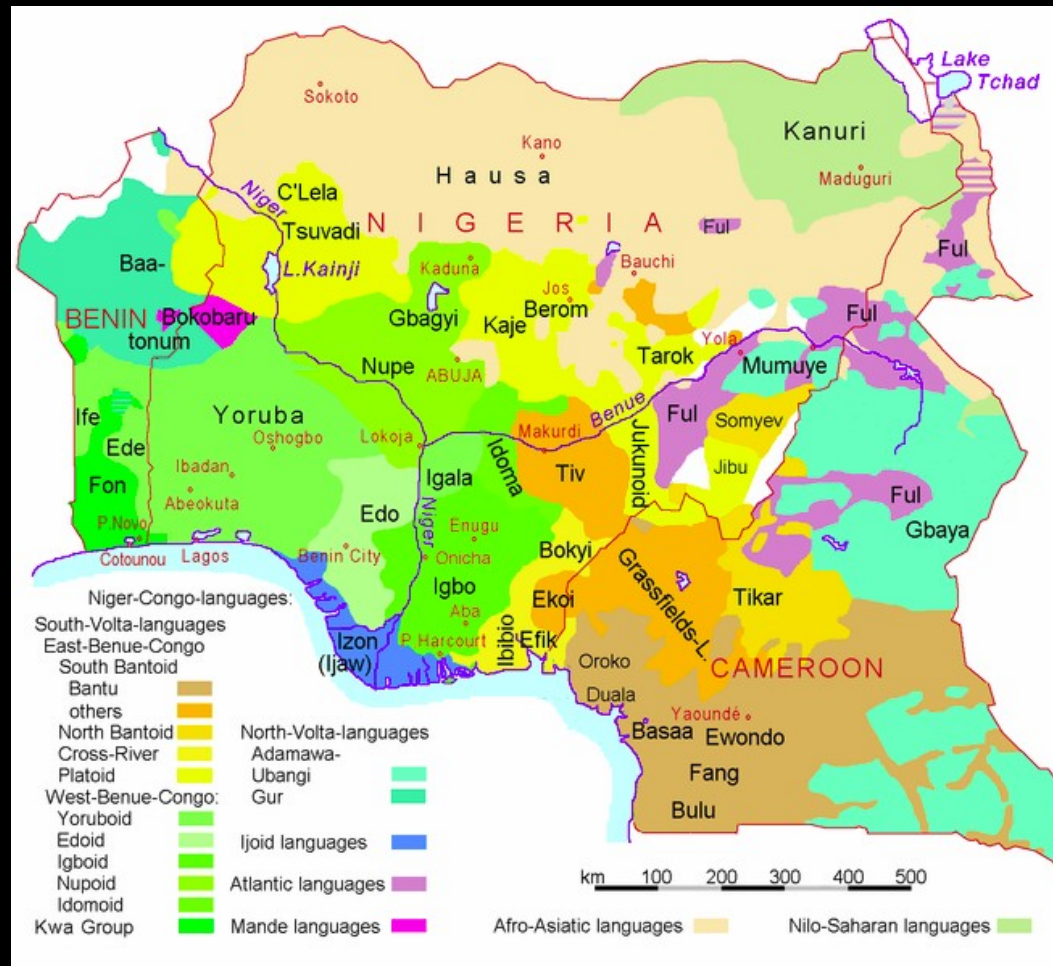
- create content in small / native languages

Challenges

- **Geography** :
  - The french chapter in most active in mainland France : we don't have a lot of volunteers in overseas territories. And the overseas are frequently very far... (New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna islands in Pacific, Territories in Indian Ocean, in Caraib islands, in south America)

  - The main part of contributors in french Wikipedia are from Europe and Québec : we don't have communities and chapters in Africa, for example.
    ==> note that the tunisian wikipedians are very active since few months, maybe a future chapter ?

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- **Languages** :
  - Native languages are often oral
    - Some of them were never written (some kanak languages, amerindian languages)
    - Some of them were written by missionnaries and it is now contested by folks
  - Some of them have several type of writing (for example, Shimaore language is written in arabic writing and latin writing)
  - What can we do with a language spoken by less than X thousand people ? Really will survive ?

- **Technology**
  - Bad quality to access to internet
  - Internet is very expansive in a lot of places (in Africa, but in some places in France too : Amazonian forest in French Guyana, islands in Pacific etc.)
  - People can not just do « stroll » into Wikipedia and read what they want, just for pleasure

- **Mental brake**
  - These languages are used for private and traditionnal conversations, or for litterature
  - People have not vocabulary to write about sciences, abstract facts
  - They say that they must release something in their mind to write encyclopedic articles in their native language : in school, university, administration, French is always used
  - Need to find some new words or insert french words into their languages
  - In some tribal folks (especially in Pacific), the language is the property of the folks, they can not share with external people

Projects

- **Collaboration with institutions dedicated to the promotion of languages**
  - The General Department for French Language and Languages of France
  - Some departments in the International Organization of Francophonie
    - They have contacts, experience
    - They can give or help to have content with free licenses (after a conference in Cayenne, we get back some audio files with native languages)

- **Giving a better access to Wikipedia**
  - Afripedia project, to give offline access with updates of content in the African universities
  - In the same time, organizing workshops to train new contributors : big need to training
  - Giving help and projects together during a long time : not just giving the basis, but conduct the projects over time

Dreamplug for Afripedia

- **Help to create new wikimedia projects**
  - New wikipedias, new wiktionaries
  - Having a good use of Wikimedia Incubator
  - Sometimes, get back some old projects (ex. encyclopedia in Saramaca language, written in the 90's : we maybe can do a basis for a Wiktionary)
  - Educationnal projects : write or translate articles in french and in the native language at the same time

And see…

- **Wikimédia France reports about languages :**

  http://www.wikimedia.fr/%C3%A9tudes-et-rapports

- **Afripedia project :**

  http://www.wikimedia.fr/afripedia or

  http://blog.wikimedia.org/2012/06/28/afripedia-collaboration-expands-offline-wikip