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## Pākehā Working With Māori – Activists and Academics

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**ABSTRACT** | How do we work together across difference? How can Pākehā work better with Māori? These were the questions at the heart of my PhD thesis, which examined how colonisation impacts the interpersonal relationships of Māori and Pākehā activists in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. These questions also became central to the collaborative methodology employed as I grappled with moving from simply talking about power sharing, to meaningfully attempting to relinquish control within my research. This article discusses the collaborative methods I drew on, like anti-oppressive methodology, participatory action research, interactive interviewing and auto ethnography, in order to meet that challenge. This approach resulted in the formation of the ‘Black Rainbow’ collective, a small group of Māori and Pākehā activists (including myself) who undertook a collaborative research journey. This article shares part of that ‘Black Rainbow story’.

**Keywords:** Kaupapa Māori; Pākehā; anti-oppressive; action research; auto-ethnography



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*Sitting on a couch in the 'yellow room' of 128 Community Centre after the global 'Day of Action' demonstration, I find myself out of touch and drifting away from the debrief meeting happening around me. The other members of the group (October 15<sup>th</sup> Solidarity crew) seem happy, talking about what a success the day has been – well organised, good media presence, no trouble with the police. This summarising at the meeting made me feel like I was at another protest. What I saw was one of the few Māori women at the demonstration handed a big tino rangatiratanga flag<sup>1</sup> to wave, while white anarchists on mega phones chanted things like: 'This is Māori land, this is Tūhoe land!<sup>2</sup> Āke, ake, ake!<sup>3</sup> and 'One solution: Revolution'. These were settler folks speaking on behalf of the indigenous people of the land. I feel awkward and embarrassed and don't know how to say that I think it was actually a pretty weird protest, especially to these people who are so pleased with the results of their hard work.*

*I'm a newbie to this group, to this community; I don't really get how it works. During the months I've been working with October 15<sup>th</sup> Solidarity, in the lead-up to this demo calling for the state to 'Drop the Charges' for the 18 defendants of the Operation 8 case, there has been a lot of talk about supporting tino rangatiratanga<sup>4</sup> and Mana Motuhake o Tūhoe.<sup>5</sup> Operation 8 saw hundreds of police raid the small Tūhoe community of Rūātoki, as well as several other homes around the North Island, including the 128 Community Centre, arresting activists under the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 (see Keenan 2008; Devadas 2008; Morse 2010). With these issues cutting to the heart of Māori struggles, I've been a little confused about why there weren't more Māori involved in this organising. But the more experienced members of October 15<sup>th</sup> Solidarity crew seemed so confident, I assumed they had the necessary relationships with Māori leaders, thinkers, activists and that these communities would connect up with ours on the day of the demo. Instead, the turn out for the protest had been a hundred-odd, mostly Pākehā, anarchist types. All I can think is: 'If we're supposed to be supporting Māori, why didn't Māori support this demo? Surely this means we are doing something wrong?'*

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Looking back, this thinking seems naïve, but at the time it sparked an important change in the way I thought about relationships between Māori and Pākehā. What disturbed me most in the weeks that followed was that I did not know how to support Māori any better. This confusion and disappointment in my own Pākehā ignorance lead me back to university to undertake a PhD project about how Māori and Pākehā work together in anarchist activism in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand (Fabish 2014). My central question – 'How can Pākehā work better with Māori?' – also became important for the methodology of this project. I realised that I had to ask this question of myself every step of the way throughout this research. That meant first and foremost responding to the concerns about research presented by Māori academics, particularly those developing Kaupapa Māori frameworks for research (see Smith 1999). In this article, I briefly outline how I

attempted to rise to the challenge presented by Kaupapa Māori researchers through a collaborative project within my own activist community, and share a few ‘stories’ from that project, which became known as the ‘Black Rainbow’ collective.

