Chapter 3

Fostering the Rapprochement of Anthropology and Indigenous Studies: The Encounter of an Italian Anthropologist with Kaupapa Māori Research

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In this chapter I share my experience as an anthropologist working with Māori academics and encountering Māori approaches to research. During my doctoral studies I investigated the indigenization of rugby in New Zealand and the socio-cultural and political impact of this phenomenon on the definitions of Māori identity (Calabrò 2011). I was enrolled in a PhD programme at the University of Messina (Italy), but moved to New Zealand for a year,[1] where I was hosted and supported by the School of Māori Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. Māori Studies used to be a branch of anthropology and acquired autonomy in 1978, when Sir Mead started the programme of Māori Studies at Victoria University (cf. Mead 1997), directly defying anthropology's monopoly over research methods and indigenous issues.

This positioning enabled me to connect to the Māori academic community, familiarize with their approach to knowledge, known as Kaupapa Māori research, and thus negotiate my space as a researcher. It ended up being a parallel fieldwork. While investigating about Māori and rugby, I was also trying to understand the Māori approach to research and reflecting on my unintentional internalization of colonial attitudes. And I puzzled how and where to locate myself in the Māori academic community as a non-Māori, a non-New Zealander and an anthropologist.

Multiple nebulous zones emerged from this experience. It does not suggest the banning of anthropology, nor does it suppose outsiders necessarily observing and analysing indigenous issues. Conflict and frictions centre, first and foremost, around political and historical issues favouring Western epistemes – a term that Kuokkanen (2007) borrowed from Foucault to emphasize the indissolubility of knowledge and worldview which seems to go unnoticed when we use the term epistemology – over indigenous ones to the extent that many Westerners do not

1 I started my PhD in 2007. I was in New Zealand in 2008 (February–December) coinciding with the New Zealand academic year. I went back in the period February–March 2009, in order to observe some Māori rugby events, and shortly visited in July 2010.

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recognize that scientific alternatives exist. Negotiations are possible, but they are endless, depending on contingencies, personalities and awareness of the issues.

Genesis of the Journey

My introduction to *Cultural Anthropology* occurred in 2002 in Italy when I was studying Foreign Languages and Literature. It was an optional subject, the exact content of which was unclear to many students. By and large, anthropology represents a niche subject in Italian academia. Like some forefathers of anthropology, I stepped into this world accidentally and indirectly, detouring from my initial studies. What captivated me was that anthropology addressed my intellectual curiosity about cultural variety, and diversity of social issues, while promoting – it seemed to me – respect and mutual understanding of people as cultural subjects.

I learnt about its history, its past faults and its present tensions. The classes also focussed on local relations with anthropological science, when the Italians were 'observed' before being 'observers'. Here anthropological research did not occur within the colonial frame, but I vividly recall images of humble southern Italian peasants – reminding me of my grandparents and the Calabrian reality where I grew up – being described as superstitious and primitive by early observers. My familiarity with Southern Italy enhanced my awareness of the cultural discrimination which pervaded early analyses, and reinforced my empathy towards the 'observed', whose dignity was usually compromised.

The Italian relationship with anthropology is recent, but complex. Local changing attitudes emerged as early as in the 1950s, involving the humanizing approach of Ernesto De Martino. Prior to the post-modern debate over the validity of anthropology's analytical categories and the elaboration of an engaged anthropology, De Martino, who focussed on magic and religion amongst the marginalized inhabitants of southern Italy and the islands (see, for example, De Martino 2005 [1961]), promoted a 'critical reflection on the very categories of our analysis and recognition that these categories derive from our own ethnocentric values' (Saunders 1993: 878), hence, the denomination of his stance as 'critical ethnocentrism' (ibid.). Claiming that all values were historically determined, De Martino engaged in historicizing the lives of southern Italians (1941, 1949); influenced by Gramsci, he disclosed the power differentials that permeated cultural observation (1951). Finally, reflecting on the moral and intellectual implications of research, he suggested that 'one needs to find the way to an ordinary human relation, and situate in the right point where one can be with them in the *same* history' (1999 [1995]: 62).

The legacy of De Martino equally impacted on my predisposition towards the discipline. In this case, it suggested that anthropology had the potential to learn from its mistakes. Nevertheless, being situated on the anthropological periphery, and with my limited anthropological education, I was somehow less aware of the burdensome legacy of anthropology's relationship with colonialism (cf. Asad 1973;

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Lewis 1973; Clifford 2004), and the acrimony of some 'classical' anthropological debates (cf. Trask 2001; Obeyesekere 1997). Such degree of naivety played a role in my decision to work with Māori.

If the forces that normally and silently inform one's election of the site had prevailed – such as career outcomes or the topicality of a site, I would have perhaps not dared to propose a doctoral project working in the Māori community. The choice was peculiar in Italian academia. Furthermore, Māori culture scarcely features today in the anthropological landscape. To some extent, the same reason that it fits the archetype of fieldwork (distant, native, tribal) makes it controversial. Also, the emergence of Māori Studies paralleled by indigenous political and social activism has resulted in the alienation of Western researchers from New Zealand's indigenous world (cf. Hanson 1989; Webster 1998).

In New Zealand an anthropologist actually lamented to me that post-graduate students are nowadays unwilling to carry out projects with Māori because they fear them. As I learnt, Māori anthropology students may experience distress too when dealing with Māori Studies. Personally, I have never viewed myself as an intrepid anthropologist. When I sent out my research proposal to the head of Māori Studies, I feared it would be discarded because of my non-Māoriness. At some stage of the fieldwork, I felt uncomfortable. Yet, I was never scared enough not to consider working with Māori or to abandon the field.

