

# THE CYCLE OF AROHA: MODELLING A MAORI INQUIRY SYSTEM

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## **Abstract**

*Kia Ora*

The authors have been involved in a collective bicultural study (called “Tumatanui”) of what makes a Maori business “Maori”. Working with Maori Funeral Directors in the culturally sensitive area of dying (tangihanga), it was necessary to develop a research protocol as the first step in modelling a distinctive Kaupapa Maori Inquiry System (one that has a Maori philosophy).

This paper follows the journey of research participants as they collectively discovered the deeply systemic nature of Maori knowledge (Matauranga). It shows how Systems Thinking can be useful in bridging Inquiry Systems that have been long “talking past each other” and developing ways (Tamatanui or “opening up” stories, following protocols, engaging in “dialogues of witnesses” and “strategic conversations”) that enable the Systems to talk to each other. The Cycle of Aroha (Love) models the vision of this project: a genuine bicultural brand for the next Millennium.

*E Noha ra.*

## **A Discovery: Indigeneous Systems Thinkers?**

Recently the researchers “co-authored” a monograph (entitled “Tumatanui”) which contains the core narratives of the research participants - four Maori families involved, as Maori, in different ways (as owners or partners) in the funeral business. Broadly speaking these stories reflect and constitute a reflection on what being a Maori entrepreneur in the funeral industry is for them. This paper contains a different story that of the research process itself. Its focus is not the funeral industry itself. Nor is it a “case study” of the (Maori) funeral industry. Rather it reflects and is a reflection by the institutional researchers on the contribution of systems thinking towards “dissolving” the problem of culturally appropriate research in the area of business organisations. The problem here is a more generic one. How do you research Maori business appropriately i.e. in a bicultural way?

To respond appropriately (in a cultural sense) to this research problem, it is necessary to reflect on the over-arching Maori concept of Maturanga (knowledge). The initial assumption of this research is that the kind of systematic knowledge inquiry we call “research” will reflect the uniqueness of the Maori concept of knowledge: what it is for, how it is exchanged, how it is preserved, what is to be our attitude to it, what obligations it brings, who is responsible for it, to whom it is accountable? Questions such as these elicit very different answers in the Maori research context to the commonly understood “valid” answers in the traditional Western (pakeha) view of research. The argument is that, as the Maori view of knowledge and knowledge-exchange (research) is different, Maori (and hence bicultural) research must reflect those differences.

In exploring this Maori way of knowing (Inquiry System) we made a remarkable discovery: Maori are “natural” (i.e. “culturally”) systems thinkers. This paper aims to demonstrate the critical combination of systems thinking in modelling a Kaupapa Maori Inquiry System and in “translating” this model in a way that speaks to the hitherto monocultural world of business. In so doing it also offers a new/old cultural, strategic and systemic model. This system we have called the “Cycle of Aroha”.

### **MATAURANGA: A SYSTEM OF SYSTEMS: The Baskets of Knowledge**

Maori knowledge differs in its origins, and in the attitude Maori have towards knowledge. Firstly, knowledge is a treasure (taonga) and sacred (tapu). In Maori mythology, the origins of knowledge, and of the three “baskets of knowledge” are conveyed in the story of Tane (Williams 1996, pp 96-97).

The “legend” of Tane ascending to the highest heaven in a bid to obtain the “Baskets of Knowledge” from Io the creator, demonstrate Maori principles of knowledge.

*The legend relates how Tane after he had successfully organised the revolt that led to the separation of their parents Rangi (Father Heaven) and Papa (Mother Earth) having concluded the various purification rites wended his way through the heavens until he arrived at the penultimate heaven. He was again sanctified by Rehua the Priest God of exorcism and purification who then allowed Tane entrance into the twelfth heaven the abode of Io. There he received the three baskets of knowledge together with two small stones, one white and the other a predominantly red coloured stone. The former white stone was named Hukatai (Seafoam) and the latter red stone called Rehutai (Seaspray).*

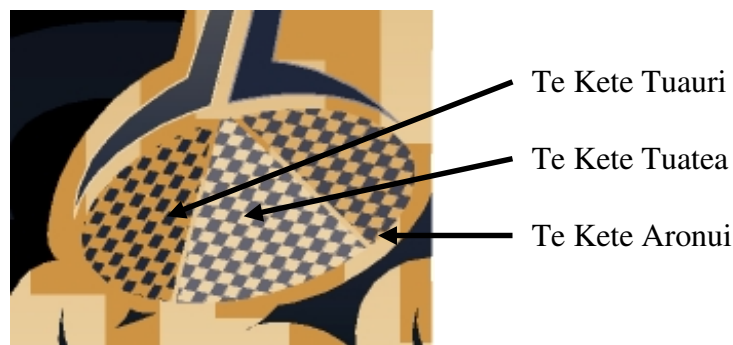
*He descended to the seventh heaven where his brothers had completed the Whare Wanganga (House of Learning or Wisdom). After the welcome, he had to undergo more purification rites to remove the intense “tapu” ingested from his association with the intense sacredness of Io. Having completed the purification rites, Tane entered the Whare Wananga named wharekura and deposited the three Baskets of Knowledge named tauri, Aronui and Tua-Atea above the “taumata” - the seat of authority where the seers and sages sat and then deposited the stones Hukatai and Rehutai, one on either side of the rear ridge pole.*

On the surface, such a story may be regarded as a fairytale, a fantasy, to tell to children by the fireside in the evenings. Nothing could be further from the truth for this legend is part of the corpus of sacred knowledge and as such was not normally related in public. Its inner meaning could not be understood without the key to unravel it. And unless all the parts were known and understood it was impossible to make sense of it.

As our designer has graphically conveyed, the three baskets are usually pictured as linked together, suggesting the inter-related nature of this essentially holistic concept. In working in this project within the basket of Life's knowledge (Te Kete Aranui), we were reminded at several points of the inter-related fields: Te Kete Tuatea (Basket of Ancestral Knowledge) and Te Kete Aranui (Basket of Sacred Knowledge). We began to understand the connectedness of these domains and to realise why "unless all the parts were known and understood, it was impossible to make sense of it". This is a whole systems view of knowledge. Grasping a part of it is not sufficient.

What is portrayed in our Maori designer's depiction (below) of the "three baskets of knowledge" (Nga Kete o te Matauranga) is a "system of systems" with classic systems features: hierarchy (Sacred→Ancestral→Life) and recursion.