### **Answering the challenge presented by Kaupapa Māori research**

When I first went to see Associate Professor Maria Bargh in Te Kawa a Māui – School of Māori Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, about the possibility of working with her as a supervisor, she suggested I read Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s Kaupapa Māori classic *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999). ‘In fact,’ Maria said, ‘you may want to *purchase* it.’ She also suggested I take Dr Ocean Mercier’s 4<sup>th</sup> year Māori Studies course, ‘Ta Te Māori Rangahau/Methodology of Māori Research.’ I did both those things and found myself suddenly in a world of new ideas – both challenging and inviting. Kaupapa Māori is often defined as ‘Māori research by, with and for Māori’ (Cram 2001: 37). It responds to several issues Māori have raised about research, including whose concerns and world-view are advanced by the research and who the researchers are accountable to (Bishop 1998). Kaupapa Māori research beings with an acknowledgment that Māori systems of knowledge are as valid as their western counterparts. This creates a scholarship that ‘starts from *te ao Māori* [the Māori world] and extends outwards to *te ao Pākehā* [the Pākehā world], rather than the other way around’ (Irwin 1994: 28). The use of Māori norms and relational ethics (*tikanga*) in research also validates ‘taken for granted’ ways of being for Māori communities and provides strategies for research practice (see for example Cram 2001).

The challenge presented by Kaupapa Māori has led to a great number of non-Māori researchers and activists experiencing what Martin Tolich has termed ‘Pākehā Paralysis’ (2002). This ‘paralysis’ leaves non-Māori researchers unable to engage with Māori in research, because they cannot work through the challenges and complexities of identity politics in contemporary Aotearoa. Tolich named the sense of a ‘political minefield’ that has led to a general situation where students are being *taught to avoid* working with Māori participants, both in Māori-centred research and general population studies. I had personally deeply internalised that message and used fears of overstepping as a reason to avoid engagement with Māori issues. Once I tentatively started trying to engage, I was told I was ‘brave’ and warned by a number of friends and colleagues about the dangers of such research. And the ‘paralysing’ sting of Kaupapa Māori can be especially felt reading works such as *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Smith 1999). Yet, a challenge of this nature also invites a response, not only a retreat. There are many places where Kaupapa Māori researchers and theorists invite non-Māori to ‘step up’ to their challenge. Smith notes that a ‘strategy of avoidance may not be helpful to anyone’ (1999: 177). Inspired by Fiona Cram’s comment that ‘what is good for Māori is often good for people in general’ (2001: 38), I approach Kaupapa Māori as an invitation to radically rethink the way we do research. Or as Kristin Jerram puts it, to pick up the ‘wero [challenge], laid down as a part of the pōhiri [ritual of encounter]...’ (2012: 28).

While attempting to rise to this challenge, I developed much of my collaborative methodology for my PhD within the fourth year Māori Studies course *Tā Te Māori Rangahau*. On my final essay Mercier wrote ‘I look forward to seeing you develop a Kaupapa Pākehā way of doing research in the Treaty house!’ (see Fabish 2009).<sup>6</sup> This kind and thoughtful feedback made me acknowledge that I was not entirely sure what a ‘Kaupapa Pākehā way’ would look like, or if it is something I would claim, however this phrase positions and grounds my work as non-Māori but in partnership with Māori. It opens up the exciting possibility to try to imagine an ethnography of this place, Aotearoa, we collectively call home. Joan Metge makes an argument in *Korero Tahi: Talking Together* (2001) that instead of finding new ways to organise group meetings, we should recognise and draw on the indigenous practices of this place. The same argument can be made for finding methods of engaged ethnography (see Bargh 2009 and Butt 2004).

A friend, Mara<sup>7</sup> (who later became a research participant), offered a possible ‘Kaupapa Pākehā way’ when she suggested I read *Research as Resistance: Critical, indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* (Brown and Strega 2005). Anti-oppressive research developed out of various oppositional social movements around racial, queer, indigenous and ability/disability identities (Moosa-Mitha 2005). Kaupapa Māori theorists are visibly part of the intellectual genealogy of the proponents of anti-oppressive theory and research. ‘Anti-oppressive research’, as a catch-all term, is useful for my research because it relates to social identity movements I am ‘inside’ of – such as queer and feminist – as well as those I am ‘outside’ of – such as disability and indigeneity. It allowed me a place to stand.

