11

Conclusion: Spiralling Forwards, Backwards, and Together to Decolonise Freshwater

Within Te Ao Māori (Māori worldviews), wai (water) is at the heart of identity and life itself. The interconnections between wai and humans abound within the Māori language (Te Reo Māori) as one common whakataukī (proverb) states: “Kei te ora te wai, kei te ora te whenua, kei te ora te tangata. When the water is healthy, the land and the people are nourished”. The word for water—wai—also means who and memory. Thus, when a Māori person meets someone new, they ask “Koi wai koe?” which translates as “Who are you” or more specifically “Who are your waters?”. To answer that question necessitates that a person possesses the knowledge of their genealogical connections (whakapapa) to their tribe (iwi), sub-tribe (hapū) and ancestral river (Ruru 2012, p. 110). Fisher, for instance, belongs to Ngāti Maniapoto and her awa is the Waipā River. All iwi throughout Aotearoa use rivers as their ancestral identity markers (alongside mountains/maunga). Throughout this book, we sought to articulate how Indigenous interests in and rights to water go beyond access to freshwater (for drinking, sanitation, development) and extend to encompass identity, wellbeing, and authority.

In this concluding chapter, we seek to bring together our earlier analyses of the historical and contemporary waterscapes of the Waipā River

(Te Awa o Waipā), its interwoven histories, geographies, meanings, and physical and metaphysical entities. We braid together the examples outlined in previous chapters of this book to consider, once again, the theory and practice of Indigenous environmental justice (IEJ). We adopt the view that decolonisation is a process and that there are numerous possibilities to decolonise freshwater governance and management approaches through recognising, procedurally including, and providing for Indigenous peoples' to express and enact their ontologies and epistemologies. Such work provides for expanding theorising about environmental justice (EJ) and providing empirical evidence of what practical (context-specific) efforts to achieve IEJ can consist of. While the works of scholars, including Schlosberg and Fraser, made significant contributions towards more pluralistic conceptualisations of justice, still such EJ frameworks continue to be rooted within Western intellectual thinking that takes universality and time-as-linear as givens of justice. In doing so, such theorising forecloses different understandings of what justice is and how it should be delivered. In the context of water justice, moreover, the discourse of 'rights' (water rights, Indigenous rights to water, human rights) are based on the Western legal 'rights' discourse, which does little to account for Indigenous conceptualisations of water responsibilities to and for water as a living being (or multiple beings). Indeed, by deliberately situating our book within the scholarship of EJ, rather than water justice (Perreault et al. 2018; Robison et al. 2018), we draw on Māori ontological thinking wherein all things are connected by reciprocal relationships (based on whakapapa), and that water cannot be separated from land (whenua), people (tangata), and all other parts of the cosmos (see Fig. 11.1). Everything is related and interwoven together through whakapapa (first discussed in Chap. 3). Each component (a plant, a river, a person, a mountain) both depend on and possesses responsibilities to care for one another. The goal is to ensure balance within the totality of Te Ao Māori, which involves the protection and enhancement of the life force (mauri) of all beings.

In this book, we sought to consider EJ in terms of our perspectives as scholars who identify as Māori/Pākehā/Hybrid Others as well as members of particular iwi (tribes), hapū (sub-tribes), and whānau (family) examining freshwater degradation of Te Awa o Waipā (which is the

Fig. 11.1 Photograph of Lake Ngāroto showing algae bloom in 2019. Source: Meg Parsons, 2019

ancestral river for two of our authors). We discuss how settler-colonialism resulted in violence (against people and ecosystems) and the dispossession of Māori iwi from their land and awa. Colonisation in Aotearoa, like in other settler-colonial societies, involved settlers physically inscribing their values, imagined geographies, and collective continuance through (what we now realise) unsustainable methods: deforestation, removal of endemic biodiversity, drainage of wetlands, productivist agriculture, air and water pollution, and so on. These means are underpinned on the settler-colonial narrative of a homeland (Aotearoa New Zealand as the ‘Britain of the South Seas’) but also frequently concealed in plain sight by stories of Māori ‘wastelands’ and untamed (unproductive) wilderness that mask histories of violence and dispossession of Māori (Hursthouse 1861; Whyte 2016, 2018). The inscriptions of the settler-colonial spaces provided the foundational conditions needed for settler collective continuance within Māori rohe (traditional lands and waters), while negatively impeding the capacities of Māori to maintain their cultural continuation. Settler-colonialism is, Whyte argues, a “structure of oppression based on one society’s interference with and erasure of another society” which is both a driver and an outcome of the Anthropocene (Whyte 2016).

