

HE TĀNGATA, HE TĀNGATA, HE TĀNGATA

The role of New Zealand's indigenous knowledge in disaster risk reduction

Xavier Forsman • University of Auckland

Whanaungatanga, participation and DRR: A 'Te Ao Māori' framework

THE MĀORI WORD 'WHANAUNGATANGA' has been translated to describe feelings such as 'unity', 'kinship', 'togetherness' and 'sense of belonging' (Durie, 1997). The understanding that 'whānau' extends beyond one's immediate family to their extended family, friends, neighbours and wider community is important. With this in mind, it appears at first that whanaungatanga aligns well with holistic participation processes. However, McNatty & Roa (2002) argue that it is often used without full recognition of its understanding, due to its broad nature. Durie (1997) similarly states that effective whanaungatanga requires its participants to be active and engaged in the process. Whanaungatanga has, in essence, become a 'buzzword'. Effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) entails a holistic means of addressing peoples' vulnerabilities and capacities (Kenney, 2015). This work attempts to demystify the complexity of whanaungatanga by contextualising it within an adaptive Te Ao Māori (Māori world-view) framework, comprising kaupapa, tikanga and mātauranga Māori. This framework is then used to identify various ways of fostering whanaungatanga in the context of DRR.

Kaupapa

- Desires "to affirm Māori cultural philosophies and practices" (Pihama et al., 2002)
- Set out in precedence to meetings, projects and work, a 'plan of action'

Tikanga

- Māori 'ethics' (Mead, 2003)
- Participatory actions should abide by both tikanga and kaupapa
- Tikanga helps to retain Māori cultural values (Tipa & Nelson, 2008)

Mātauranga

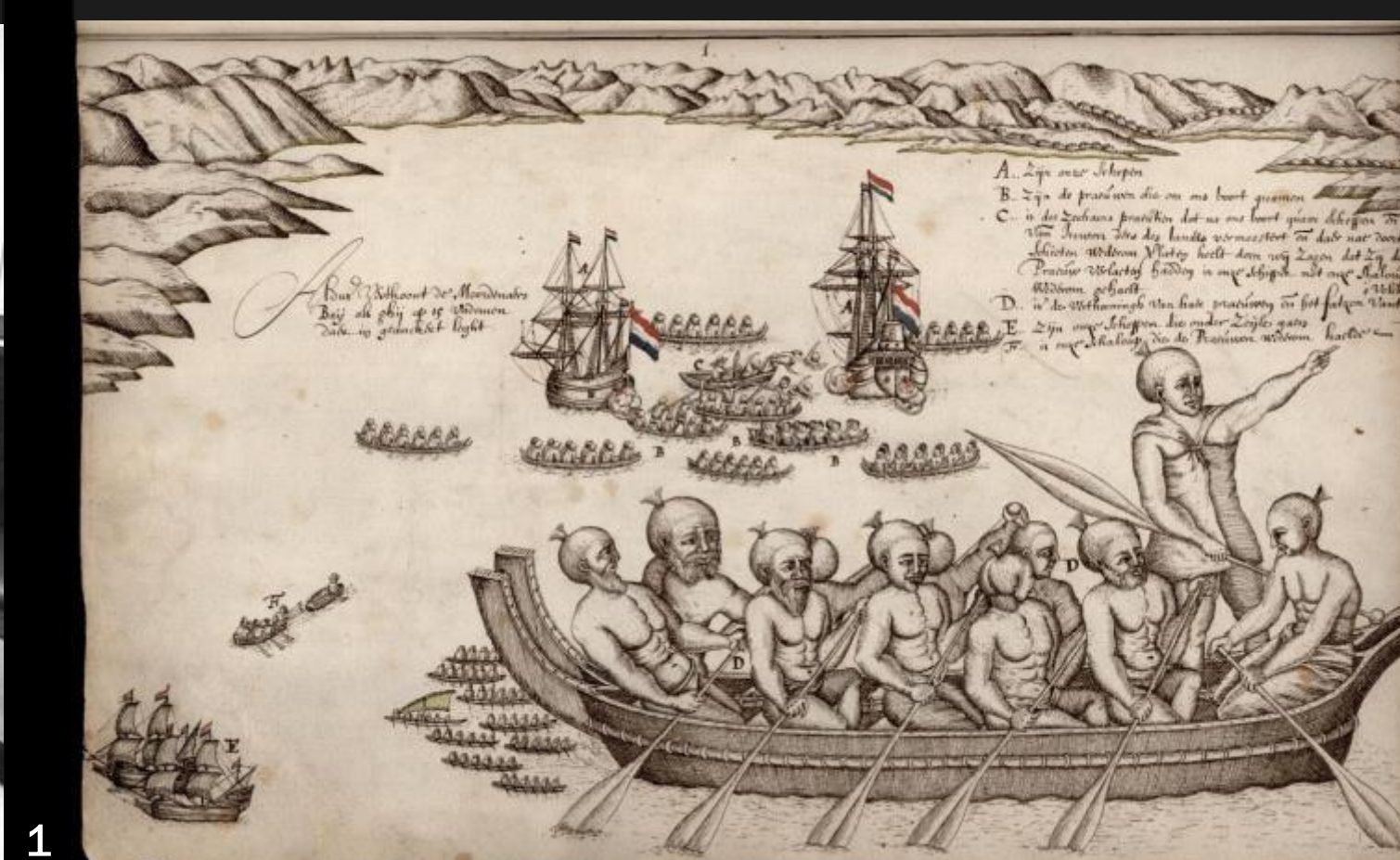
- Helps establish an interface between science and 'tradition' (i.e. indigenous knowledge) (Durie, 2004)
- Various forms, including waiata (song), pūrākau (legend) and karakia (prayer)