### **Collaborative research with Black Rainbow**

Mercier, my former lecturer and advisor (now Head of School at Te Kawa a Māui), also suggested that I follow the lead of Miki Seifert’s collaborative work (Seifert and Gildea 2011) and centre my research on my own anarchist community. This allowed me to respond to the Kaupapa Māori research emphasis on collaborative, insider research (see Bishop 1998). Moreover, it resonated with the desire expressed by many of my friends in the anarchist scene to work in a collective that was uplifting and supportive, rather than exhausting and painful. This offered to not only create a focused situation within which to study cross-cultural interactions, but also provided the greatly needed opportunity for us to reflect on and transform alienating organising practices existing within our activist community.

The participants in this research are all people I already had established relationships with, either from working together in other collectives or just hanging out in anarchist spaces. Some of them I count among my closest friends. These relationships meant that participants influenced the research design at every stage, as this short story about how the Black Rainbow collective was formed illustrates:

*In July 2010, once I thought I had a fairly solid plan for collaborative research, I sent out invites for an initial discussion about setting up a collective. At that time I was hoping for a small group of about five or six, and so I sent invites for a potluck dinner to ten people I thought would be interested. Imagining a fairly evenly mixed group, I invited five Māori, four Pākehā and an Indian woman. I got many enthusiastic replies. However, two things pushed me quickly in a new direction.*

*First, I received an email from a white women (who is very active within the anarchist scene) expressing her disappointment that she was not invited to join the project. In my reply I had to delicately explain that one of the aims was to centre Māori – most especially those who have become marginalised from and within the anarchist community – and that since she has unresolved issues with some of these people, I wanted to prioritise their involvement over hers.*

*Secondly, Mara (who was one of those particularly ‘burnt out’ Māori women) didn’t reply to my invite and I started to worry that there were people in that initial set of invites that she would rather not work with. I ran into her at the university library and muttered embarrassedly that maybe if my aim was to centre Māori, I shouldn’t have invited the people I thought would work well together. I should’ve found out who Māori were excited about working with. Mara just said, ‘Yep’. I went home and sheepishly retracted my initial invitation. Then I started speaking one-on-one with the five Māori colleagues and friends I had initially invited. These conversations reshaped the way I imagined this project.*

*A couple of people named mostly other Māori as the folks they were most interested in working with. Kura said outright that what she wanted most was to work with more Māori. She was used to it being just her, or her and Te Awanui in collectives with a bunch of Pākehā and she was keen to be in a space where she wasn’t expected to represent all of Māori opinion and where she could learn from other Māori activists. I came to wonder if a Māori majority group would be better for everyone involved – a supportive, refreshing and stimulating change for Māori members and a chance for non-Māori to practice ‘learning to be affected’<sup>8</sup> in a Māori-centred group. This shift in thinking also solved another problem: the fact that after talking with everyone, Hayley was the only non-Māori anarchist that everyone was really enthusiastic about working with. Since I wanted to keep the collective fairly small and intimate, and there were already five Māori people, it seemed as though the seven of us would make up a good group. After some discussion at our first meeting, it was decided to keep the group as it was and make it a closed collective of five Māori and two Pākehā. Thus Black Rainbow was formed.*

After establishing the collective in July 2010, we met roughly monthly until September 2011. We met at people’s homes, always beginning with a shared meal, and we organised according to the anarchist practices we are familiar with, including consensus decision making. During our initial meetings we set ground

rules for how we would treat each other and decided by consensus to audio record the meetings. We spoke about what we would like to get out of this group and brainstormed ideas we could address. Here is that initial list of ideas:

- Things that happen in activist groups that are seen as neutral, but are actually cultural
- ‘Neutral’ spaces and earnest, superficial ‘biculturalism’
- Why do we have these discussions?
- Strategies for dealing with Pākehā taking up space being ‘bicultural’
- Where are people coming from?
- Intimate relationships between Māori and Pākehā
- Insecurity about Māori identity
- When you first noticed your ethnicity
- Activist ideology and supporting *tino rangatiratanga*
- Crossovers between class and identity politics
- Identity and essentialism
- Trauma of colonisation
- Why were there so few Pākehā that Māori wanted to work with in this group?

