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What has Participatory Video Research Got to Offer Māori? Reflections From a Small Space on Shifting Ground

Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999:140) states that the negotiation and transformation of institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the practice of research itself and that, “The spaces within the research domain through which indigenous research can operate are small spaces on a shifting ground” (1999:140).

Taking these ideas as the starting point for reflection and analysis, we consider our involvement in a collaborative participatory video research project over the last seven years as indigenous and tauīwi research partners. The initially VUW-funded project has been exploring relationships between place, identity and ‘social cohesion’ within the various communities of Ngati Hauiti and has been informed by kaupapa Māori research, feminist and postcolonial epistemologies, participatory action research and participatory video. Through it we sought to develop a respectful and reciprocal approach to research, which would provide tangible benefits to iwi members involved and which might prove useful to other researchers working with Māori.

In this presentation, we acknowledge the different positions that each of us occupied within the research relationship. We consider how our research relationship was negotiated and how our practice evolved. We reflect upon some of its successes and challenges paying particular attention to the positioning of our work between iwi, governmental and academic institutions and agendas. We focus specifically on the degree to which transformation of institutional practices and research frameworks was achieved.

Through this presentation we hope to contribute to ongoing debates about the nature and value of participatory video research for indigenous peoples and to the development of a larger space within which indigenous research more generally can be both resistant and/or responsive to the shifting ‘ground’ on which it occurs.