### **NGA KETE O TE MATAURANGA (The Three Baskets of Knowledge)**



The "tapu" concept is central to this "creation story". The "participation" required in approaching knowledge in this context suggests a truth we discovered only slowly over time: "The key to unravelling" the knowledge is somehow connected with a totally ethical and completely humble stance towards knowledge - gathering (research). This discovery, embedded in the legend, resulted from a real-life uneasiness in the early stages which led us to explore the ethical basis of our research and to develop an ethical Protocol.

### **MATAURANGA: A COMPLEX AND HOLISTIC SYSTEM**

The second principle, that knowledge is complex and understood holistically, is implicit in the "origins of knowledge" legend. The reason for this is clear: cultural knowledge touches the essence of "being Maori", a distinctive way of being in the world. In this world, everything is connected to everything else. In common with other distinctive ways (feminism, for example), being Maori is "not merely a 'perspective', a way of seeing; nor even this plus an epistemology, a way of knowing: it is a way of being in the world". For a contemporary view, John Rangihau's "Being Maori" (King 1992, pp 183-190) demonstrates acceptance of complexity and contradictions, and rejection of easy simplifications. In answering the question, "What does being Maori mean?", Rangihau refuses to draw any conclusions or to make any recommendations to either Maori or non-Maori. Instead he leaves the question open for future resolution, while taking us "inside" the experience itself. Impressively, Rangihau challenges the question itself ("My being Maori is absolutely dependent on my history as a Tuhoe person as against being a Maori person) and embraces the paradoxes inherent in the experience. This is the kind of rich and complex view of life that led one of the researchers (Michael Cash, 1997) to describe Maori as a "people of paradox". In this territory, only a poet, certainly not a traditional researcher, can feel at home.

## **MATAURANGA: A PRACTICAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

Historically and traditionally Maori have a different motivation or reason for undertaking the exchange of knowledge. In the Maori view knowledge is exchanged for practical and collectivist reasons: Knowledge should benefit the community in practical day-to-day ways. It stands against the view that knowledge is sought as good for its own sake. It challenges also the practice of researching as a good for the sake of the career of the researcher, which has been called the “researcher capture” of Maori people (Clark, 1997, p. 138).

Finally it challenges research for the good of the research sponsors (typically Universities and other tertiary institutions). The research audience should be the participants themselves not the academic or research community (Stokes, 1985, p. 3).

“The Maori attitude is that research simply for the sake of knowing is pointless. There should be more specific aims and objectives in Maori research which are directed at helping people in their daily lives”.

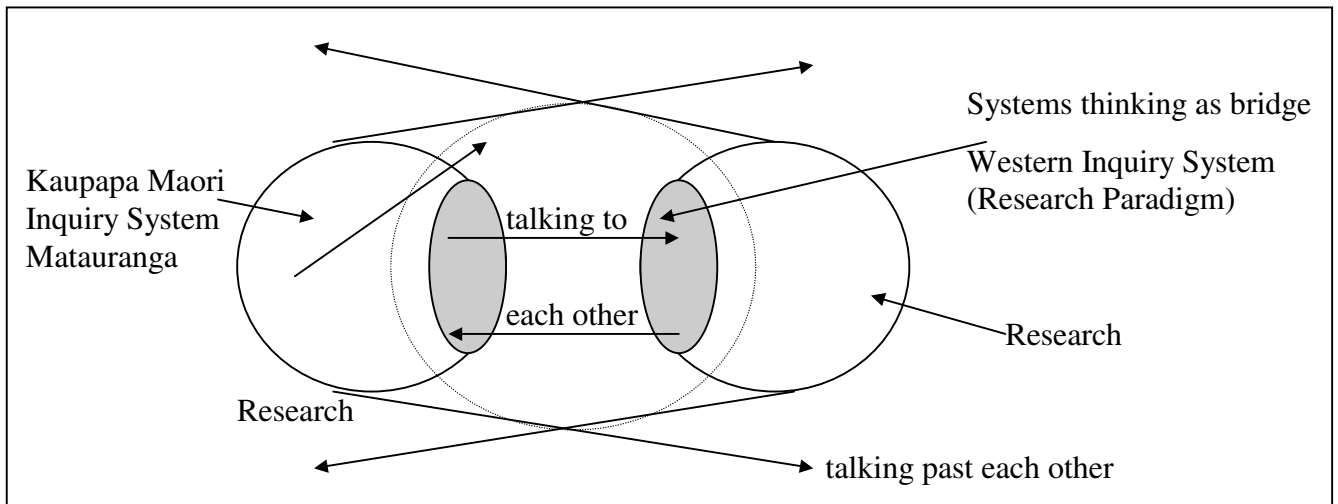
The practical view that knowledge is for the welfare of the people, far from being naïve, recognises the contextual complexity of knowledge exchange. Knowledge can easily be “commodified” and “eroded” in a transfer from one political and cultural context to the other. The practical motivation for knowledge exchange implies a sophisticated understanding of the political dimension of both knowledge exchange, and, in the current context, of what might be called “the research industry”. This mature understanding of knowledge (research) ironically places the traditional approach close to the “post-modern” understanding, knowledge is power. Thus a central theme of the French postmodernist thinker, Michael Foucault, was “truth as a form of power” (Anderson, 1996).

But, generally speaking, the fact that societies can become the object of scientific observation, that human behaviour became, from a certain point on, a problem to be analysed and resolved, all that is bound up, I believe with mechanisms of power - which, at a given moment, indeed, analysed that object (man society etc) as a problem to be resolved. So the birth of the human sciences goes hand in hand with the mechanisms of power.”

Foucault’s “mechanisms of power” reflects the common recognition by Maori commentators, that, in the Western world, knowledge is power, knowledge is control. Why an essentially cautionary stance towards research has been adopted is also explained by Maori commentators who see the imposition of the traditional Western Research paradigm as a form of control, even “damage control”. Genuine contempt for the imposed inappropriate model is seen in expressions such as “research as something non-Maori to do”, “research for self-interest”, “research as emphasising negative statistics about Maori”, and as “telling Maori what they already know” (Stokes, 1985, pp. 27-28).

## **SYSTEMS THINKING: BRIDGING THE TRANSCULTURAL GAP**

Forcing research to be done in a non-Maori way by imposing norms drawn from another world - view or research paradigm reflects the phenomenon of trans-cultural miscommunication, recognised by bicultural researcher Joan Metge and Patricia Kinloch (Metge & Kinloch, 1984) in a famous text as “Talking Past Each Other. In recognising Mahuranga as a “system of systems”, we glimpsed the possibility that systems thinking might be used to bridge that gap.