Many of those who joined Black Rainbow were the same people I had been speaking with about these issues since I first experienced that moment of disjuncture within the October 15<sup>th</sup> Solidarity crew, so the questioning we did within this collective largely continued those earlier discussions. Drawing on Participatory Action Research (PAR henceforth), I was able to argue that all of the members of Black Rainbow were ‘participant-researchers’, including myself. I find the core idea of PAR – that people are better at solving their own problems than outside researchers – especially useful (see Kemmis and McTaggart 2005). Arama Rata (a fellow graduate student at the time) suggested members take turns, in pairs, leading meetings – by proposing a topic for discussion or activities and facilitating discussions – as a way of shifting ownership of the project towards all the members of the group. This approach was enthusiastically taken up by Black Rainbow. The focus of such a participatory approach to research then becomes the understandings that are constructed among the group through interaction. Black Rainbow became a site for ‘co-theorising’ (see Huygens, 2007). In writing up this research, I developed two questions that encompassed our collective exploration:

How do Māori and Pākehā work together across difference?  
How can Pākehā work better with Māori?

My primary supervisor, Professor Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich (now Head of the School of Social and Cultural Studies at Victoria University of Wellington), pointed out early on that if I was going to be working with my own anarchist community I would also be carrying out autoethnography, and the writing of autoethnographers came to have a large impact on my work, particularly Carolyn Ellis

(2004, 2009), Kimberly Nettles (2008) and Laurel Richardson (2007) (see also Bönisch-Brednich 2018). What I find most useful about the work of auto-ethnographers is their willingness to turn towards their own emotional responses as a source of information about society. I tried to expose my own struggles within the thesis, as a way of balancing the power with other participants. Ellis and Berger's work also lent me the idea of 'interactive interviews' (Ellis and Berger 2003). This helped me develop data collection methods to suit the collaborative context, by emphasising reciprocal discussion. Ellis and Berger use this term to describe interviews where researchers share elements of themselves during the interview process, giving space for different voices and reflecting life as lived. Extending this idea to group meetings among Black Rainbow supported my assertion that all members are participant-researchers.

### **Black Rainbow stories**

Following Ellis and Berger's (2003) lead, I wrote these group discussions up as 'stories' of events (see also Trinh T. Minh-ha 1989 and Abu-Lughod 1993 for the power of stories to resist generalisations). These discussions became the heart of the meaning making in the thesis, with the final discussion chapter devoted to how the experience of collaborating with Black Rainbow worked a 'process of Pākehā change' in me (see Huygens, 2007).

In this article, I have tried to keep the outline of my attempts to find a collaborative methodology in keeping with Kaupapa Māori research fairly brief in order to leave room to *show* this power sharing on the page through stories. The story that follows offers an example of how Black Rainbow members negotiated what direction to take the discussions and how they might be useful.

*28th of May, 2011*

*'Do you wanna feedback?' Hayley asks the group as we settle into our seats in her and Francis' home.*

*After spending the first half of the meeting discussing our frustrations with the group (especially lack of direction), and what we hoped to get out of Black Rainbow, we split into small groups to talk about potential projects. Now we have come back together to share our ideas.*

*'We thought we could make a list,' Te Awanui says. 'Like: "Here are some stupid things that people often say or do that are crappy for Māori people in an activist group". Maybe we could all share a story of a situation we've been in that was like: "Oh my god, I can't believe this shit happened", and make a little thing with those in it. Then we could be like: "If you're a Māori person who is in an activist group and this stuff is happening, that's not ok and it's alright to feel crap about it and want to change it". Or: "This has happened to all of us". And we could be like: "If you are in that position and you are thinking: "Ah! There are all these crazy Pākehās around me!" Email us and we can talk".'*

*'That's cool,' Amiria says.*

*'It would be good to put the challenge to Pākehā activists to step up when they notice stuff is happening as well,' says Francis. 'Because I think we've all been around those times when someone afterwards will say something, like: "I thought that was really stink". But instead of talking to whoever Māori person, why don't you talk to whoever Pākehā person? Work out what you are going to do?'*