Given that settler-colonialism is an ongoing process that is “deeply ecological”, it is always related to environmental injustices. In the catchment of the Waipā River, the settler-state and settlers, as we document in-depth in Chaps. 4 and 5, sought to “establish their collective continuance” over that of other societies (Ngāti Maniapoto and other iwi) (Whyte 2016). The Pākehā-dominated settler society imposed preventable harms on Māori communities to facilitate the former’s process of making a new home, a place of belongingness, and security. The inscription process replaced Māori knowledge, values, laws, institutions, and ecologies with those of settler political institutions, social norms, environments and relationships. The foundation of EJ is centred on how people see, exist, and interact with the world. We demonstrate, throughout this book, that the environmental changes that took place within the Waipā catchment were (and are still) unjust because those changes (directed by one society for its benefit) robbed local Māori iwi, hapū and whānau of their capacities to experience their landscapes and waterscapes (their worlds) on their

terms; which included their subsistence and flourishing as well as their abilities to maintain their systems of responsibilities. Although some scholarship on EJ only emphasise the distribution of environmental burdens or risks, our examples (drawn predominately from the Waipā) illustrate the challenges of negotiating relationships between different cultures, systems of law, governance and management, and what these negotiations mean in the context of addressing worsening freshwater crises in the Anthropocene. Therefore, let us briefly return to the three components of EJ discussed throughout the book as a means to tease out some of our thinking, but also to emphasise the ways in which these three categories blur together and are interwoven within IEJ.

Distributive Justice

In the previous chapters, we demonstrate how settler-colonial-led acts to transform Māori waterscapes into drained and canalled farmlands, straightened rivers, and flood levee-protected townships negatively impacted the health and wellbeing of iwi, hapū and whānau. Māori could no longer depend on their different mahinga kai (food gathering sites) to provide them with an abundance of foods (shellfish, fish, birds, plants) due to deforestation, drainage and flood control works, pollutants (human waste, livestock effluent, fertilisers and agri-chemicals), invasive introduced species, as well as the imposition of private property rights that restricted access. At the same time, as Māori faced ongoing losses of environmental “goods”, Pākehā derived greater and greater material benefits from their newly created landscapes and waterscapes. Farms, factories, townships, piped and treated water supplies, as well as newly introduced exotic plants and animals (including cows, sheep, pigs, deer and trout) all ensured Pākehā communities’ free access to environmental benefits (clean water, food) while Māori communities encountered more restricted access. When placed through the lens of distributional justice, there is clear evidence that the distribution of environmental risks and goods was inequitable in the Waipā catchment. Indeed, as we demonstrated in Chap. 4, government officials took deliberate actions to prevent Māori access to parts of the freshwater system of the Waipā (such as

wetlands) which underpinned the health and wellbeing of local iwi, hapū, and whānau. Likewise, water pollution, a result of the ongoing discharges of effluent, chemicals and fertilisers (from towns, factories, and farms) onto lands and into waterways, disproportionately impacted Māori due to their use of waterways for swimming, bathing, drinking, and food sources. The distribution of environmental risks was (and are still) not equitable, we argue, because of the different ways in which Māori and Pākehā use and relate to the river. For instance, in 2020 many Māori (unlike Pākehā) continue to swim in and harvest foods from waters of the Waipā River and its tributaries (despite the waterways remaining highly unhealthy due to incredibly high counts of bacteria (*E. Coli*), nitrogen and phosphorus levels. They make the decision to use the polluted water and foods from the river (despite their awareness of potential health risks) because they consider such practices critical to retaining their cultural identity and continuance, mātauranga (knowledge), and spiritual integrity (wairua), with bathing and eating food collected from their ancestral waters critical to maintaining connections between tūpuna (ancestors which includes the river itself) and living people (discussed in Chap. 10). Yet, the distribution of environmental goods and harms are only a segment of the story of how Māori were (and still are) negatively impacted by changes wrought by settler-colonialism on their relationships with awa.

