Beyond Authors and Translators: Expanding and diversifying participation in Global Voices

Introduction

Global Voices believes strongly in diversity and inclusion. These two values have been part of our ethos from the start and are central to our makeup as a community. Creating a platform for a wide variety of voices and stories is a big part of our mission, and to achieve that goal, we need to make room for all types of people to contribute.

While GV is already a standout community in terms of participation, with exemplary levels of participation by women and traditionally underrepresented groups, we are always looking to do better and find ways to involve an even broader range of contributors.

Similar ideas came up during the 2018 GV Council conversation about "Degrees of Professionalism." In that deliberation, the "model" that the council overwhelmingly supported, with almost twice as many votes as the next most popular, was called "Diversifying types of participation — Hybrid." Its focus was on finding a place within GV for people who are unable to contribute by writing or translating stories, and on helping them to develop their skills over time. We encourage everyone to review the details of that model, as well as the whole document, if you have time.

We believe that making participation in GV more inclusive will not only increase the diversity and number of contributors —a valuable goal in and of itself. It will also help GV remain vibrant, relevant and dynamic as we move into the future.

In this deliberation, we aim to brainstorm and develop plans for changes we can make to our organization that will help us achieve this goal.

Summary of the issue

The GV community, as it is currently structured, privileges participation by people with a specific set of abilities, profiles and temperaments: basically, extroverts who are able to communicate in English, who have sufficient skill and free time to write or translate stories on a voluntary basis, and who have easy access to a reliable internet connection.

At GV, most people fulfil at least one of the following **main** roles:

- Author - writing stories
- Translator - translating stories
- Regional Editor - leading a regional newsroom team
- Translation Manager - leading a Lingua translation team

- Other Editor or Manager - e.g. social media team, translation services
- Other team member - e.g. social media team
- Core team member - managing the organization
- Other contractors (e.g researchers, translators working on translation services projects)

GV contributors also participate in the community in other **complementary** ways, such as representing the community on the board and Community Council, interacting with other members in the community on mailing lists and chats, supporting advocacy campaigns, running the GV Instagram account, and sharing knowledge through initiatives such as the recent Community Exchanges.

There is also a category of people who participate in GV initiatives or are affiliated with GV in some way, but are not fully integrated into the community. These include Rising Voices grantees, participants in GV-led Twitter campaigns, some "external" researchers, media partners, potential community members we meet during Summits (e.g. our group of local connectors in Sri Lanka), and individuals and groups for whom GV (through Friends of Global Voices) acts as a fiscal sponsor.

GV alumni—volunteers and contractors who are no longer active—represent another group whom it would be beneficial to reintegrate into the community in some way.

For both people in the "affiliated" category and inactive GV alumni, we currently have no process for moving them from the periphery to more meaningful membership in the GV community.

The deliberation

In this Council deliberation, we aim to explore how to make GV a more inclusive community by:

1. Reviewing and clarifying existing roles and processes to ensure that they continue to function effectively in a more open and inclusive GV community environment
2. Developing and defining additional roles that would allow a more diverse set of people to participate in the community and offer their unique skills
3. Developing plans for concrete initiatives that we can undertake as a community to achieve these goals

What these changes would bring to GV

Opening up the GV community to participation by a greater diversity of people would:

- Enrich and expand the overall community experience
- Introduce a greater variety of viewpoints into our work
- Enlarge our network to include new regions and communities
- Help us meet our goal of being a genuinely inclusive project where all types of people can both contribute and develop their skills

Some initial ideas and questions

Tips and leads: We have long envisioned a role within GV that would allow people to contribute to story production in the form of offering tips and leads. This already happens on an informal basis. How do we formalize this?

Harnessing existing skills and capacity: As the recent Community Exchanges have shown, there is a wealth of skill and knowledge within the GV Community. How do we make skill- and knowledge-sharing a more integral role in the community? And how could we integrate skills such as photography and illustration into our workflows?

Community census: If we were to conduct a community "census", what questions should we ask, and what information should we collect? What would you like to know about our community?

Making newsroom discussions more open and accessible: how do we involve a greater diversity of people (e.g. authors, translators and media partners) in discussions around story ideas and production?

Language: How do we make it easier for people who do not have high English-language proficiency to participate in the GV community?

Leadership roles: One of the most popular ideas from the 2018 council was more opportunities for leadership within GV outside the staples of Translation Manager and Regional Editor. What roles could GV implement to enrich our work and spread opportunities more widely?

Mentorship: The GV community can be a confusing place for new contributors, especially those who are just starting out as writers or translators. Can we build a process for matching new contributors with more experienced GV community members who can help navigate the ins and outs of GV?

We know that many more questions and ideas will occur to you as you digest the content of this paper. We look forward to discussing them with you on the Council mailing list and Zoom calls.

Thank you for participating, and for all that you give to GV!

July 13, 2020