*Kura says, 'I just also thought it would be good on a personal level, to be able to share those experiences. Because I gather we've all had similar ones. And that will just keep perpetuating itself. There will be new people coming in, having the same experiences. So I think it would be a really good experience to be able to talk about that stuff and be able to take it and put it somewhere that makes it feel like we are doing something with it. Because it can be really hard to be like: "Well, they do all this shit stuff, but..." Yeah.'*

*There is a lot of agreement with this.*

*Hayley asks, 'Do one of you want to feedback from ours?'*

*'We were talking a little bit along those lines,' Amiria says, 'like maybe creating a resource for activist groups and looking at different ways of organising and meeting. And also, we talked a little bit about being radical Māori (not just Māori) and all those kind of things that come into it, like being vegan or queer or whatever. So exploring that a bit more would be quite cool.'*

*'Well,' says Mara, 'just to move things on a little bit, it looks like there is one clear common thing – the production of something surrounding groups and how they operate. In general and with a Māori thing to it.'*

*'Yeah, we can totally smash those two things together, and make a really awesome 'zine-y, pamphlet-y, paper-y thing,' Te Awanui says. 'Something on a paper!'*

*'Yeah!' Amiria laughs.*

*'Maybe at our next meeting we could use it as a chance to brainstorm that whole list of things of what to do and not do,' Hayley says. 'And people could think between then and now about a particular instance that stands out for them. We could share them and ask each other questions and then that might make it easier to go back and write about it.'*

*'Yeah, totally,' Kura says. But after a while she adds, 'Maybe if we are talking about "What not to do" we are focusing heaps on Pākehā, so we could also have something that re-affirms Māori in that group as well. Something that's actually positive to read. Because one thing about working with lots of Pākehā for me is that it makes me more insecure in being Māori, because I'm being asked what Māori think and I don't know. Are there ways of exploring...'*

*'The positive things that Māori bring to the group, or something?' I ask. 'As individuals, rather than being the token Māori?'*

*'Well, we were talking more about groups in general,' Mara says, 'how they operate, issues to look at when setting up groups. Lots of stuff that's already out there in the world, but maybe we could collate that and make it more applicable.'*

*'And there's probably stuff that is really healthy for a group, that is not specifically about being Māori or not being Māori, that would be good,' says Hayley. 'Like: "What are the various things that group members bring to the group?" It's about valuing people.'*

*'Yeah,' Kura says.*

*'Cultural safety,' Francis adds.*

*Te Awanui says, 'I feel like I've had conversations where it's like: "When people are doing or saying this thing, it makes me feel really uncomfortable" and I'm real like: "Oh yeah! Me too! Oh, right". And I think it was quite a cool idea – maybe not so much: "This is what you shouldn't say if you're Pākehā" – but: "It's ok to be upset or angry when people are saying these kinds of things. And here are some things that you might say." It was awesome for me at the A-fem hui<sup>9</sup>, when it was ok to say: "Hey! I don't like the way everyone's talking, I don't know why, but I feel real like this isn't ok". And it gave me a little bit more room to feel, and to be like: "Maybe this is what is wrong with it?" Or for other people to say it. So I think the idea of: "These are some stupid things that might happen in groups" might be real validating and useful.'*

*'Can we make a note of what Kura said though,' Hayley says, 'so we can think about it more at the next meeting?'*

*Te Awanui writes down a few of Kura's points and I say, 'It sounded like you were saying something about affirming Māori in the group, eh? So it's not just like: "Here's all the ways it's going to suck".' We laugh.*

*'Yeah, exactly,' says Kura.*

*"'It's easier to have a whites-only group",' Francis jokes. After the laughter, she adds, 'I really like the way you all first started talking about it – like experiences that we had, and how it made us feel. And then, potentially, this is how it could have been different. Not phrasing it like: "Necessarily, all Māori are going to feel this way" and: "This is necessarily a bad way of talking about stuff", but...'*

*'Yep,' Amiria says, and Kura also agrees.*

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Clearly, we in the group did not have a pure research focus – we were all hoping to effect change in the activist culture surrounding us. Taking my lead from the group, I tried to model the PhD thesis on some of the intentions expressed in this discussion, including: validating Māori experience, challenging Pākehā to respond more actively as allies and sharing stories of things that happen – rather than essentialising those experiences.