One of the pitfalls of much of the EJ scholarship relates to the employment of distributive justice (environmental equity) as the solution to address environmental injustices. Environmental equity is often simplistically conceived of in terms of the equitable distribution of society's environmental risks and benefits. To be sure, over that last two decades, more and more scholars' critiques within the EJ literature calls for more in-depth attention to examining the reasons underpinning such maldistribution (Agyeman et al. 2016; Schlosberg 2003; Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003). However, as we have demonstrated throughout this book's previous chapters, the distributive justice approach often renders invisible Indigenous peoples' experiences of environmental harms and benefits. Indeed, when many scholars discuss distributive equity, there is an underlying assumption that nature or environments can be exploited and turned into a distributable good (a resource, commodity). However,

this conception is challenged by Indigenous relational ways of thinking and modes of life.

The struggles of Ngāti Maniapoto against settler colonialism, dispossession, and the destruction of their rohe were historically (throughout the last one hundred years) and now, in the present-day (2020), not just a challenge or fight against the “distribution of risks and impacts” (to borrow the words of Coulthard); but also about the right to live “concerning one another and the natural world in non-dominating and nonexploitative terms” (Coulthard 2014, p. 13). In consideration of this, it is difficult to see how the distributional equity of environmental resources amongst different populations would address many of the environmental injustices at hand. As demonstrated throughout our book, the narrow conceptualisation of distributional EJ, underpinned with Western intellectual framings (materialism, anthropocentrism, individualism, land/water/biota as property), is incompatible with Māori conceptualisations of the taiao (environment), awa (river) and whenua (land) as being part of one’s extended family. These genealogical relationships (whakapapa), that stretch back to the creation of the cosmos (starting with Io/the supreme being, and continuing to Ranginui/Sky Father and Papa-tū-ā-nuku/Earth Mother, and the creation of the living beings), are centred on the idea that everything is connected and that everything possesses dignity which must be respected. The reciprocal relations between human and more-than-human entities, in the Waipā freshwater system, challenge Western views of water as a resource that can be commanded and controlled or quantified and allocated. This highlights the critical need for recognitional justice, wherein Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies are not only recognised by settler-states but also allowed to be enacted in ways that Indigenous peoples’ themselves define as appropriate within contemporary settings. Our descriptions of Ngāti Maniapoto perspectives of freshwater management and governance offer an important entry point for others, in Aotearoa and around the globe, to think about what it means to move beyond dominant Euro-Western framings of water as a resource to measure, allocate, and control. We highlight how such challenges to the colonial capitalist order of things (which continues to the norm around the world) require the embrace of ontological pluralism wherein the existence of multiple worlds (not just Te Ao Māori and Te Ao

Pākehā) are not only acknowledged but also that practical actions are taken to ensure that these worlds (and worldviews) be allowed to flourish (Escobar 2016; Grosfoguel 2006; Rojas 2016; Salmond 2017). In light of these different ideas, ways of knowing, and modes of life, current framings of distributional EJ appears incompatible with many Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Moreover, efforts to address environmental injustices through distributive means (equitable distribution of environmental goods and burdens) do little to address many of the environmental injustices faced by Indigenous peoples.

Procedural Justice

Procedural injustice, as documented in Chap. 2, occurs when people possess “no voice or capacity to exercise self-determination in decision-making processes that affect their lives” and there are no acceptable reasons why those persons lack information or a voice (Whyte 2017, p. 117). As Shrader-Frechette writes, procedural justice premised on the principle of “participative justice” that aims to “ensure that there are institutional and procedural norms that guarantee that all people [have] equal opportunity for consideration in decision-making” (Shrader-Frechette 2002, p. 28). Since institutions and procedures (established by the settler-state) did not allow Ngāti Maniapoto to participate in decision-making processes about freshwater (and environmental management more generally) during the nineteenth century and the majority of the twentieth century, procedural EJ did occur. However, since the 1990s, procedural justice has been pursued through many different strategies that aim to redress the historical social and environmental injustices experienced by Māori. The passage of the Resource Management Act (1991) (RMA), outlined in Chaps. 5 and 6, required that local governments consider Māori interests in their responsibilities to create and implement regional and district plans, and consult with iwi. The RMA, for instance, directs local authorities to acknowledge Māori connections with rivers, including their wāhi tapu (sacred sites), harvesting practices, and understandings of rivers as more-than-human beings that possess agency and mauri (Ruru 2012). The RMA does provide some possibilities for Māori to be