The proposition (presented graphically in our “eyeball to eyeball” model) of this paper is that systems thinking can play a critical role in linking the two world-views, so that they talk to each other, rather than past each other.

### **MATAURANGA IS AN ORAL SYSTEM**

Finally, Maori have historically and traditionally had a different medium of knowledge exchange in that Maori culture is primarily an oral culture. As a dynamic culture and one increasingly operating in a bicultural mode, Maori culture has produced a multitude of “literary texts” to explain and exchange its culture (tikangi) to both the Maori and the non-Maori world. But even today the natural Maori preference appears to be to exchange views, ideas, findings by meeting together, often in ritual face-to-face exchanges such as through ceremonial meetings (hui).

The oral tradition has two implications for Maori research methodology. Firstly, research needs to be done primarily face-to-face. Our own experience supports the view that the usual instruments of the western research armoury - surveys, questionnaires, written reports and so on, are very largely inappropriate. They are likely to elicit a poor response both in quantity and quality.

We found that the better approach was “face-to-face” (kanohi ki kanohi). In a face-to-face encounter everyone can openly express their feelings and concerns, frankly debate the issues, and establish a bond of trust.

Face-to-face encounters allow important non-verbal communication (always culturally significant) to subtly effect the terms of the exchange and thereby elicit richer responses in the research context. A “known face” implies a relationship between researcher and participant and thereby a more participative research methodology. It is summarised as “te kanohi kitea”: a face seen is an argument understood (Bishop, 1996, p.197).

The second implication that arises for research methodology is that, for an oral culture, a key means of knowledge exchange is that of narrative or story telling. In broad terms, this suggests what has been called “narrative inquiry”.<sup>11</sup> Three aspects of the story seem to be important. The story allows the participant(s) to keep in touch with the realities of his/her/their lives and to reveal content in relationship with the context (often the cultural context) which gives it meaning. Stories are “related within the cultural frame of reference and the language of the research participant” (Bishop, 1996, p.24). Secondly, stories are relational: they set up a dynamic relationship with the listener.

This relationship is an open one: the story listener must bring his/her contribution to the story especially to its interpretation. In this context all stories are collaborative ventures: for this reason one researcher (Russell Bishop, 1996) has called his stories “Collaborative Research Stories: whakawhanaungtanga”. Finally, stories embody the theories storytellers have about the content of their stories, i.e. the knowledge “within”. Stories, therefore, open up territory for mutual exploration and challenge both as to the “facts” and as to the “meaning”. Stories suggest multiple interpretation and even allow for them, revealing and recognising the complexity of the real event, and suggesting a range of possible responses. As such they resist the simplifying urge evident in so much western research. Maori commentators have often been caught by surprise by the simplifying process in Pakeha attempts to “organise” Maori knowledge, as in the historic attempt to shape a “single voyage theory” for Maori settlement (Stokes, 1989, p.8). One aim of using narrative inquiry in this project is to allow the full complexity (what system thinkers call “the rich picture”), of the situations that occur when Maori enterprises operate in the monocultural business world, to emerge from the stories. Like a joke, a story should never be “explained away”.

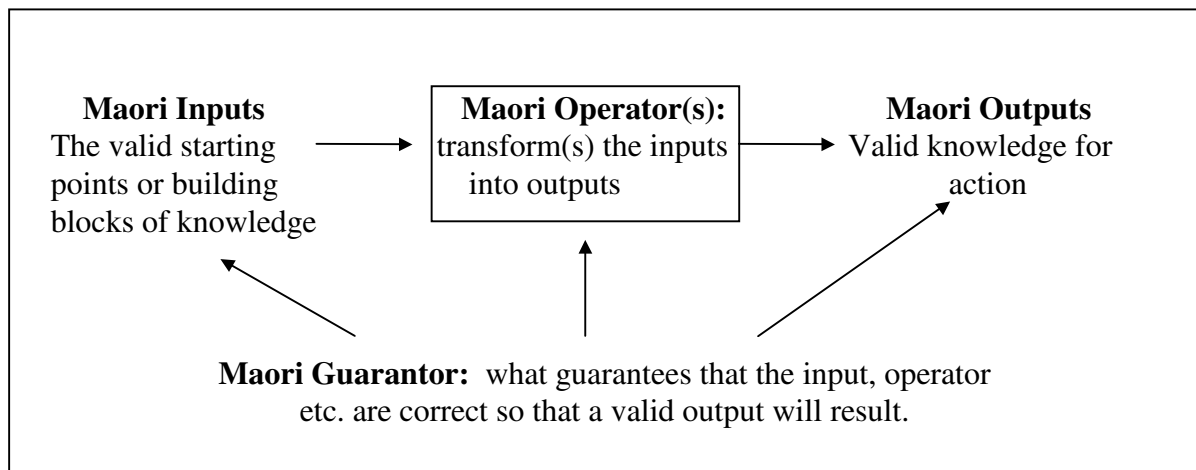
In this project the story telling has a special character. Its prime purpose is to allow the “voice” of Maori funeral directors to be heard. One of the transparent features of this industry sector is that the Maori contribution is largely “invisible” and their “story” largely unheard. Official sources told the researchers that there were “about three” Maori Funeral Directors. As Wayne Taurima personally knew at least six, we began to explore the scope of this “sector” (Maori funeral directors) which grew to about twenty and may be as high as fifty. So hidden was this sector that both Maori and pakeha observers have expressed surprise that it even existed.

The Maori funeral directors are without “voice” in their own industry which appears to have scarcely recognised their existence. They have no industry association of their own. For the most part they operate outside the recognised or official industry boundaries. In some cases they appear at odds with their industry. Many came into the industry through a single training event (Nga Hau E Wha), which proved to be so controversial that it brought the sponsoring Maori training organisation into a legal conflict with both the industry association and the sole industry training body, the Central Institute of Technology.

What emerges from the four case stories in this monograph is that to survive in this sometimes distanced, sometimes almost hostile, business environment, the participants often needed to overcome significant barriers. Because this theme emerged spontaneously from the collaborative stories of the research participants, we called our research, “Breaking the Boundaries”.

## **TOWARDS A MAORI INQUIRY SYSTEM**

Differences in values systems, ethical stances, imaginative frames, ultimately an alternative world-view or “myth” (Cash, 1997) require a different approach to research, a different inquiry system. For systems thinkers, an inquiry system is “a system (Churhman, 1971) of interrelated components for producing knowledge in a problem of importance” (Mitroff & Linstone, 1993). When adapted to the Maori world-view, a generic inquiry system (IS) would become a “Maori Inquiry System.”