This also extended to how the Black Rainbow stories were connected to the academic literature. In order to acknowledge the participants ownership of their knowledge and stories, I have shown drafts to the members of Black Rainbow throughout the writing of the thesis and subsequent publications. While this practice slowed down my writing progress, the value of this kind of checking became plain when I received critique. Notably, one of the participants, Frances, challenged me over an early chapter draft that presented my argument and the academic literature at the end of their stories: ‘The way it is written at the moment often implied to me that the people you cite understand the real meaning behind our stories better than we do. I guess I felt silenced and not respected’ (personal correspondence September 27, 2012). This criticism was painful to hear, but I took it as a gift and it pushed me to explore alternative ways of relating the supporting literature to the stories of participants. Sharing power meant conscientiously sharing the page. I chose to do this through extended footnotes, which hang directly from the comments members of Black Rainbow made in our discussions (see Nettles 2008 use of endnotes). Around the stories, I gave my comments showing why I had chosen each story and the meanings I believed participants were making. You can see an example of this writing style in the final story I share here, from that ‘*Oh my god, I can’t believe this shit happened*’ discussion at our following meeting.

*25th of June, 2011*

*‘I find it really difficult,’ Kura says, ‘when groups start talking about tino rangatiratanga because quite often I don’t want to be part of those discussions.’ We are all sitting around Hayley and Francis’ pretty living room again, in the middle of a long rambling session of shared storytelling.*

*‘Or I feel really reluctant to. It is also really odd to be in a group talking about tino rangatiratanga and to be Māori, you automatically get that sense of responsibility. Like if they are doing something really stupid that is going to have an effect, it’s going to fall on you.’<sup>1</sup>*

*There is a lot of support for this statement from others in the group.*

*‘Yeah, and you feel like you have to be the person who sorts it all out,’ says Te Awanui.*

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<sup>1</sup> Uma Narayan notes that one of the burdens that may fall on insiders to oppression is a responsibility to use their epistemic privilege to educate outsiders (1988: 37).

*'Yeah!' Kura says. 'And if someone says something really fucked or stupid, it's always uncomfortable. I haven't experienced it yet where I haven't felt either really tokenistic or really just not Māori enough, like just ignored a bit.'*

*'I think one of the things that's really hard with tino rangatiratanga,' Mara says, 'which I didn't get for ages, is that it's connected to and it can't be separated from tikanga.<sup>2</sup> But the problem with tikanga is how much of that is actually relevant? And how much of it is just being held onto for ceremonial purposes? Or as resistance to losing knowledge? Because there are some weird situations when it's like: "Why are we doing this, when it's not relevant at all whatsoever?"'*

*'Are you talking about in Māori spaces?' I ask.*

*'Yeah, sorry. Māori spaces,' Mara says.*

*'Because I think that's really true in the anarchist scene as well,' I say. 'It seems so often when you're talking about tikanga, you're talking about stuff you do, eh? You're not talking about values and why you do them.'<sup>3</sup>*

*'Yeah, we'll be talking about tea towels on the floor or something,' Kura says.*

*'Yeah,' Mara says. 'That's just dirty!'*

*We all crack up and Francis says, 'It's also not the reason more Māori aren't involved.'*

*'Yeah, totally. Not at all,' Kura says.*

*'If Māori said it was ok to have tea towels on the floor,' Mara says, 'would 128 [Community Centre] be saying: "Let's have tea towels on the floor"?''*

*This sets us off laughing again.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Ani Mikaere stresses that *tino rangatiratanga* and *tikanga* are inseparable, arguing that when *rangatiratanga* was reaffirmed in both He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī (the Māori text of the Declaration of Independence) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Māori text of the Treaty of Waitangi), *tikanga* was recognised as the paramount law of the land (2011: 257, 264).