procedurally included within freshwater governance and management by providing Māori with a platform to speak about their concerns (in consultation meetings, public hearings and submissions to local authorities). However, Māori are still only participants in public consultative planning processes that are designed and administered by the settler-colonial-state rather than Māori and do not necessarily accord to mātauranga Māori (knowledge), tikanga (laws), and kawa (ceremonies) (Bell 2018; Ruru 2012). Local governments (and if the decision is appealed, the Environmental Court) are expected to consider Māori interests and concerns (often focused on the need to prevent and/or mitigate environmental degradation) over those of other interest groups (district councils, local developers, large energy corporations, farmers) who seek to maintain existing or create new infrastructure development opportunities (Ruru 2012). Ultimately, when local authorities and the courts make decisions about resource consents, both government and the judiciary frequently favour groups seeking to maintain the settler-colonial status quo (centred on the endless expansion of development and accumulation of material assets), and the priorities of Māori (most notably the need to enact the practices of kaitiakitanga—environmental guardianship) continued to be marginalised. The RMA does not give Māori the decision-making power to veto resource consent applications that breach their tikanga (Māori laws), such as those that threaten to diminish the mauri of their ancestral river and whenua.

Recently, new legislation created co-governance and co-management arrangements over the Waipā River that provided positions for iwi to negotiate with governments and seek to address their EJ issues, which provides for far greater inclusion of iwi interests than previous legislations. In particular, the creation of the joint management agreement (JMA) (signed between Ngāti Maniapoto and different territorial authorities) provides for some of local governments' functions and duties over freshwater management to be transferred to the iwi authority (Maniapoto Māori Trust Board). Ngāti Maniapoto considers the JMA an effective new tool to emerge from the Treaty settlement process which offers the iwi an opportunity to re-assert their rangatiratanga (authority) over their rohe (traditional lands and waters), actively monitor water quality, and seek to design and enact kaitiakitanga-based management processes to

restore the health of their awa and their entire iwi. However, Ngāti Maniapoto iwi, hapū, and whānau still, despite the passage of new legislation as well as co-governance and co-management arrangements, encounter substantive challenges when trying to make meaningful actions to address freshwater problems (as we outlined in Chaps. 5, 7, 8, and 9). They do not necessarily possess the required resources (highlighting the distributive inequities) and capacities to support their restoration efforts as well as mount legal actions to hold government authorities, private landholders, and industries that fail to comply with regulations and continue to pollute and degrade their rivers. Despite new legislative and institutional arrangements, the Waikato Regional Council (WRC) and Environmental Court, as we outline in Chap. 5, consistently deny iwi complaints, submissions and court cases seeking to prevent local authorities discharging wastewater (human waste) into waterbodies because Māori claimants' cite only mātauranga Māori, cultural practices and tikanga not scientific knowledge to support their claims. Local governments and the courts argue that Māori experts speaking on mātauranga and tikanga are not equivalent to scientific experts. Furthermore, the courts regularly uphold the view that there is no legal basis (because Māori knowledge and laws are just 'cultural views' rather than legitimate evidence) to support their opposition to the discharge of human waste into water bodies. Thus, though there are now mechanisms that allow for iwi members to participate in decision-making processes, and iwi members take the time to attend council meetings, public hearings, and write and orally submit their views at such official local government forums (or launch legal cases and give evidence before the courts), there is no guarantee that Māori experiences, knowledge, and values will be taken seriously by decision-makers, who operate within Te Ao Pākehā and governance frameworks designed to secure and maintain the sovereignty and authority of the settler-state.