I believe the main difference between New Zealanders and I rested in our being situated in different historical and anthropological contexts. I was not familiar with feelings such as guilt for my ancestors' deeds, or fear to discover the unbalance that hides behind a flaunted bicultural credo. I was not affected by the socio-political dynamics that characterize the country and I was not influenced by the misrepresentation of the indigenous community in the dominant discourse, which, I argue, plays an important role in informing non-Māori perceptions of Māori. If anything, I was influenced by the international mis/representation of Māori within rugby, which instilled fascination and curiosity rather than hostility. From this point of view, being an outsider did play a positive role. It allowed my imagination to move freely and shape a collaboration with Māori.

There was also something accidental in my decision to consider a Māori-related topic, albeit it might sound cliché (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 11). When I started attending anthropology classes, I was already interested in learning about Māori culture. My then partner was from New Zealand. Even though they were not indigenous, he and his family had offered me Māori bone carving and *pounamu* (greenstone) pendants as a gift. That expression of New Zealand's indigenous culture had somehow become part of me. As such, it had been piquing my curiosity. Furthermore, a three-month stay in New Zealand was already planned. Thus, I passionately turned a sojourn motivated by personal reasons into an anthropological enquiry on aspects of Māori culture.[2] Following my studies,

2 That first approach to indigenous culture resulted in my four-year degree dissertation, where I focussed on the *marae* and its rituals.

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I moved to New Zealand for a year's work experience and learned more about New Zealand ethnic relations and indigenous culture. By the time I decided to undertake doctoral studies in cultural anthropology, I had become quite familiar with New Zealand, its history and social dynamics.

My approach to anthropology and fortuitousness allowed me to picture a research with Māori, yet I believed that I would need the support of the Māori academic community. Both the indigenous mistrust I experienced when I first started to show an interest in Māori culture and the understanding of the historical context I had gained from my stays in New Zealand solicited such a solution. Accordingly, I sent the project's outline to the head of a school of Māori Studies, asking for approval and hospitality. His assent proved that Māori academics do not a priori exclude non-Māori participation to Māori research. As a matter of fact, at that time the school at Victoria was hosting other non-Māori researchers. However, being welcomed to Māori Studies was like being admitted to pass a test rather than passing the test. I was given a chance; the chance to be exposed to Māori research and to experience what is actually about, and to prove that I was worth trusting as a researcher.

The Intelligibility of Epistemic Plurality

When I arrived in Māori Studies, some Māori students recommended I read Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) book about decolonizing methodologies and the formalization of a Māori approach to research known as Kaupapa Māori research. The Māori term '*Kaupapa*' (agenda, philosophy, programme) situates research in a Māori context, integrating their worldview, practices, needs and goals. The Māori understanding of the world, *mātauranga*, rests on distinctive semantic and ontological orders, but early non-Māori observers dismissed it as puerile and irrational (cf. Polack 1840; Thomson 1859), or only valued it as figurative representation of the world – through allegories and personification (Best 1921). In this sense, Kaupapa Māori research has restored the dignity of Māori knowledge.

While students and researchers in Māori Studies asserted an indigenous path to knowledge, I actually sensed that the atmosphere in the Māori academic space was quite dissimilar to what I had theretofore experienced. Everyone viewed the Māori Studies' community (students, teachers and administrators) as a family, upholding values such as reciprocity, sharing, humbleness and participation. Importance was given to collective decision-making. The community aspired to *kotahitanga* (unity) in spite of frictions and dissimilarities.[3] As a researcher, everyone felt responsible towards the Māori community at large as well as the people involved in their work. Everyone showed strong critical spirit in an ironic way, making

3 For example, some were more inclusive or more hostile towards anthropology and non-Māori researchers than others, but the engagement to decolonization was a common denominator.

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engagement and determination to achieve intellectual enfranchisement palpable. There was the presence of *mana* (spiritual prestige/authority) with the *marae* (Māori ceremonial centre) acting as a 'physical metaphor for intellectual domain' (Hokowhitu 2010a: 13). There was respect for the ancestors symbolized by the carved meeting-house, and emphasis on hospitality (defined by Māori values and procedures). Conferences were modelled on the Māori *hui* (meeting), thus revolving around the *marae* and valuing hospitality.

First of all, the Māori Studies community has emerged as a metaphorical *whānau*. The *whānau* is the basic kin-structure of society with a set of defining values and procedures (Metge 1990, 1995). All the more often groups based on common interests rather than descent or kin 'use the word whaanau as symbol and charter, expressing the quality of their commitment to each other and continually reminding themselves of the tikanga (practices and values) which they associate with the whaanau and to which they aspire' (Metge 1990: 74). People in Māori Studies explicitly refer to their department as *whānau*. The same Māori language points to the notion of *whānau* as paradigm of Māori social relations. The concept of social relationship is expressed by the term '*whanaungatanga*'. Many research participants used this term to define the camaraderie of Māori rugby. It is a relationship based on shared experiences and working together, and informed by reciprocity, where people develop a sense of belonging. To refer to the process of establishing such a relationship, Māori use the term '*whakawhanaungatanga*', where *whaka* means 'to cause something to happen, cause to be'. This same term is also used to translate 'relating well'.