## A Maori Inquiry System

In a Maori (bicultural) inquiry system we would expect:

1. Different inputs - starting from “within” the experience (narrative inquiry).
2. Different operator(s) - more “collaborative” operation, primarily the research participants themselves with the institutional researchers in a “participative support” role.
3. Different Guarantor - Maori experts or mentors to validate the process and the outputs.
4. Different outputs - culturally appropriate knowledge.

How would a Maori IS fit into “the system of IS systems”? One answer may lie with systems thinking which also has as its goals to operate within a “holistic-view-of-knowing”. Adapting Mintroff and Linstone (1995), we can construct a taxonomy of inquiry systems.

**Simple:** (dealing with well-structured questions or propositions, governed by linear logic)

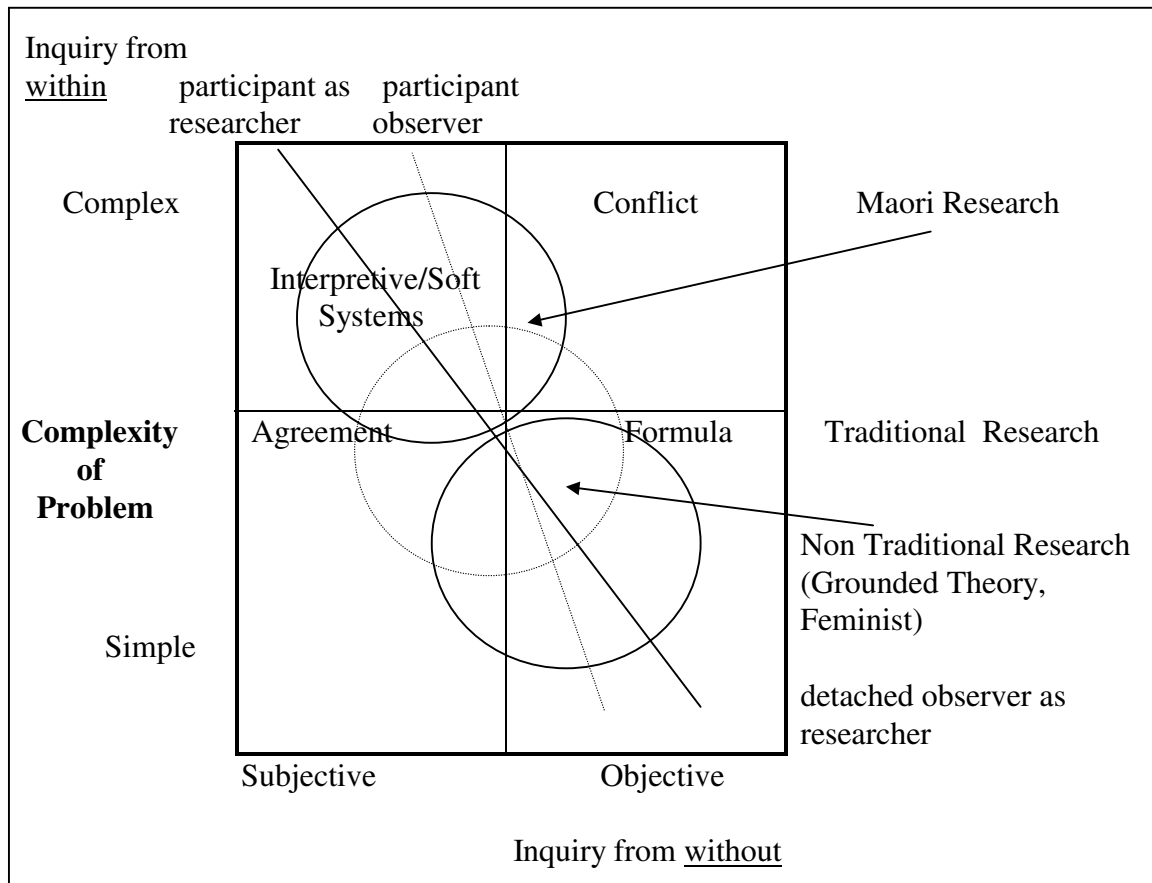
1. Agreement IS - (Inductive - Consensual)
2. Formula IS - (Analytic - Deductive)

**Complex:** (dealing with ill-structured propositions - values, ethics, social/cultural things)

3. Interpretive IS (Multiple Realities)
4. Conflict IS (Testing Assumptions)
5. Systems Thinking IS

It seems reasonable to assume that a Maori Research Paradigm would mainly lie in the complex fields. It would be interpretative in the first place. Debate and synthesis within a ritual collective setting such as a ceremonial meeting (hui) would follow. (Conflict IS, Systems Thinking IS).

Mintroff and Linstone’s taxonomy could be adapted to a four stage model by combining Nos. 3 and 5 (both multi-faceted soft systems methodologies) of the System of IS Systems Model. The model would then look like the following:



### A Maori Research Model (Inquiry System)

In the Maori Research Model above, it is possible to “see” clearly that the three research paradigms occupy different positions, because they address different types of questions and take different operator (researcher) stances. The Maori research paradigm is mainly in the quadrant with complex unstructured propositions requiring highly interpretive (multiple realities) responses. The responses are “subjective” in the collective sense of “sharing a common set of understandings”.

In this quadrant, the operator/researcher is trying to operate more from the inside, to participate in the research process by reflecting on their own interpretations. Here, the knowledge carriers are the principal researchers. It is the function of the institutional researchers in this model to support the participant-researchers, to stand alongside them, to try to enter into their world. They must take up a “biased” position in order to ensure that the “voice” of the knowledge carriers is heard. **They must research with Maori not on them.**

The essential flaw in applying inquiry systems appropriate to the Western world view in a Maori context is emphasised in the Maori saying:

*E motuotia ana a waho kei roto he aha:*

**One cannot know from the outside what is contained within  
(unless one can see inside)**



A Maori inquiry system seeks to know what is contained within the baskets of knowledge (real-life experience rightly or wisely interpreted). Inquiry from within operates on different lines to inquiry from without: its aim is to “see inside”.

To help us “see inside”, two tools emerge from and were developed in our “research system”: The Ethical Protocol and Tamatanui stories.