Recognition as Justice

Environmental injustice also occurs when laws, institutions, and practices are organised and enacted in ways that fail to recognise or respect the identities, knowledges, and values of certain populations. In this book, we discuss the numerous ways in which the settler-colonial state persistently did not recognise (or misrecognition) the ontologies and epistemologies of Māori groups. Recognition is a critical element of EJ (Barnhill-Dilling et al. 2020; Whyte 2017). Indeed, increased recognition by the settler-state, since the 1980s onwards, of the specific relationships that Māori iwi have with their rohe, provide an important entry point for addressing environmental injustices. As we outline in Chap. 6, the acknowledgement that iwi (including Ngāti Maniapoto) are not stakeholders but Treaty partners with the New Zealand Government (the Crown), and iwi hold particular interests in and decision-making authority in their traditional lands and waters are now incorporated in various statutes, Treaty settlements, local government policies, as well as co-governance and co-management arrangements. Although Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) is not recognised under domestic law, which means Māori do not possess any “general constitutional rights ... [to] heard within the court setting” (Ruru 2012, p. 111), informal recognition of the Treaty and Māori interests has shown through in other legislation (such as the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Constitution Act 1986). A range of statutes to explicitly acknowledge Māori knowledge (mātauranga) and laws (tikanga), including the principles of kaitiakitanga (environmental guardianship) and mauri (life force) as well as specific relationships iwi possess with their ancestral lands and waters (as mana whenua).

Recognition of Māori relational ontologies, which encompass the more-than-human, through new Treaty settlement legislation are presenting the possibility of disrupting Western worldviews and environmental management practices premised on anthropocentrism (and the nature-culture binary). A range of new legislation, imbued with ontological and legal pluralism, adopts different ways to acknowledge the more-than-human. In Aotearoa, this includes the awarding of legal personhood

to geo-entities (the Whanganui River and Te Urewera range) and the specific naming of supernatural beings (the taniwha Waiwaia who lives in the Waipā River). Whereas, in South America, Mother Nature is now included in the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador. Yet, there remain substantive challenges in theories, laws, and practices that attempt to dissolve the “ontological divide” between Western and Indigenous intellectual traditions (first noted in Chap. 2) and multiple tensions come forth in translating Indigenous ethics of care (which includes Ngāti Maniapoto) *mātauranga* and *tikanga* into legislative and institutional frameworks, as we detail in Chap. 7 in regard to co-governance arrangements.

While we demonstrate how ‘having a voice’ or being recognised within settler-state apparatus is a significant step for Māori, it is not necessarily enough to overcome existing or emerging injustices (such as those associated with climate change). To begin with, as we outline throughout this book, state-based recognition of Indigenous interests can serve to (re) produce environmental injustices and of colonised subjectivities (Álvarez and Coolsaet 2018). A closer examination of existing processes demonstrates how different sorts of settler-colonial mechanisms contribute to influence decision-making processes that do not necessarily benefit Indigenous peoples and instead emphasis the settler colonial status quo. Indeed, in Chap. 6 we note how the practice of implementing Treaty settlement legislation remains problematic because the government decision-makers responsible for interpreting the legislation are frequently ignorant about what the purpose of Treaty settlements are, are unfamiliar with Māori concepts, and do not take the learn about Te Ao Māori to avoid misinterpreting the meaning and functions of new statutes. There is thus a considerable interpretative risk associated with state-based recognition through legislation as those in positions of authority (who are interpreting and implementing the laws) continue to enact the world as if it is only one (Te Ao Pākehā) instead of many. Along similar lines, international decolonial and Indigenous scholarship warn of the potential dangers of integrating “Indigenous philosophies into hegemonic institutions” can lead to “distortion, erasure and co-optation” and the emergence of a “new epistemic extractivism and violence” (Hunt 2014, pp. 24, 29; Sundberg 2014; Watts 2013; Widenhorn 2013). As Temper

notes, there is a gap between theory and practice, and the tensions between the needs to make marginalised knowledges, ways of life, and practices politically relevant, which can erase, co-opt and distort Indigenous “knowledge systems through the very act of doing so” (Temper 2019, p. 14).