The *whānau*-like relationships within Māori Studies provided insights on the Māori-defined research I was reading about in the books. Firstly, the relation between researcher and informant should be a replica of those relationships. Secondly, the responsibility of the researcher towards the community upheld by Kaupapa Māori research is not solely relevant to the political context; it also falls within Māori social dynamics, where the relationship with the community contributes to define the individual. Finally, the values which ideally inform the *whānau* underpin the ethical guidelines of Kaupapa Māori research as identified by Linda Smith (1999: 120): *aroha ki te tangata* (a respect for people); *kanohi kitea* (the seen face, that is commit yourself, participate); *titiro, whakarongo ... korero* (look, listen … speak); *manaaki ki te tangata* (share and host people, be generous); *kia tupato* (be cautious); *kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* (do not trample over the *mana* of people); *kaua e mahaki* (don't flaunt your knowledge). As a matter of fact, formulations of Kaupapa Māori research have explicitly viewed the notion of *whānau* as a pivotal element in organizing research (Nepe 1990; Smith 1999; Bishop 1998). *Whānau*-like dynamics make Māori Studies a safe academic environment to Māori, where they do not have to justify who they are and what they do. I argue that this aspect is paramount in legitimizing the existence of Māori Studies. I also believe that detractors of indigenous studies usually miss this aspect, for the simple reason that they have not experienced or

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managed to empathize with the cultural estrangement and frustration minority groups tend to experience within mainstream contexts (cf. Sandri's chapter).

To continue, Māori research has emerged as an integrated whole, for 'Māori's science system is in a form that cannot be separated from the family system, religion system and political system' (Ito 2004: 20). The Japanese anthropologist Ito (2004) observed Māori Studies as a discipline against Luhmann's social system theory, which describes modern society as being functionally differentiated in many systems, which are autonomous, self-referential and closed, and use binary codes (for example, true/false; legal/illegal). Upholding an all-encompassing approach to science, Māori Studies are viewed as an example of 'dedifferentiation' of systems. Thus, holism emerges as the defining trait of Māori Studies against non-indigenous disciplines. Because of the non-alignment of indigenous studies with the logic of Western disciplines, their scientific integrity is often questioned.

The polarities of Western/dominant groups and Indigenous groups do not circumscribe differences in knowledge, academic institution, and power relations. As a student initiated in anthropology in an Italian institution, I recognize the presence of centre and peripheries within my discipline (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 25–9;) as well as the impact of my national scientific field 'with its traditions, habits of thought, problematics, shared commonplaces, and so on' (Bourdieu 2003: 283), which caused me to experience a subtle form of estrangement in the mainstream institution where Māori Studies is situated too. Still, despite my academic origins and the awareness of cultural difference which pertains to anthropology, I had not appropriately anticipated the 'cultural shock' at Māori Studies, which shows the extent to which we fail to realize that the academic environment is itself culturally informed, and take many of our procedures and values for granted.

However, I also realized that our tendency to give our research categories and academic practices for granted paradoxically confirms the very cultural dimension of academia. As illustrated by Kuokkanen, episteme '[…] is a mode of social reality, a reality that is taken-for-granted ground whose unwritten rules are learned (or as Foucault would say, "written" in the social order) through the processes of socialization into a particular culture' (2007: 53). From this point of view, I argue that the Māori-enhanced awareness of their episteme is to be ascribed to the historical events that have not allowed them to take it for granted. Māori have had to objectify their episteme, in order to preserve it and safeguard it. Ultimately, this comes down again to power differentials.

Historicizing Māori Studies' Bitterness towards Anthropology

Being entrenched in the Māori worldview, the authority of Māori Studies and *kaupapa* Māori research transcends the here and now. Yet, we have to consider political motives, which are the same as the indigenous movement, and inform the same definition of 'indigenous' as illustrated by Sillitoe's chapter. Māori Studies, like indigenous studies generally, oppose subjugation within the field of

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knowledge challenging Western disciplinary control (cf. Walker 1996; Smith 1999; Mahuika 2008). Unlike other disciplines, anthropology has esteemed non-Western knowledge for generations, even though mostly framed in Western categories. Similarly, it has tried to dialogue with indigenous communities for a long time. Anthropologists who worked during the colonial era were not usually part of the colonial machine; nor did they necessarily endorse colonialist ideas, so much so that we also find early attempts of self-reflexivity; moreover, the colonial officers did not appreciate anthropologists either.[4] Nevertheless, due to the historical context and the way ethnographies have been used by colonial and postcolonial forces, amongst indigenous people anthropology has gained a reputation as the main academic locus of colonial domination,[5] and tends to be still perceived as 'the study of primitive societies' as it used to be conceived in its origins (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1951; Nadel 1953).

I have accordingly been told or suggested that my research was unethical. Or obsolete. I have been 'challenged' by being asked how I would feel if someone started observing and commenting upon the people I identified with and our culture, being presumed that it would not normally be the case. I responded by admitting I would be initially suspicious too. I shared my community's relation to anthropology. I illustrated the definition of anthropology I embraced. I stressed that it was not my intention to get into a competition between internal and external gaze and to replace the Māori viewpoint. I described my standpoint as complementary to the insider one, provided that no-one is ever totally outsider or insider,[6] and that one's specific experiences impact on research as much as the (not) belonging to the culture investigated. On one occasion I challenged back, arguing that it would have been really interesting to see my culture and the West in general through a Māori lens. How would they perceive facts, values and practices? How would they approach research? In that case, it was pointed out that Māori cannot afford the time to understand other cultures, for they have to daily strive to legitimate and preserve their own, and have to urgently face issues deeply affecting their community well-being.

The conclusion is that to some extent I was able to defend anthropology and to go to the other side of world in order to work with Māori, because I was privileged enough not to have to constantly worry about defending my own culture and

4 See Wendy James (1973) and her analysis of Malinowski's writings about the relation between anthropology and colonialism. See also Sillitoe (2006) and his review of the application of anthropology during British colonialism, and Bourdieu (1985) and his observation of the relationship between anthropologists and colonial officers in the French colony of New Caledonia.