## **The Research Protocol**

To ensure the cultural safety of the research process, a draft Protocol was devised. The Protocol has three sections: The first section deals with who are the researchers and for whom is the benefit of the research:

### ***Preamble:***

*Recognising the unique tikanga dimension of researching Maori business, and respecting the right of peoples to the guardianship of customary knowledge and to the creation of new knowledge based on cultural traditions, we offer the following draft protocol as the basis of the research enterprise.*

### ***Protocol:***

- 1. The principal researchers’ main responsibilities will be to the people involved in the activities being researched, who will be regarded as co-researchers, and co-owners of the research.*
- 2. The rights, interests and sensitivities of the people involved will be acknowledged and protected.*
- 3. The outcome of this research project will be of benefit to the participants and the Maori people. Maori designers and publishers will be involved in design/publication of any published study.*

The Protocol recognises that the research has only one objective, “the welfare of the people”. We also acknowledge in the preamble and enunciate in the first article of the *protocol*, recognition of the people as owners or guardians of the knowledge to be shared. This is a fundamental principle of the entire project. From this it follows that the people sharing the knowledge are to be seen as co-researchers. A participative research methodology is needed to encompass this principle. This principle does not grant a favour. It recognises a basic human right.

This right has been authorised in the Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property rights of indigenous People (1993). The first Declaration is that “Indigenous Peoples of the world have the right to self-determination and in exercising that right must be recognised as the exclusive owners of their culture and intellectual property”. The Declaration also recognised the right of such people to manage ‘their traditional knowledge themselves’ and insists that the direct indigenous descendent of such knowledge must be the first beneficiaries. Finally, it declared that “all exploitation of indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights must cease.”

The second section deals with the ethical practices that flow from the initial principles and presents a third principle: the openness of the research process.

***Protocol:***

4. *Consent of the people involved in the researched activities will be sought and confirmed before the project begins.*
5. *The aims of the investigation will be conveyed as clearly as possible to the research participants: as should be the anticipated outcome of such an investigation.*
6. *Research tools and techniques which support open direct and transparent communication will be used at all times, and secret work excluded.*
7. *The contribution of any person or group consulted will be acknowledged in the final report.*
8. *A copy of the final report will be sent to any person or groups who provided information used in the report.*
9. *All people or groups involved in the research process will be given a copy of the protocol.*
10. *As the prime object of the research is to allow participants to tell their own unique stories, they will be shown the research paper in draft form and will be able to make changes in the case of any part being unacceptable.*

The final section presents the mentoring process as a practical assurance of right guidance and cultural safety for both the research facilitations and the research participants.

***Protocol:***

10. *Those involved in the research activities will be provided with the opportunity to appeal to the research mentors in the case of any problems arising in the research process.*
11. *The mentors will be empowered to negotiate any changes in the report that they see as in the best interest of people or groups involved.*

In systems terms, the mentors are the “guarantors” of the research process.

## **THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE**

### **Tumatanui: Through “Opening Up” Stories**

On reflection, and after consultation with our mentors, we have called the research methodology used in this project, Tumatanui.

The metaphor of the kete or “basket” of knowledge, like the metaphor of the “net” commonly used in Maori discourse about knowledge, suggests that while knowledge must be held, kept, and preserved, it is also important that it be “opened up” for the treasures (food, fish) to be enjoyed by the community in need of sustenance. The term “Tumatanui” means “open, public, without disguise”. “Opening up” stories allow Maori entrepreneurs to share what has made them unique and to reflect on the source of this uniqueness.

Four elements are reflected in the many meanings of “open”, “openness” and associated expressions such as “open government”, “open minded”, “open question”, and “open hearted”. The echoing themes are:

- being accessible
- being transparent
- being ready for challenge, and
- initiating a possible new set of relationships or opportunities (welcoming)

The purpose of the protocol developed was to make the knowledge held by the research participants, knowledge which embodied their unique experience of working within that sector and their understandings (theory) of what that experience means, accessible to themselves, their fellow participants, their industry colleagues and, more generally, the New Zealand public. Making “public” what setting up their enterprises means to them, opens them to challenge even as it challenges others to reflect on their ways of “doing business”. The challenge is a mutual one. As in the ceremonial challenge (haka), what is placed down as a challenge must be taken up by the challenged. The “opening up” stories call for an honest and transparent response. But it is a positive challenge which carries the promise of opening up or initiating a new set of relationships, a wider cultural consciousness and understanding within the total business community.

The six steps on this “opening up” process can be described as:

1. Negotiating on appropriate protocol for a bicultural knowledge exchange (on the basis of the draft protocol).
2. Sharing stories in a conversational face-to-face story exchange.
3. “Hearing the stories” i.e. refraining from theorising, explaining, simplifying, or surrounding the stories with associated commentary or critique.
4. Seeking out the “theories” of the participants as revealed in their unique explanatory language, by returning to them to explore those key dimensions which can only be explained in cultural terms.
5. Presenting the stories to the public, in an accessible and transparent way.
6. Explaining the research process, as a challenge to the business research community, and as an opportunity for encouraging and forging a new set of relationships between the business communities of the Treaty partners. Here the research shifts from a Maori to a bicultural focus.

In its broadest terms this research project, therefore, has a relational focus: “to have voices heard”, “to build bridges”, “to heal wounds”, “to right the balance of power”, are all metaphors for correcting, improving and mending a flawed relationship, and for re-establishing the (equal) partnership between the Treaty partners.

### **Distinctive Maori Strategic Features**

What are the themes or distinctive cultural features of these “opening up” stories, themes that might open up the possibilities of a Maori strategic dimension, a distinctive Maori purpose or intent?

And, how might these themes be revealed? Certain Maori terms within the original stories seemed to the research facilitators to “call out for explanation”. As suggested in Step 4 above, these terms would not be easily “appreciated” through simple translation. European “listeners”, in particular, would strike difficulties in understanding the import of these terms or how the realities they signified figured either in the day-to-day operation of the business or in the fundamental purpose (strategy) of the enterprise. We returned, as in an iterative process, to ask the participants for a fuller explanation (their personal theory) of what these realities meant for their business. Thus, isolating the features was a collaborative process, in which the research facilitators were initially quite active (“Tell us more about ‘koha’, it seems important in your business”). The explanation, however, were those of the participants themselves and are offered without interpretation. A noticeable part of the distinctive Maori “voice” or “tone” is the fact that these explanations were not couched as “definitions” but were more usually stories-within-stories.