Interweaving and Layering of Justice: Pluralistic Accounts of IEJ

Herein lies the overlaps (interweaving) between recognitional, procedural, and distributive dimensions of EJ. Recognition of Māori cultural identity, knowledges, values, and practices (by the settler-state) through legislation and co-governance and co-management arrangements is not enough if it is not also accompanied by procedures that ensure the knowledge, meanings, and practices of Te Ao Māori are given equal weighting within legal and institutional regimes (that are responsible for how freshwater (land, sea, air) is governed and managed). For instance, Māori are increasingly recognised as *mana whenua* (tribal authority holders within their ancestral lands and waters) under legislation and new institutional arrangements, however, settler-state designed procedures (designed for collaborative planning) still inadequately accompany Māori practices (centred on collective discussions and consensus-based decision-making). Likewise, Māori groups (both formal institutions as well as *whānau* and *hāpu*) inadequate resources (both in terms of time and money) to allow them to participate in state-based planning processes, and often face the burdens of intergenerational deprivation (poverty, poor health, lack of education).

Ngāti Maniapoto iwi members desire to exercise their *rangatiratanga* and modes of governance within their *rohe* through practising ethics of care (*kaitiakitanga*) towards their waterscapes and landscapes; in doing so, they seek to heal and restore the *mauri* and *wairua* (spiritual integrity) of their *awa* and *whenua* (their more-than-human kin) as well as themselves as a collective group (as members of Ngāti Maniapoto).

Beyond Recognition to Encompass Indigenous Ontologies and Responsibilities

As an ordering principle, the colonial and capitalist modernity claims of itself “the right to be ‘the world’, subjecting all other worlds to its own terms, or worse, to non-existence” (Escobar 2016, p. 3). Yet, as our studies and countless others demonstrate, different ontologies and epistemologies (ways of knowing and being) persist around the world that provide possibilities to address social and environmental injustices through a plurality of approaches. A plethora of new research highlights the diversity of Indigenous peoples’ relationships with waters and demonstrates that there are multiple ways of seeing the world(s) and responding to changing environmental conditions (Bischoff-Mattson et al. 2018; Castleden et al. 2017; Diver et al. 2019; Jackson 2018; McGregor 2015; Parsons and Fisher 2020; Wilson 2019). Such scholarship provides clear evidence of why freshwater management should not be solely framed through the gaze of scientific knowledge and modernising development. Yet, freshwater management scholars, decision-makers, and practitioners remain far too often situated within the universalising lens of Western ontologies (premised on water/land as property, materialism, individualism, anthropocentrism), wherein matters of water pollution, river management, flooding, and restoration are only situated and assessed through Western ontological and epistemological frameworks (McLean 2014; Parsons et al. 2019; Sarna-Wojcicki et al. 2019). In doing so, freshwater governance and management simply become new exercises in colonial modernity (itself the foundation of the multiple ecological crises of the Anthropocene).

That being said, the movement to embrace legal and ontological pluralism (discussed in Chap. 6) may be useful for destabilising settler-colonial and capitalist modernity, thereby, opening spaces for ontologies that do not fit within the settler-colonial command-and-control approaches to freshwater governance and management. In this newly emergent space (post-Treaty settlements) of co-governance and co-management agreements, Ngāti Maniapoto are seeking to re-assert their own legal order and to live their concept of EJ, through practices that