5 See Ottenberg (1990: 151) who remembered going to do fieldwork in Nigeria driven by a genuine interest and ideals of recognition and seeing his fieldnotes labelled as colonialist as soon as Nigeria gained independence in 1960.

6 The scientific approach to facts and events create a first element of disconnection from the community we work with (cf. Narayan 1993: 679–80).

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identity. In indigenous contexts many grievances remain feeding resentment. Anthropologists' work – decontextualized, misinterpreted and manipulated – may still be misused by media and dominant institutions.[7] Furthermore, the balance of power still favouring *Pākehā* (New Zealanders of European descent) over Māori, the latter can exercise *rangatiratanga* (self-determination) in a meaningful way in Māori contexts only (Metge 1995: 311). Basically, when Māori and I talked about anthropology, we would often talk past each other, our perceptions of anthropology being related to distinct pasts and distinct presents.

It is also interesting noting that the Māori view of culture does not encourage anthropological observation either. All expressions which can be labelled as culture (symbols, rituals, language, arts, knowledge about the world) are classified as *taonga*, a term commonly translated as treasures, precious possessions. They are therefore expected to be treated with respect, preserved and transmitted to the inheritors, and are collectively held and managed by *iwi* (tribe), *hapū* (subtribe), and *whānau*. The consequence is that 'Māori who have internalized this understanding about the nature of knowledge […] refuse to generalize about Mātauranga Māori and speak only of what they learnt and know as members of their own iwi, hapū and whānau' (Metge 1995: 310). This aspect emerged when interviewing, inasmuch as participants would frequently clarify that they could not speak on behalf of all Māori, or that they could only refer to the experience of their own tribal groups. This makes us reflect upon the fact that the mere act of generalizing upon cultures, talking about and 'handling' cultures different from our own is situated in the Western logic. When we question our research possibilities with Māori, we should maybe 'worry' about this aspect rather than the Māori current opposition to the discipline.

In Māori contexts the critical approach to anthropology as a form of political domination is, however, long-standing. The correspondence between Te Rangi Hīroa (or Sir Peter Buck), the first Māori anthropologist, and the politician and lawyer Apirana Ngata, who played a pivotal role in the resurgence of Māori pride and the improvement of their socio-cultural condition during the first half of the last century, provides an honest and acute observation of anthropology at the time, which remains topical (Sorrenson, vols 1–3, 1986). In 1928 Ngata expressed his distress at the way Anglo-American anthropologists represented Māori and other native peoples negatively (Sorrenson, vol. 1, 1986: 91–2). In response to that comment, Buck advocated the creation of an indigenous approach to cultural analysis (Sorrenson, vol. 1, 1986: 121–2). We also see Buck considering and opposing the common idea that Māori lacked abstract thinking (Sorrenson, vol. 1, 1986: 236; cf. Metge 1976: 72–3), lamenting how Pākehā anthropologists normally glossed over Māori corrections and opinions, whenever they tried to make their voice heard (Sorrenson, vol. 2, 1986: 172), and revealing the Pākehā

7 A famous example is the article 'US expert states that Māori culture is an invention' published in 1990 by the New Zealand newspaper *The Dominion Post*, based on Hanson's article (1989), which caused a harsh socio-political debate.

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economic and political interests that lay behind the mission to 'civilize' the Māori and the use of anthropology to fulfil those goals (Sorrenson, vol. 2, 1986: 209–10). We even see him reflecting about the possibilities and limits of his view as insider in Māori culture (Sorrenson, vol. 1, 1986: 123–4).

Buck and Ngata questioned the authority of Western anthropologists and their methods and goals, but believed that the anthropological approach to culture could be used to their own benefit and in their own way. At the turn of the twentieth century, following the land wars, Māori had decreased to 15 per cent of the population and lost most of their lands. Morals were collapsing and many Māori were dismissing their practices and language, assimilation being seen as the only option available. Given this scenario, 'Ngata and Te Rangihoa saw Anthropology as a tool for cultural recovery and for expressing and maintaining a deeply-held sense of identity and cultural being' (Kahotea 2006: 6). As a matter of fact, Buck wrote several ethnographic monographs on Māori culture, documenting elements of Māori culture that were disappearing or had disappeared.

At first, I believed Buck and Ngata's stance could legitimize and ease a possible collaboration between anthropology and Māori research/ers today. The Māori anthropologist Kahotea (2006) also referred to Buck's work and approach to anthropology to justify his commitment to the anthropological research. Nonetheless, the scenario I have sketched in the previous paragraph suggests that at their time there was no alternative but to promote change within anthropology. Consequently, the use of research to benefit the community, the reflection on an indigenous approach to research, and the effort to challenge Western determination within research could be rather viewed as a primeval attempt of scientific self-determination and thus an early form of Māori Studies.[8]

In any case, following the Second World War, the socio-political and economic context changed radically and certainly left little space for similar even-handed voices,[9] and Māori definitely got to view anthropology as the stronghold of the

8 On the other hand, the Māori leaders were able to play a preeminent role in academy and politics because they participated to the new colonial society. In some cases, Buck would himself adopt stances that mirrored the interiorization of elements of evolutionism and cultural discrimination. For instance, he claimed the dignity and efficiency of Māori culture by referring to their alleged Aryan origins (cf. Hanson 1989). Like Westerners looked down on Māori, he would look down on Africans. These contradictions could be understood viewing Buck as a personality in-between two dissociated worlds, as his double name might suggest. In this sense, not only was the emancipation of Māori research from anthropology unfeasible, imagination could not conceive spaces of socio-cultural inquiry on Māori other than anthropology.