WHANAUNGATANGA

He mahi mo whanaungatanga whāngai: Fostering whanaungatanga in DRR

Hui

- Involve discussions and dialogue in an intimate setting, adhering to the kaupapa and tikanga of tangata whenua (Durie, 2004) – culturally relevant (Kenney, 2015)
- Christchurch quake realised potential for hui: Involve councils, communities, government – engaging with the decision-makers and forming stakeholder partnerships key to effective DRR (Kenney, 2015)



Whakapapa

- Whakapapa "a fundamental attribute and a gift of birth ... [provides an] identity within a tribal structure" (Mead, 2003, pg.42)
- In DRR, a foundational value of being able to access traditional knowledge about hazard and disaster events – knowledge of whakapapa influences how a person responds to disaster events (Kenney, 2015)

Community

- Build support networks and empowerment: e.g. marae offer community activities such as waiata, gardening and used as respite centres/accommodation following 2004 floods in Matatā, Hawke's Bay (Busby, 2010)
- For DRR, marae play a significant role in providing physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing to people in a time of need (Hudson & Hughes, 2007)



Environment

- Kaitiakitanga (environmental stewardship) often emphasised through mātauranga, as well as local knowledge not typically documented through conventional science (Durie, 2004)
- Mātauranga Māori is therefore valuable in DRR as a knowledge system that can be used to make sense of historic hazard and disaster events in New Zealand



Ngā pae tūhoto: What does the framework mean for participation and DRR?

The participatory process can be explained through whanaungatanga based within a Te Ao Māori framework. Whanaungatanga, like participation, is a process. Kaupapa, tikanga and mātauranga Māori are embodied through whanaungatanga. This work concludes by asserting that the above framework could be used as a basis for participatory development in Māori communities. For DRR, it outlines the need for effective participation and DRR to address many dimensions of people's livelihoods. There are challenges with involvement, funding and co-operation among participants (Durie, 1997). These challenges however, apply to most participatory processes. The framework is not meant to be restrictive, but rather offer a platform on which participatory actions and processes can be implemented. What is clear is that people lie at the heart of the participatory process, and that whanaungatanga, for Māori, is important. Tying this all together answers the whakataukī (message): "He aha te mea nui o te ao?" ("What is the most important thing in the world?"):

"He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata" ("It is people, it is people, it is people")

References

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