<sup>3</sup> Mikaere writes that:

Tikanga is based upon a set of underlying principles that have withstood the test of time: principles such as whakapapa, whanaungatanga [relationships], mana, manaakitanga, aroha [affection], wairua [spirit] and utu [reciprocity]. While the practice of tikanga has adapted over time to meet new contexts and needs, it has nevertheless remained true to those foundational concepts, which some have called 'conceptual regulators', others 'kaupapa' (ibid: 254-255).

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth A. Povinelli writes about the 'limits of recognition' (2002), where indigenous people are expected to be culturally different, but not in ways considered 'repugnant' by the dominant culture.

*'There was one Māori guy who came,' Kura says, 'he's from Dunedin or something. He came up to 128 one day and was like: "Oh, this place is really interesting, I've just moved to Wellington and I'd like to get involved in a place like this". This is while I was living there and I was asleep and someone came and woke me up and was like: "There's a Māori here who wants to join the collective". I was like: "That's nice".' As we all crack up, Kura goes on, "'Cool. One day, when I'm not in bed, I'd like to meet him". But pretty much it was like: "Here's your Māori team-mate".'*

*'So you quickly threw together a pōwhiri for him?' Francis says and the laughter keeps building as Te Awanui calls out, 'Come up, come up. Come up the stairs!'*

*'That sounds like a really sensitive and thoughtful way of dealing with that,' Francis says.*

*'Yeah,' Kura says. 'It's quite the same with lots of Māori related stuff. People's way of being sensitive is: "This is primarily a Māori issue, so—". You know, it's like they're saying you have more say, but ultimately they're saying you should have the responsibility.' The room hums with recognition and she concludes, 'Yeah. It's weird.'*

*'Yeah, often it's either one extreme or the other,' Amiria says. 'Like you take responsibility, or I'm just going to totally forget that you're Māori while we talk about this.'*

*'I totally felt like that the time I asked that Helge not speak for us when we went somewhere,' says Francis. 'Like if I didn't want Helge to speak for us, I had to come up with some other plan, other than: "Let's not have a speaker".'*

*'I was going to ask you about that,' Mara says. 'I remember I heard about it and I said: "What? He can't do that!" and it was like: "Well, apparently Francis said it was alright". I said: "What?! Francis can't do that!"' That gets a big laugh from the rest of us.*

*'That's the other thing,' Te Awanui says. 'You are always in the position – if you are the Māori person in the group, you have to vouch for the rest of the group not being racist and stupid. And it's like: "I'm not going to do that!"'*

*'I can't vouch for that!' Amiria exclaims and sets us all laughing with her.*

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The story above gives a small taste of the costs for Māori of collaborating with Pākehā. There are interesting parallels between the ideas raised in the Black Rainbow discussions about the limitations on power-sharing in the anarchist scene, and the limitations of power-sharing within this collaborative research

project. I was in a position of power as the instigator and author of my research thesis, and I shared many of the same difficulties – such as seeking consensus and not being sure if it is found – as some of the people discussed by Black Rainbow during our meetings. Nevertheless, this project was an important change experience for me and it created a space for Māori members to share their experiences with each other. The form that the thesis takes asks the reader to ‘listen’ carefully to the participants. Careful listening demands that Pākehā, as activists and academics, find something other to say than ‘*This is primarily a Māori issue, so...*’

### Acknowledgements

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### Notes

1. A symbol of Maori sovereignty.
2. Central Wellington, is not in fact Tūhoe land (which is centred in the Bay of Plenty), but Te Ātiawa/Taranaki ki Te Upoko o Te Ika land.
3. Forever.
4. Māori self-determination.
5. The autonomy of the Tūhoe nation.
6. Quoted with permission from Ocean Mercier.
7. All names used here are pseudonyms.
8. This phrase is borrowed from J.K. Gibson-Graham and Gerda Roelvink (2009).
9. Aotearoa Anarcha-Feminist Hui, April 2-5, 2010.

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