9 Ngata passed away in 1950. No leader able to stir Māori pride and energy emerged after his death. The curriculum of the Māori boarding schools had been changed, in order to orientate Māori towards manual and agricultural labour. New Zealand adopted an industrial economy. This economical change originated the phenomenon of Māori urbanization, which deeply affected Māori socio-cultural realities. New Zealand also ceased to be a colony and the government tried to accelerate assimilation. The Māori language had nearly been lost

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Pākehā definition of Māori.[10] The Māori upsurge at the national political level which is not solely about recognition, but is also an expression of indigenous conscientization (Smith, G. 2003), eventually enabled them to emancipate from anthropology. Seeking to elaborate an autochthonous approach cognisant of the Western notion of research, it is arguable that Māori Studies represent the intellectual pursuit of Buck's and Ngata's ideals today. This would corroborate the argument that anthropology is outdated, having been replaced by indigenous studies. Yet, Māori Studies go beyond the way of the scope and interests of anthropology, and the latter discipline is not merely about understanding indigenous cultures. Rather than substituting anthropology, I argue that Māori Studies have gained their own disciplinary dignity and space within the academia.

Facing Politics to Bridge Disciplinary Distance

Since the controversy between anthropology and Māori research stems first and foremost from the historical context, to negotiate a space as an anthropologist I had to encompass the political dimension of Māori Studies, its implications and responsibilities. The fact that I was doing Māori-related research and situated myself in a Māori academic context had political and ethical implications, which fully emerged in the range of reactions and qualms my positioning raised. I do not necessarily refer to Māori reactions. I include the response of anthropologists or students who stay away from Māori topics because of the political reality, and, above all, the reactions of non-Māori New Zealanders, particularly Pākehā.

Non-Māori were startled as much as Māori were by my interest in indigenous elements and issues. A few of them – usually people who were knowledgeable about indigenous culture – applauded my interest and approach. In most cases, I would perceive circumspection and malaise. Some seemed to be experiencing a feeling of inadequacy vis-à-vis the fact that I possessed a better knowledge about Māori than they did. Others seemed to automatically interpret my attempts to learn the Māori language and the Māori ways as my siding with the indigenous people in an alleged battle between Māori and Pākehā. Sometimes I was 'reminded' how Māori culture is unauthentic and merely political, or told that Māori had pushed beyond limits the 'story of the Treaty of Waitangi and the land'.[11] More frequently,

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and the whole context was discouraging. As a few Māori told me, from the 1950s to the 1970s many Māori downplayed their indigenous identity and neglected Māori practices because 'it was not cool to be Māori'.

10 I must nevertheless mention the contribution of Winiata Maharaia. He gained a PhD in Anthropology in 1954 and upheld Buck and Ngata's ideals and views about the discipline, but prematurely died in 1960.

11 On 6 February 1840 the representative of the Crown and various tribal chiefs met at Waitangi in the North Island to sign a treaty that established British sovereignty in New Zealand, recognized the Māori ownership of their lands and other properties and granted

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I was gently made to understand that I could not really appreciate how things worked because I was not a New Zealander.

Consequently, one cannot ignore the politics without de-historicizing Māori hostility towards anthropologists and, more generally Western observers, which, as noted, is the legacy of colonialism. I do not believe this is a reason to put a halt to anthropologically-informed research. When Smith identified four formulas of cultural sensitivity that could accommodate for Western presence, she actually mentioned the 'strategy of avoidance' (1999: 176). It might be argued that if the researchers are not prone to engagement, dialogue and understanding of indigenous needs and practices, avoidance might be preferable. However, it will eventually benefit no-one, as claimed by Smith (ibid.). Avoidance contributes to create and/or solidify barriers. It also amounts to acceptance of 'epistemological racism (i.e. what is considered legitimate epistemology in the academy) as well as of sheer indifference and ignorance of the sort that takes Western epistemes for granted as the only valid point of departure' (Kuokkanen 2007: 67).[12]

Avoidance is not necessarily indicative of cultural sensitivity either, insofar as fear seems more commonly to dictate it as well as a desire to spare oneself the trouble of complex negotiations, and unwillingness to question one's methodology and values to experiment with diverse approaches (cf. Reilly 1996: 404). From this point of view, avoidance suggests compliance with the dominant view of indigenous people and issues as problems. In New Zealand Māori are perceived as a problem (Walker 1996) and so is the Māori–Pākehā relationship (Maaka 2008), leading Smith to argue that 'problematizing the Indigenous is a Western obsession' (1999: 91).

During my first difficulties and discomfort in the field, I fell victim to this trite discourse, by viewing Māori reluctance towards Western observers and/or anthropologists as a problem. Realizing that I had been conforming with, and thus perpetuating, the dominant discourse had a significant impact on my field-approach. Accordingly, I started to view the situation as one where historical circumstances inflamed suspicion of the researcher, and to focus on why things had been easier in the past rather than the reasons why 'it is hard to work with Māori today'. Indeed, the issue is not so much that 'collaboration' used to be easier because of power imbalance, but about anthropology having been spoiled

Māori the rights and duties of British citizens. Māori view land confiscation as a breach of the promises made in the treaty. A permanent commission of inquiry, known as the Waitangi Tribunal, was set up in 1975. The tribunal makes recommendations on claims regarding breaches of the treaty brought by Māori and aiming to compensation or land restitution.

12 My impression was that ignorance and indifference were ingrained into the majority of non-Māori opinions of/attitudes towards Māori. In New Zealand these conditions are discreetly created by mainstream institutions. Ignorance is thus sanctioned (cf. Spivak 1990) and indifference is institutionalized (cf. Herzfeld 1992).

