

# Clash of Cultures, Clash of Values

## Wikipedia and Indigenous Communities

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# Chapter Outline

- 1 Wikipedia Overview
- 2 Reviewer's Comments
- 3 Selected Results



# The 21<sup>st</sup> century encyclopedia



WIKIPEDIA

- Started 2001, open source, content licensed under CC-BY-SA
- 36 million articles, 291 languages
- Largest edition: English, 5.2 million articles, 10 billion page views
- the Internet's largest and most popular general reference work
- Written by about 90,000 volunteers
- 21<sup>st</sup> century's **outline**, **bibliography**, and **definition** of knowledge



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# Wikipedia's relevance for Namibia

- available in English, German, Afrikaans, Chinese, Portuguese
  - ... the native tongues of former and current colonial masters
  - 3 editors are actively writing about Namibia—2 Germans, 1 Australian
  - ⇒ 'Namibian narrative' again told from an alien perspective
- Namibian indigenous languages are in Incubator at best
  - Oshindonga: 54 articles
  - Otjiherero: 80 articles
  - Khoekhoegowab: 1 article
  - Silozi, Rukwangali, Ju'Hoansi, Oshikwanyama, Taa, !Kung ... :-(
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# #1: What did you actually *do*?

- 1 Hypothesised values to be the independent variable of editing activity
- 2 Hypothesised common values throughout Otjiherero–speaking community
- 3 Idea: Every language edition makes their own rules
- 4 Offered a ‘Wikipedia without rules’ to a group of OvaHerero
- 5 Observed self–organisation
- 6 Conceptualised and described the differences
- 7 Discussed desired features (Value Sensitive Design)
- 8 Evaluated their feasibility in a future Otjiherero Wikipedia





## #2: But that's all *black and white!*

- Only the most obvious differences collected for now
- Both Wikipedians and OvaHerero lack an accepted ethnological description
- Verification mechanism: one veteran Wikipedian, two Otjiherero native speakers



# Trust: Why should I believe you?

- OvaHerero: trust the contributor
  - Groups defined by their members
  - Speech inseparable from speaker
  - Elders speak, others desist
- Wikipedians: trust the contribution
  - Individuality
  - Anonymity
  - Verifiability
- **Solvable conflict:** audiovisual content, username policy, group accounts, page protection



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# Ownership: Anyone may edit

- OvaHerero: Strong oppose
  - Every bit of knowledge has a hierarchy of owners
  - Outside influence not welcome
- Wikipedians: Strong support
  - Knowledge is not created but merely documented
  - Diversification of duties
- **Not a conflict:**
  - Content that cannot be improved will not be improved
  - Mere reporting (audio, video) acceptable to OvaHerero
  - “Theorising” unwanted by both groups



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# Collaboration: How shall we work?

- OvaHerero: Offline deliberation, present the end result
  - Be silent if you're not designated to speak
  - Present nothing half-baked
  - Change nothing that resulted from consensus
- Wikipedians: Online drafts of varying quality
  - “Experts are scum”
  - Start somewhere to get the work done
  - Use consensus for changes
- Probably **solvable conflict**:
  - No problem: voluntary self-censorship
  - Doubtful: Different perceptions of quality
  - Doubtful: What about alternative narratives?



# Courtesy: How shall we treat each other?

- OvaHerero: Extreme politeness is existential
  - Plethora of rules and customs
  - Harmony before all else
- Wikipedians: Nice-to-have
  - Extensive civility policies, selectively enforced
  - “Right to blow up” occasionally
- **Solvable conflict:** Community rules are the blueprint



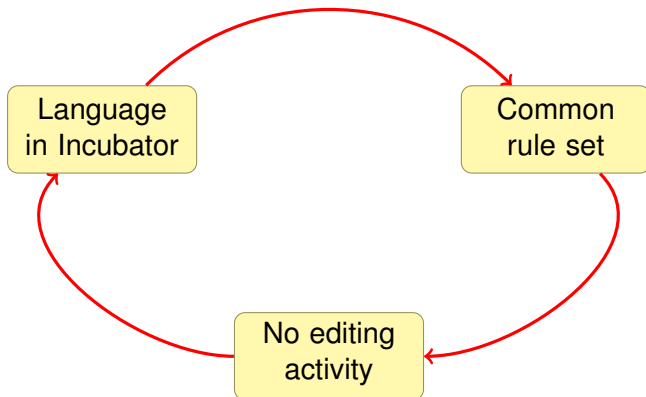
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# Vicious Circle



# End of Presentation

- Thanks to the [Wikimedia Foundation](#) and the [Namibia Knowledge Portal](#) for sponsoring this project

## Any questions?

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