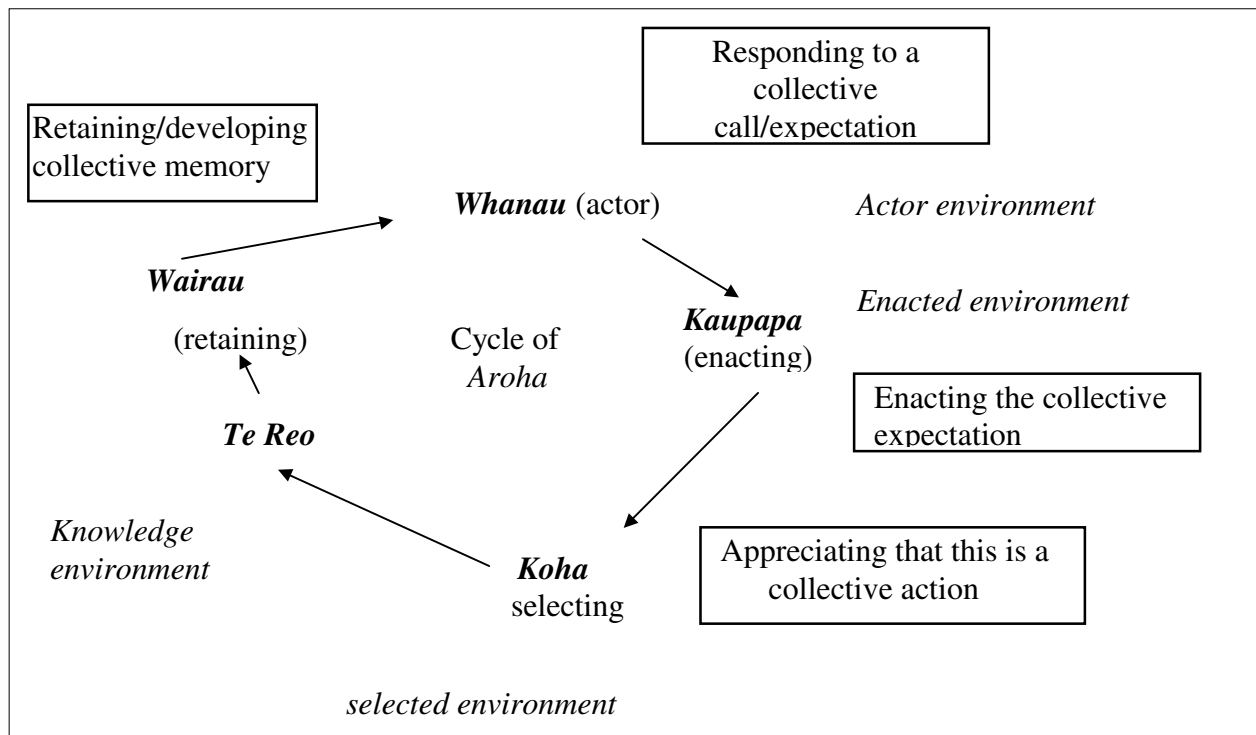
The theories or explanations of the participants are offered in the Appendices to each story. They may be seen as personal reflections or what might be seen as distinctively Maori features or themes that tended to be present in one way or other in most of the stories:

- Te Reo (language)
- Whanau (family)
- Koha (gift)
- Wairua (spirituality)
- Kaupapa (plan)
- Aroha (love)

These themes, opened up by the stories (Tumatanui), are a specially important part of what is to be “heard” in this research project. They are offered here more as questions to be pondered on, not as ready-made simplistic answers.

## **THE CYCLE OF AROHA**

The social psychologist Karl Weick has provided a comprehensive model of “organising” which suggests a generic approach to organisational “sense-making”. In his *Social Psychology of Organising* (1979), Weick proposed a circular or systems model of organising. Weick saw “organising” as “learning” or “sense-making”. He began with a common sense saying: “I’ll believe it when I see it”, and reversed it to: “I’ll see it when I believe it”, as his model of learning or “sense-making”. “Beliefs are cause maps that people impose on the world in which they ‘see’ what they have already imposed”. (Weick, 1979, p.135) But he did not see this reversion as a simple linear cause model: believing not only controls seeing, seeing in turns conditions further beliefs. Weick’s theory stresses enactment, the doing, as the core driving force. His organising model has four components: Ecological Change (actors), Enactment (acting/organising), Selection (the decision strategy), Retention (knowing/learning). When we apply Weick’s “model” to the “found” strategic themes or features, we arrive at a new strategic paradigm: The Cycle of *Aroha*.



## Cycle of Aroha

This cycle somewhat reflects what we found: entrepreneurs implicitly or (in some cases explicitly) responding to a call or expectation of their *whanau* (or in the extreme, a community “cry for help”). They acted out (organised) in ways that showed they “did not own” the service or transforming process, but only shared in it with others (*kaupapa*, *koha*). Finally, they held fast to cultural anchors (*te reo*, *wairua*) without which it was difficult to explain “why they were in business in the first place”. Underscoring it all was the “Maori heart” (*Aroha*): this seemed to provide the dynamic that drove the cycle - hence the “Cycle of Aroha”. The model suggests entrepreneurs whose organising has a purpose (*kaupapa*) which lies beyond, though not necessarily replaces, the purpose usually offered in the current business “myth” - profit, shareholder value and so on. This vision, or guiding purpose, may be part of what Maori entrepreneurs have to offer to the general business community: a new model of strategy: *Aroha* as strategy?

### WHAT THE STORIES SAY

Major obstacles identified in the stories included

- lack of access to training (especially culturally appropriate training)
- a sense of being ‘beyond the pale’ with respect to the industry and (often) lack of industry support, even industry opposition
- inequitable treatment by government and quasi-government bodies (such as health authorities)
- being subject either directly or, as the ones ‘in the middle’, to culturally inappropriate or offensive practices such as coroners’ delays, ‘aggressive’ pathologists’ practice.

- The constant need to be advocates for their clients in areas that add to their costs, yet are not recognised as costs
- the need to maintain the lowest possible costs to overcome structural inequality (high levels of unemployment in the north).