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by decades of (apparent) collaboration,[13] which makes it harder to accept and cope with obstructions and enmity.

Thus, rather than discontinuing anthropological research about indigenous-related issues, one should look for or try to build bridges towards collaboration, mutual respect and understanding (cf. Hendry 2007, Hendry & Fitznor 2012) and should conduct research bearing in mind the political implications of their work. While I believe that anthropological investigation becomes political exercise, I argue that its political dimension is quite subtle. It is about understanding the current research conditions as the result of history and politics and being aware of the community's vulnerability; it is about being responsible towards the community, more inclusive of their voices and vigilant as to the way data is handled and ideas are articulated. Refusing to face the political issues reiterates the mistake of anthropologists in the colonial era (cf. Asad 1973; Sillitoe 2006). We can be merciless towards our predecessors, overlooking primeval forms of self-reflexivity and historical constraints, but 'those scholars today who are critical of the colonial mentality of that time are just as likely to be blind to the current political realities in which they are entrapped and for which problem is perception of the current world one lives in; the past seems much easier to understand from within the framework of the present' (Ottenberg 1990: 152).

I found it illuminating to visualize the political arena where Māori and non-Māori meet as a myriad of intersecting trajectories and relationships, rather than a unique trajectory of two cultures opposing each other, as elaborated by the Torres Strait Islander scientist Martin Nakata (2007), who conceived this space as a 'cultural interface'. What I view as an obstacle in the acknowledgement of the historical legacy and the way it impacts on the 'cultural interface' is the enduring negative perception and use of the term 'political'. Many Pākehā implicitly blame Māori strongly asserting their Māori-ness as well as anti-colonial ideas and aspirations by labelling them as political. Likewise, the dominant discourse demeans Māori research by identifying it as mere political activism (cf. Sandri's chapter). What bemused me is that the Māori contexts are not exempt from this perception of the term. I noticed it was not uncommon for Māori to identify the position of more intransigent or radical scholars and thinkers as 'political', even though it would often occur in ironic terms. What about the 'non-radical' researchers? Implying that in that case there were no politics involved contradicted the holism as well as the engagement in decolonization of Māori Studies. In New Zealand the mere act of proudly and overtly stating one's indigenous identity corresponds to a political statement. Hence, we need to review critically the derogative interpretations of the term 'political' as it informs indigenous-related academic debates.

13 See Yacin, Mammeri and Bourdieu (2003) and their considerations on the illusions of the fieldworker regarding the collaboration of the observed ones in the colonial context.

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Investigating Māori and Rugby: Hows and Abouts

Rugby informed my first impressions of Māori, conveying images of a proud and strong people connected to their heritage while integrated into the egalitarian society embodied by the All Blacks, the New Zealand National team. This occurred in autumn 1999, when England was hosting the first professional Rugby World Cup and I was temporarily living in its capital. In that period a huge billboard of Adidas – sponsor of the All Blacks – was hanging in Tottenham Court Road, one of the busiest streets of London, displaying the tattooed face of a Māori warrior as a symbol of the team. Not long after the billboard had captured my eyes, I also watched my first All Blacks match and their pre-match performance of the *haka* (Māori posture dance), sensing immediately the clamor the team engendered in Europe. When events situated me on the crossroads between Europe and New Zealand and I started to actively get interested in Māori realities, rugby seemed to act as the background leitmotiv. Europeans who found out about my connections with New Zealand would regularly ask me questions concerning the *haka* and Māori as rugby players, voicing their rugby-related opinions of Māori and their stereotypes about indigenous people at large. While in New Zealand, I would look at things against the image vehicled through rugby, noticing that reality partly contradicted such an idyll. I realized that not only did rugby act as an interface between Māori and Europe, it also emerged as the main site where Māori and non-Māori would encounter. Also, I accessed a broader vision of Māori culture and gradually sensed that the relationship between Māori and rugby was much more than the simple Māori participation to a Western cultural practice. I therefore came to view rugby as a site that would provide further insights into the socio-cultural and political experience of Māori as colonized subjects as well as an indigenous minority in a postcolonial society.

This is how a non-Māori woman coming from a nation where rugby is a 'tradition under construction', and who had never been a rugby fan or played this game, ended up probing into the Māori relationship with rugby. My personal journey got me to reflect upon the phenomenon and identify it as a valuable research topic. Anthropology supplied the conceptual and theoretical instruments and the vocabulary to analyse it. Māori Studies provided me with guidance, intellectual sponsorship and the chance to actually interact with the Māori community.

However, my object of investigation somehow made my negotiation of a space more difficult. 'Rugby is just a game' is a refrain one can commonly hear in New Zealand. As such, it tends to be viewed as lacking relevant socio-cultural meaning and being separated from politics. A similar topic may be perceived as trivial, or not impellent enough within Māori research, and even with engaged anthropology. The topic as well as my apparent lack of credentials to analyse it (including being a woman) might have at first seemed to confirm the assumption that Māori are supposed to best know what is significant to them. I tried to demonstrate that perspectives originating from distinct experiences can instead enrich the spectrum

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of indigenous-related knowledge and I deem that the Māori worldview asserting the interdependence of all aspects of reality, it should sanction such complementarity.

