



Why Universities Distrust Field Researchers?

Indigenous Knowledge and Research Encounters

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Venue: Law Lecture Theatre 1 (G31)

The *Rethinking Indigeneity* project has been running for 22 years amongst the indigenous of the southern Africa's Kalahari. The seven phase project has examined the nature of research encounters and how indigeneity is constructed through these encounters¹. This project has recognised some research participants as co-generators of knowledge, on occasion as our co-authors, and even as primary authors. Our research reveals that our Kalahari partners have agency, teaching often ignorant researchers about themselves and their situations. This presentation and discussion will examine:

- The nature of the **encounter** in doing field research;
- The **value of indigenous and experiential narrative** in research that challenges the alienating biomedical positivistic logic of institutional review boards will be discussed using the illustrated postmodern archaeology, *Engraved Landscape* (2013)², published in English, Afrikaans and Nama. I assess the contradictions that cause university managements to refuse to recognise such work as *bona fide* research, even in the face of university and state policy promoting Indigenous Knowledge Systems as an academic, policy and social change enterprise.
- Along with interpretive practices that aim to be ethical, transformative, participatory, and committed to dialogue, I discuss **decolonising** research practices in the face of their being institutionally re-colonised and instrumentally restricted by review boards, academic auditors, neo-liberal managerialism and by civic bodies.

Bio: Keyan G Tomaselli is Distinguished Professor, University of Johannesburg, and was Director of the Centre for Communication, Media and Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal for 29 years.

His publications on the *Rethinking Indigeneity* project include: *San Representation: Politics, Practice and Possibility* (with Michael Wessels, 2015); *Cultural Tourism: Rethinking Indigeneity* (2012); *Writing in the S/and* (2007); *Where Global Contradictions are Sharpest* (2005), and he has edited two special journal issues on the topic: "From One to Another: Auto-Ethnographic Explorations in Southern Africa", *Cultural Studies* ↔ *Critical Methodologies* (2003), and "Encounters in the Kalahari", *Visual Anthropology*, (1999). See also Tomaselli, K.G., Dyll-Myklebust, L. & van Grootheest, S. (2013). Personal/Political Interventions via Autoethnography: Dualisms, Knowledge, Power and Performativity in Research Relations. In Holman Jones, S. Adams, T.E, Ellis, C. (eds.) *The Handbook of Autoethnography*. California: Left Coast Books.

¹ See: Dyll-Myklebust, L. (2013) Chapter 5. Blurring the lines: Rethinking Indigeneity research at Biesje Poort. In Lange M.E., Müller Jansen L., Fisher R.C., Tomaselli K.G. and Morris, D. (eds.) *Engraved Landscape. Biesje Poort: Many Voices*. Pretoria: Tormentosa, 81-87.

² Lange, M., Muller Jansen, L., Fisher, R.C., Tomaselli, K.G. and Morris, D. *Engraved Landscape. Biesje Poort. Many Voices*. For an animated view see: <http://www.biesjepoortbook.co.za/>