The stories suggest also, that some or all of the Maori entrepreneurs in this industry have distinctive competencies which include:

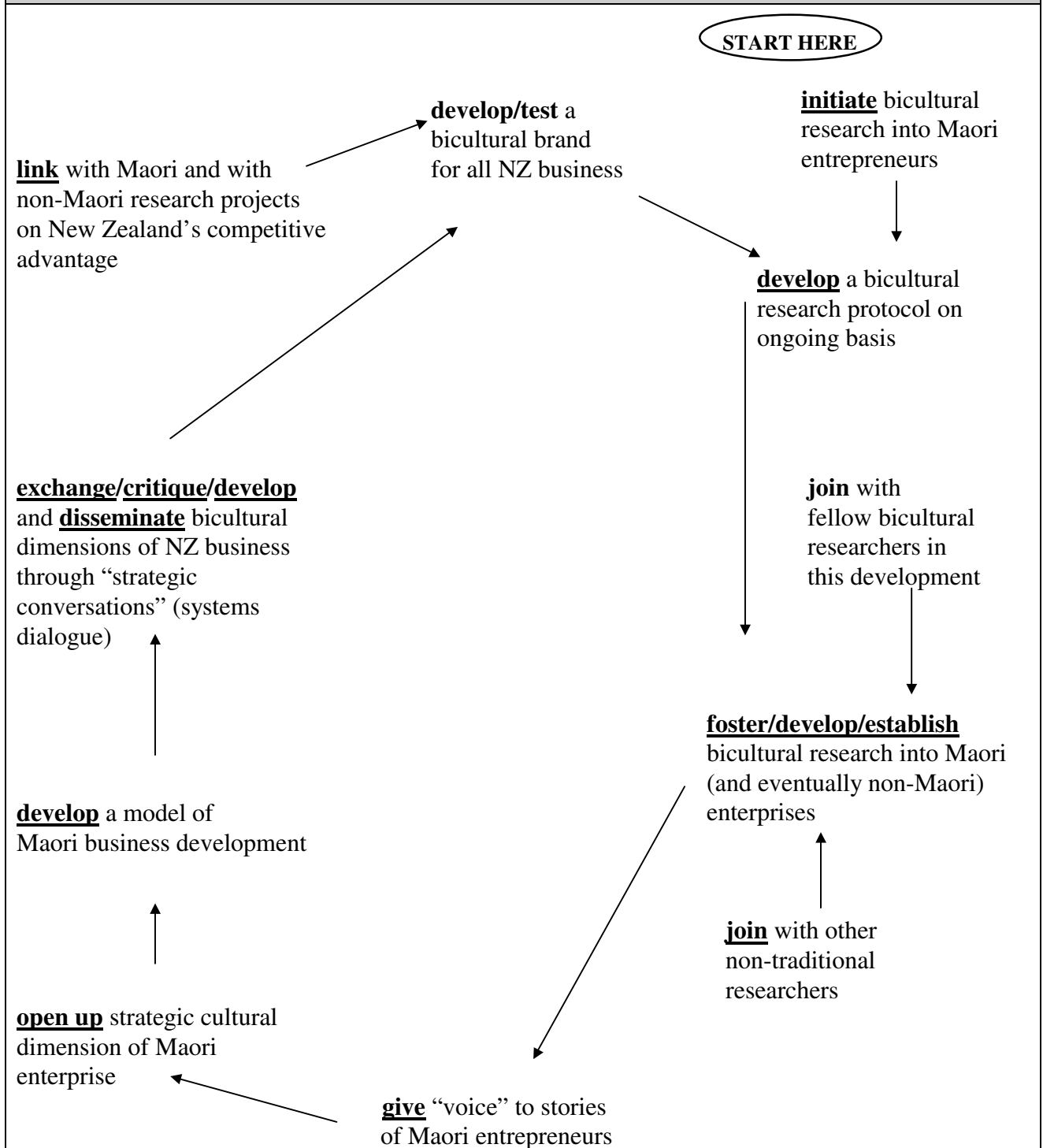
- superior technical competence in embalming because of ‘open viewing’ - a cultural necessity
- unique ways of organising and gaining customer loyalty (kaupapa Maori)
- distinctive education role in a bicultural society (attitudes to death of still-born babies, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and whanau support)
- special cultural empathy with other ethnic groups (including marketing strengths)
- enhanced capacity to foster the mental health of clients
- strength in recognising and supporting the spiritual dimensions of a human/social activity.

The suggestion is: Maori culture adds value to business. The question is” ‘Can New Zealand, as a small trading nation, afford to ignore this added value?’

## **A SYSTEMIC DIALOGUE MODEL**

To assist a better appreciation of the value of a sound, healthy and robust bicultural relationship, we offer a vision of what a bicultural research process focusing initially on Maori entrepreneurs could offer to the business community. The Systemic Dialogue Model incorporates both a Maori development model.

## MODEL OF SYSTEMIC DIALOGUE FOR DEVELOPING A BICULTURAL 'NZ BRAND'



This radically new research paradigm can be seen as a shift from left to right in the table below:

## SHIFT IN RESEARCH PROCESS REQUIRED BY BICULTURAL VISION

Traditional (Monocultural)	—————→	Radical (Bicultural)
Knowledge as power or control	—————→	Knowledge as emancipation (tino Rangatiratanga)
Research from without	—————→	Research from within
Researching from objective research stance	—————→	Researching from subjective research stance
Individualistic concept	—————→	Collective concept
Simple well-structured research questions	—————→	Complex ill-structured research questions
Simple answers/conclusions	—————→	Complex/paradoxical answers
Systematic IS	—————→	Systemic IS
Research as single event	—————→	Research as ongoing social exchange
Participant as object of research	—————→	Participant as researcher
Dialogue of Planners	—————→	Dialogue of Witnesses
Strategic analysis	—————→	Strategic conversation
Closed	—————→	Open (tumatanui)

The research tools developed for this project - the Protocol and the Tumatanui stories - are designed to promote the shift from a monocultural (traditional) to bicultural (radical) inquiry system. Eventually, the "birds-eye" and the "worms eye" view of the organisation must be integrated into a "collaborative inquiry" (Fisher and Trobet, 1995, p). The infrastructure for this collaborative inquiry has yet to be put in place, but Systems Thinking is one research tradition which has been working to effect a related shift.



Since the 1970's Soft Systems Methodologies have attempted to develop a new research paradigm in ways strikingly similar to that proposed here. In 1989 Jonathon Rosenhead outlined an alternative research paradigm in his "Rational Analysis for a Problematic World: Problem Structuring Methods for Complexity, Uncertainty and Conflict" (Rosenhead, 1989).

### Characteristics for an Alternative Paradigm

1. Non-optimising; seeks alternative solutions which are acceptable on separate dimensions without trade-offs.
2. Reduced data demands, achieved by greater integration of hard and soft data with social judgements.
3. Simplicity and transparency, aimed at clarifying the terms of conflict.
4. Conceptualises people as active subjects.
5. Facilitates planning from the bottom-up.
6. Accepts uncertainty, and aims to keep options open for later resolution.

Rosenhead's ideal alternative paradigm has many echoes with our concept of research openness (Tumatanui) and the radical paradigm of research outlined in this paper. Expressions such as "alternative solutions", "social judgements", "transparency", "clarifying terms of conflict", "people as active subjects", "bottom-up planning", "accepting uncertainty", and "keeping options open" are accurate reflections of the "opening up" process. In reviewing the extent to which actual methodologies approach this ideal, Rosenhead (1989) draws on the triple division of Dando and Bennett into "orthodox", "reformist" and what they call "revolutionary" paradigms.