The research confirmed that rugby has been the object of a process of indigenization, aiming to fulfil Māori ends of socio-cultural continuity and political recognition. It has allowed Māori to transmit some of their values and practices as a means of safeguarding and re-invigorating indigenous social dynamics undisturbed. Due to the elevated status of rugby in New Zealand society, rugby has also become a privileged site for Māori to participate in mainstream society and a platform to reaffirm their values and define their identity locally, nationally and internationally. Today, it is also seen as a site of social upward mobility. Nevertheless, rugby has also emerged as being still instrumental to the control of Māori cultural agency, representation and self-determination within the wider society. I therefore individuated an ambiguous and dialectic site, which bears testimony to both Pākehā hegemony and Māori resilience and has ambivalent repercussions on the contemporary indigenous lived experiences. I believe this investigation contributes to disclose elements that impinge on Māori self-actualization and integration as well as to highlight Māori socio-cultural distinctiveness and vitality and their aspirations and needs in contemporary society.

During fieldwork I also tried to encompass aspects of Māori research, moving towards a cross-cultural methodology.[14] By situating myself at Māori Studies, I had unawares adopted the *tiaki* or mentorship strategy identified by Graham Smith (Smith, L.T. 1999: 176). It was easy to also endorse the strategy of 'personal development' (ibid.), whereby the non-Western researcher becomes knowledgeable of and participates in Māori culture, insofar as it is a given-for-granted procedure in anthropological research. Since my arrival I clearly immersed myself in the Māori cultural world, which included learning the Māori language attending both university classes and the community-based *Te Ataarangi* classes[15] at the *marae*. Following the *pōwhiri* or welcome ceremony at the *marae*, I started to take part in the *hui* of the university *marae* as part of the *tangata whenua* (hosts) rather than the *manuhiri* (guests). This included welcoming and helping out during the *hui*.

However, my personal development also involved elements that were not comprised in my training as an anthropologist. I moved towards a collective approach by welcoming the ideas, suggestions and expectations of participants and Māori researchers and being available to answer their questions about the research and my own experience. The interview turned into a nice interaction which first and foremost enriched me as a person. The purported construction of a long-term academic relationship with Māori became more central. The question 'How will the research benefit the Māori community?' became less vague and

14 Cf. Gonzalez (2010) and Sakamoto (2011) for other examples of non-Māori researchers trying to be inclusive of Kaupapa Māori research.

15 *Te Ataarangi* is the Māori reinterpretation of the silent way language learning method elaborated by the Jewish linguist Caleb Gattegno, where Cuisenaire rods are used to illustrate the language, spoken language is privileged and learning is student-centred.

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more relevant and I grew more responsible towards the people involved in my research. I also learnt to be more patient and flexible, in spite of the pressure of institutional deadlines and parameters.

I did not relate to people as a Western researcher in anthropology, but as an individual whose identity was no less complex and multifarious than the Māori ones. I disclosed my *whakapapa* (genealogy) as an Italian and that enabled people to establish a first connection. In situations like gatherings or first contact, I learnt to disclose it through the *pepeha*, a set of verses in Māori language which defines the individual in relation to their land and their social relations. Some people, adults and particularly elders, saw a connection with my Italian identity because of the historical relationship that the soldiers of the 28th Māori Battalion established with the Italian soldiers and families during the Second World War, in the period corresponding to the German invasion of Italy following the Italian surrender to the Allied forces. Others established a connection because of their work interactions with the Italian diaspora community, or because they themselves had Italian ancestry.[16] From this first connection, people would identify further connections based on what they pinpointed as cultural similarities, such as the emphasis placed on hospitality; the importance of family; the attitude to life; the passion for food. In relation to the former aspect, I confess that something as simple as reciprocating hospitality or support by making a tiramisu revealed to be a tool of connection. Regarding my *whakapapa*, I equally often shared my identification as a Southern Italian and its implications. The history of the area I come from is characterized by elements of oppression, discrimination and poverty as well as of internal conflicts. Still today, in Europe and in the rest of Italy Southern Italians can be the object of negative representations and stereotypes, which echo the accounts provided by early observers.

Moving from that I tried to establish connections based on shared interests (such as Māori rugby or Māori research at large) and experiences, according to the principles of *whakawhanaungatanga*, and gradually created a network. I therefore interviewed people that I had got familiar with or people that other Māori – acting like intermediaries – introduced me to. I abandoned the use of a formal email as a way to ask for an interview to privilege face-to-face or at least phone communication. I entered into the spirit of reciprocity by appreciating their availability through a *koha* (gift) that represented something from my culture whenever possible, and by engaging to send results. I learnt to value *mana* rather than status in Western terms, and tried to respect participants' *mana* by naming them and acknowledging them as a source of my knowledge. I decided to write my thesis in English instead

16 The *whānau* Sciascia, which numbers more than 2,000 people, revolves around the eponymous ancestor Nicola Sciascia, a man who migrated from Italy – notably from Trani in the region of Apulia – to New Zealand during the second half of the nineteenth century and married a Māori woman, Riria McGregor. Furthermore, in the 70s, a group of Italians went to New Zealand to construct the Rangipo tunnel and quite a few of them eventually married Māori women and stayed in the country. According to statistics, a higher proportion of Italians than of any other New Zealand ethnic group identify their second ethnicity as Māori.

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of Italian, so that it could be accessible to Māori, and committed to acknowledge the Māori language as a *taonga* and as part of the Māori lived experiences by respecting the use of the macron and avoiding italics. Finally, I included lengthy sections of the interviews in the thesis, so that the reader could actually encounter many voices with different personalities, experiences and perspectives. My hope was that the research would emerge as a choral work. I equally hoped the research to be a platform where existing voices could articulate themselves rather than a space where I would purely give voice to indigenous ideas and aspirations. All these adjustments may seem like '*minutiae*', but they also allowed me to initiate a conversation which will hopefully be continued, and to develop a warm sense of belonging on the other side of my world.