disrupt the socio-economic and ecological logic and production of settler-colonial power. In identifying the contradictions that are central in the contemporary realities of freshwater management, in Aotearoa (specifically in the context of the Waipā River), and the ways in which such colonial orderings rest at the heart of many modern freshwater crises, we elucidate, is far more than the fracturing effects of the settler-colonial imposition of territorial boundaries and binaries (nature/culture and land/water). We demonstrate how the colonial logics of the universal (the unanimous applicability of scientific knowledge and technology, as well as the economy, development, and so forth) function(ed) to undermine and devalue Māori ways of being and their relationships with each other and their environments. Our descriptions of Indigenous perspectives of freshwater management, and socio-cultural and political life-worlds (which stand in contrast to the ordering principles of colonial, scientific, and capitalist modernity) offer an important entry point to integrate one of the core components of modernity (Escobar 2016; Grosfoguel 2006; Rojas 2016). In particular, the emphasis on intergenerational EJ within Te Ao Māori, as discussed in Chap. 10, is premised on the need to ensure that the mauri of the tangata, whenua, awa, and all other entities within their rohe are respected, maintained, and enhanced across temporal scales (including in the context of the impacts of climate change) (Winter 2018, p. 216). The movement towards decolonising freshwater governance and management, in the Anthropocene, requires such new (or some would say old) ways of thinking about and enacting respectful inter-being relationality. Respectful intergenerational and inter-being relationality goes beyond the concepts of ‘environmental management’ and ‘sustainability’. Duties and responsibilities can and do move between times, spaces, realms, and forms and allow for flexibility in usage but always with the emphasis being on maintaining balance and life across generations and beings (maintaining the mauri of the river, the people, plants, animals, and others). As we document through our exploration of the changing waterscapes of Te Awa o Waipā throughout this book and the ways in which Māori experiences of environmental injustices are bound up in iwi webs of multiple interactions, wherein the sense of self is always interwoven in ongoing reciprocal relationships with their kin,

biota, land and water, ancestors and future generations. Actions to achieve justice, similarly, reside in an interwoven or multifaceted approach.

Our case study suggests that moving towards more pluralistic forms of EJ requires expansions of the boundaries of justice away from its basis within Western liberal philosophies and theories to encompass different philosophies and modes of thought. Thus, when scholars and activists advocate for the inclusion of inter-species and non-humans (including rivers and “Mother Nature”) to be given legal recognition and provided for in accounts of EJ, we do not only cite the work of Western theorists and those who draw on Western intellectual traditions (Rawls, Fraser, and Latour) (Fraser 1995; Latour 1996; Rawls 2009). In this book, we use examples from our small corner of the world (which is obviously not without its limitations and an example of strategic localism rather than universalism) to attest to how Western knowledge and the political, economic and social structures of settler-colonialism created (and still create) ontological and epistemological divides that sought to keep (and treat) nature as separate from society, and land as divided from water. Yet, since the commencement of the settler-colonial acts (military and eco-violence, dispossession and marginalisation), Māori groups have persistently sought to challenge and resist the establishment of ontological and epistemological divisions between tangata whenua, whenua, and awa. Māori consistently advocate for their holistic understandings to be recognised by others but also sought to ensure that they enact their own possibilities to transcend and restrict colonial/Western liberal constructs. In doing so, iwi demonstrate how, despite the depth of colonising lines that were and are still drawn across the land and waters (be it through land surveys and the construction of drainage canals, or social norms and political institutions), iwi are seeking to create and (re)assert their own ways of governing and managing and enacting the practices of kaitiakitanga through using their own mātauranga, language, and ways of seeing the world as well as drawing on Western scientific knowledge, approaches and practices (on their own terms). Rather than a politics of refusal and resistance, noted by some scholars, the process involves healing themselves and their awa and sharing with others as a means to transform their awa and the capacities of others to heal. Most importantly, it goes beyond the theory of decolonising freshwater and involves actions and lived practices of kaitiakitanga

(guardianship) and intergenerational EJ based on responsibilities to ancestors (past, present, future) both human and more-than-human.

There is a world of difference between perceiving the river as an object (fluvial geomorphological, H₂O, commodity) and as a subject (wahine/female Waipā, ancestor, kin). The first viewpoint denotes something that can be measured, quantified, divided and controlled, and something situated at the margin of humanity/distance for the political economy/culture/values (a wet surface that cut across lands). The second viewpoint is a perspective that centres of the totality of connections and interrelationships. The first perspective frames the Waipā River from the settler (Western/European) viewpoint. Settlers drew both real and imaginary lines and physical structures across landscapes, waterscapes, and seascapes, and in doing so imposed colonial boundaries that sought to define, divide, and confine spaces, biota, and peoples to restricted for the first time. The dividing lines continue in the present-day, and seek to separate: human health from river health; taonga (treasures) from wai (water); material from metaphysical; economic security from water security; kaitiaki (guardians) from practices of kaitiakitanga (environmental guardianship); wairua (spiritual integrity) from mauri (life force); and the expression of rangatiratanga (chiefly authority and rights of self-determination) from that of mana (power, prestige and sovereignty).

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