One way of distinguishing between them is through their concepts of control. The orthodox "hard" systems paradigm can be seen to correspond to control through a "command" relationship; the reformist paradigm lends itself to control through manipulation; and the revolutionary paradigm to self-control, that is, emancipation".

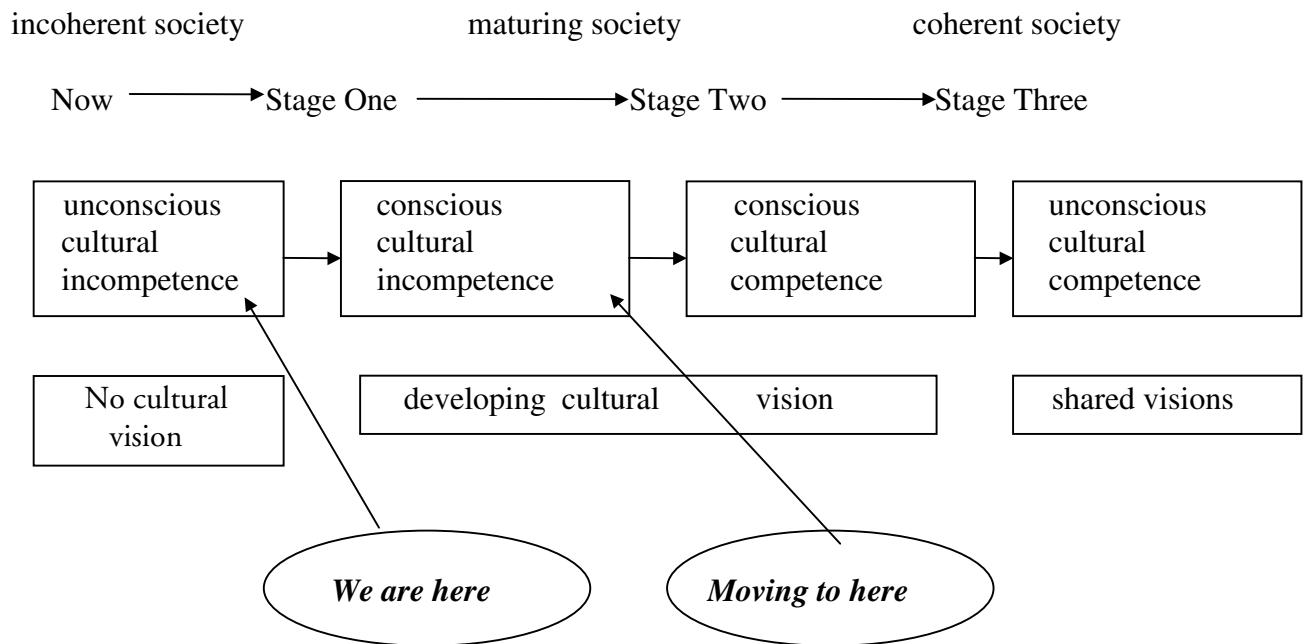
Emancipation (in Maori terms, "tino Rangatiratanga" - self determination) is likewise the goal of the radical systemic process outlined in this paper. The emancipatory ideal in Soft Systems Methodologies found a champion in Werner Ulrich whose "Critical System Heuristics" was designed to make systems planners reflect on the narrowness of their assumptions (world-view) (Flood & Jackson, 1991). It was also designed to confront the "experts" with a "dialogue of witnesses". Witnesses are representatives of those "effected but not involved" i.e. in terms of this paper, the invisible and the unheard. It is one of the purposes of this research to promote such a "dialogue of witnesses". A dialogue of witnesses (the "unheard" or the "invisible) challenges the "boundary judgements" of the experts, the narrowness of their world-views and the controlling mechanisms of their view of knowledge (epistemology). The social process which makes this dialogue of witnesses happen is yet to be discovered\* and remains an enticing prospect for future research.

## SYSTEMS THEORY: PRESENT AND FUTURE CONTRIBUTION

What is possible in the short term is to promote a “strategic conversation” (Schwartz, 1996, p. 227) between the Treaty partners in the business world, as in every other sphere of national life. It may be that promoting a “dialogue of witnesses” and a “strategic conversation” between the Treaty partners, is all that can and should be done, but ways to make this happen need to be developed.

In the short term, this dialogue or conversation would develop a greater awareness or self-consciousness in all parties. As researchers into cross-cultural business interactions have succinctly put it: “Only by understanding our own behaviour can we fully appreciate the impact it has on others.” (Williams and Bawa, 1998, p. 20)

In the medium-term, the process addresses the business-world’s current cultural “deficit” or “incompetence”. The transformation required, is to move from the present state of unconscious incompetence (the business world doesn’t see the relevance of biculturalism to its operations) to one of conscious incompetence (the business world realising it is culturally incompetent, to its own loss). This study may be seen as a contribution to Stage One of this process. Two further stages lie beyond: from conscious incompetence to conscious competence (working actively to create a bicultural “competence”) and from conscious competence to unconscious competence (“biculturalism’ as our business “culture”). The transformation has just begun.



### Business Cultural Transformation Model

What “practical” or “bottom line” benefit comes from enhanced cultural awareness and the forging of a New Zealand identity which enacts a dynamic cultural exchange between the Treaty partners? Strategists such as Michael Porter argue that a critical “competitive advantage” for countries in the global economy is a distinct and differentiated cultural identity.<sup>31</sup> Cultural identity forms the ‘brand’ of that country. “Brands” embody a sought-after good which commands a premium price in the global market place. A brand such as “Anchor” is valued on the “bottom-line” balance sheets of

large corporates as major company assets. This is the kind of realistic and practical opportunity that a research process such as Tumatanui welcomes. The challenge is for business to recognise its own emerging bicultural “brand” and to realise its value for the good of all.

The final stage of this business-wide transformation would be an ongoing strategic alliance between the Treaty Partners i.e. genuine biculturalism in practice. This strategic business alliance would come at a time when “strategic business relationships” long common in non-Western business, are increasingly being discovered in our own. The influential Japanese strategist, Kenichi Ohmae, has presented a strong business case for what he calls the coherent society (the final stage of this process) which cannot be imposed (“come from dictatorship”) but from “a shared vision of the future” (Ohmae, 1998). In a bicultural context, this might be aptly rephrased as “shared visions of the future”.

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