Conclusions

My experience suggests that working with Māori as an anthropologist and a non-indigenous researcher is achievable, and to some extent desirable, notwithstanding diversified obstacles, which can be met in both anthropology and indigenous studies. In 2012, during a conference on indigenous research, a Māori anthropologist (Muru-Lanning 2012) talked about the way she carried out doctoral research in her own community in compliance with Māori perspectives, practices and values. This part had to be deleted from her thesis chapter on methodology, for it was not considered to be anthropology. Irony of fate, I had just presented a paper about my own experience as a non-indigenous anthropologist working with Māori, including a brief but passionate apology of current anthropology and its possibilities in indigenous research. If anthropology expects researchers to understand and participate in the cultural realities they analyse, why should not this extend to research practices?

As for me, I have sometimes been classified as a case of 'gone native'. As a response to my ideas/ideals, I have been once told that I did not need to do a PhD and should have instead trained as a social worker. More generally, I have suffered the collision between my patience and my desire to be an accountable researcher in the Māori community and a reality made of rigid timetables, scarcity of funding and specific expectations as to the way things need to be done. These elements raise further questions. Partly, they are related to the way we conceive anthropological distance. In my view, it corresponds to a level of emotional detachment from cultural assumptions, which results from and further fosters the development of the academic approach. It is an uneasy process – for our own cultural experiences lose some of their emotive strength and spontaneity – which enables the individual to analyse cultural issues and develop the *potential* to achieve a degree of insider access to other socio-cultural realities. Partly, the questions are related to the awareness or acceptance of our historical obligations as well as of our disciplinary responsibilities, as a science dealing with human beings and the ways we make sense of our lives. Overall, the overview of current issues witnesses fear of losing disciplinary control (cf. Sillitoe's chapter).

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Indigenous anthropologists are probably in the most uncomfortable position. Aiming to be viewed as accountable in both contexts, they are perceived as 'not anthropologist enough' or 'not indigenous enough'. The Māori anthropologist Kahotea (2006) wrote about his dilemmas as to how position himself in the field of anthropology as a Māori. He eventually did not mention Kaupapa Māori research and yet later realized that his role as a native informant respecting Māori practices and his being inscribed in the tradition of Māori anthropology automatically aligned his research to the Kaupapa Māori one.

In indigenous contexts, the issue is the hostility towards what appears as Western. Te Punga Sommerville (2011), a researcher in English literature, noticed that because of the constant association of Kaupapa Māori research to concepts of resistance and disenfranchisement, Māori have tended to restrain from doing research within fields – such as her own (and I would add anthropology) – or about topics that seem not to be useful to Māori, or do not involve Māori or are not associated to Māori 'traditional' ways of being. Such union may even lead Māori to disregard literature written by non-Māori. Rather than wondering 'what it [Kaupapa Māori research] enables', she thus asked 'what does it shut down?' (2011: 8).

My question is if the creation of indigenous studies can entail the relinquishment of all Western elements in indigenous-related research – and it necessarily has to. I argue that Māori rugby and indigenous studies are not too dissimilar cultural phenomena. I like to think of the latter as the indigenization of the Western concept of research. While this phenomenon witnesses creativity, resilience of local epistemes and values, and enfranchisement within knowledge, the Western origins of research and the fact that indigenous studies usually operate within a Western context cannot be transcended. In research, like in daily life, there are no essential definitions of what is Western and what is indigenous, for they have long overlapped.

Some of the elements I have sometimes noticed in Māori contexts – judging internal and external gaze in binary terms (good/bad), perceiving non-indigenous individuals in essentialist terms, fearing to be labelled as 'political' – actually reproduce Western criteria of definition. The picture is just reversed. The issue is that they are some of the discourses that have been used to disenfranchise Māori and delegitimize their episteme. They also overshadow indigenous views which would on the contrary facilitate inclusiveness and collaboration. The emphasis on blatant 'Western' signs eclipses 'the internalization of the symbolic violence' (Andersen 2010: 23) whereby the Europeans have controlled the indigenous, and so conceal the fact that the power of colonialism consists in living in them.

The Māori scholar Borell pointed out that Māori researchers 'must ensure that decolonising projects at a strategic level, do not become *re-colonising* projects at an operational level' (2005: 40). The Māori scientist Hokowhitu advocated that indigenous people and, consequently, indigenous studies should move beyond the concept of decolonization itself, for 'the assertion of Indigenous self-determination in constant referral to the colonising other merely serves to re-establish the neo-imperial colonial power structure themselves' (2010b: 210). In this sense, I think

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that indigenous self-confidence and self-esteem play an important role. My impression was that individuals who had a more secure identity than others tended to be more conciliatory or open towards anthropology and non-Māori researchers. Encounters and dialogues can contribute to grow such confidence as well as to foster reconciliation with what it is viewed as Western. The multiple conversations/confrontations Māori and I had – as intellectuals and cultural subjects – certainly breached many barriers creating possibilities for reciprocal understanding and self-questioning as well as sharing.

As a discipline that acknowledges cultural diversity and aims to understand cultures, I believe that anthropology is potentially the Western-defined discipline that can more easily access, make intelligible and legitimate before the Western scientific world the diversity and exigencies of indigenous research. I also view its engagement with indigenous realities as a responsibility. As for Māori Studies, it opens up various possibilities for collaboration, because 'while Māori Studies positions Māori culture, knowledge and values at the centre of investigation and representation […] it can also be a bridging point between theoretical and disciplinary multiplicity' (Gonzalez 2010: 13). Under the umbrella of Kaupapa Māori research, anthropology and indigenous studies can potentially co-exist as disciplines contributing in their own way to the understanding of Māori issues and realities.

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