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Transforming River Governance: The Co-Governance Arrangements in the Waikato and Waipā Rivers

Since the commencement of formal British colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand in 1840, the settler-state took deliberate efforts to exclude Māori tribes' (iwi) knowledge, values, and decision-making authority over their ancestral lands and waters. Indeed, settler-colonialism, as a structure and a process, was (and still is) premised on the suppression of other ways of knowing and being and the introduction and promotion of Western knowledge, laws, worldviews, social norms, and modes of life. In the Waipā River, as we demonstrated in earlier chapters in this book, individual settlers and government agencies undertook a wide array of activities that directly aimed to radically remake Māori waterscapes, which included the systematic clearance of vegetation, draining wetlands, lowering river and lake levels, destroying eel weirs (pā tuna), building flood levees, using waterways as waste disposal sites, and introducing new biota to supplant native biota (Park 2002; Parsons and Nalau 2016; Parsons et al. 2017, 2019; Williams et al. 2018). All these actions were premised on the suppression and marginalisation of not only Māori bodies and entire communities, but also Māori knowledge, legal and governance

The original version of this chapter was revised: The incorrect information with reference to The Waikato River Authority text has now been revised and updated. The correction to this chapter is available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-61071-5_12

systems, cultural practices, and ways of life. The consequences of the processes of dispossession, violence, and marginalisation were shown through in Māori experiencing multiple forms of environmental injustice (inequitable distribution of environmental harms, lack of participatory parity, and failure to recognise Māori identities, knowledge and values).

In this chapter, we review how Ngāti Maniapoto is seeking to address the environmental injustices related to their river (Te Awa o Waipā) through new co-governance mechanisms which reassert Māori authority over and knowledge about wai (water) and awa (rivers). We highlight the different avenues by which Māori groups are transforming approaches to the freshwater governance and management and the implications for addressing freshwater degradation in the Anthropocene. As we documented previously in Chap. 6 the emergence of new legislation and resulting, co-governance arrangements (introduced since the mid-2010s) are providing Māori iwi with greater influence in relation to day-to-day operations as well as planning and policy changes regarding river governance and management (New Zealand Parliament 1991, 2010a, 2017; Ngā Wai o Maniapoto (Waipā River) Act 2012; Rangitāiki River Forum 2015; Waikato River Authority 2011).

In this chapter, we go in-depth to examine the ways (and the extent to which) formal recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems within environmental governance and reconciliation are achieving environmental justice (EJ) with a particular focus on Treaty settlement agreements between the New Zealand Crown (Crown) and Māori iwi groups. We focus, in particular, on the practical realities of implementing and operationalising the co-governance framework established through legislation passed following a Treaty settlement between the Crown and Ngāti Maniapoto (Ngā Wai o Maniapoto (Waipā River) 2012) using EJ and the dimensions outlined in Chap. 2 as an analytical lens (distributive, procedural and recognition). We are interested in determining whether the Indigenous-state co-governance model established for the Waipā River enables Ngāti Maniapoto to exercise their mātauranga (Māori knowledge), tikanga (customary laws), rangatiratanga (chiefly authority and sovereignty), and priorities in formal governance and decision-making in a way that addresses the environmental injustices experienced by Ngāti Maniapoto. Before we proceed to our examples from Aotearoa, it is important to situate our research within the context of broader scholarship on Indigenous freshwater governance, management, and justice.

Water 'Rights' and 'Responsibilities': Water Co-Governance and Justice

Indigenous peoples, for whom freshwater is a matter of the highest importance, are typically excluded from colonial water governance frameworks (Arsenault et al. 2019; Behn and Bakker 2019; Wilson 2020). Indeed, in settler-colonial states (such as Aotearoa NZ, Canada, the United States and Australia), where the Indigenous peoples comprise the minority of the total national population and colonisation is ongoing rather than a historical period, the knowledges, values, and management practices of Indigenous peoples' remain side-lined in favour of Western knowledge and Eurocentric environmental governance and management approaches (Coombes 2006; Pulido 2017; Veracini 2010, 2011). As a consequence of this marginalisation, shared water governance arrangements are being advocated as a way in which Indigenous peoples can be included in decision-making processes regarding waterways, and to address (redress) the historical and contemporary exclusion of Indigenous peoples' knowledges, values, and practices from water governance and management regimes (Parsons et al. 2017; Poelina et al. 2019; von der Porten et al. 2015; Simms et al. 2016).

Indigenous freshwater governance scholarship demonstrates Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination include decision-making authority based on Indigenous laws, ontologies, and epistemologies to protect freshwater for all types of life (human and more-than-human entities) as well as generations (past, present and future) (Boelens 2014; McGregor 2014; Morgan and Te Aho 2013; Wilson and Inkster 2018). Although the deliberate refusal by settler-states to acknowledge Indigenous water rights and responsibilities are at the heart of many of the environmental injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples, the implications of power disparities that advantage and normalise settler-colonial ways of thinking and acting with regard to water, including governance arrangements, requires further exploration (Simms et al. 2016; Wilson 2020). Many scholars draw attention to the important distinction between settler-colonial legal frameworks underpinned by 'rights' over or to water, and Indigenous legal and governance frameworks centred on

responsibilities and duties to water as a living entity (Castleden et al. 2017; Charpleix 2018; Jackson 2018; Poelina et al. 2019). Whereas, legal frameworks based on ‘rights’ implies an entitlement to own, use and manage water, Indigenous frameworks emphasise duties and responsibilities for and about water, and acknowledge that people are living because of (and their lives, livelihoods, and sense of self are all entangled with) water (McGregor 2015; Robison et al. 2018). Indigenous responsibilities for water encapsulate the maintenance and protection of water, including its quality and quantity, to enable and enhance the health and wellbeing of human and more-than-human beings (including biological and meta-physical entities). These responsibilities are intergenerational (Johnston 2018). Researchers who explore the ontological politics of freshwater governance demonstrate that injustices are linked to the repeated imposition of settler conceptualisations of water as a resource and commodity for people to exploit, own and manage (as we outline in previous chapters) (McGregor 2014; Parsons et al. 2019; Salmond 2017; Wilson and Inkster 2018). Such epistemological and ontological violence marginalised Indigenous authority and knowledge, and its expression, within legal, governance, and management systems, in ways that negatively impacted the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples (Barber and Jackson 2015; Berry et al. 2018; McLean 2014; Wilson et al. 2019).

Water governance performs a socio-cultural function that shapes and regulates the management and development of water resources as well as the provision of water services to society to ensure water resources are kept in a “desirable state” (Pahl-wostl 2017; Pahl-Wostl et al. 2011). A water governance system, therefore, is an interconnected assemblage of social, cultural, political and legal components that enacts the role of water governance, and which embraces actors and their institutions. As an interdependent set of institutions (formal laws, professional practices, social values and norms), a water governance regime is the main structural feature of a water governance system. The water governance arrangements that exist within settler-nations are situated on a continuum ranging from Indigenous-led to colonial-led governance systems, with co-governance or shared governance occupying a middle ground (Kotaska 2013). Shared or joint governance arrangements are created to replace the adversarial, exclusionary and top-down modes of water governance

and policy-making and are being implemented around the world (not only in the context of Indigenous-state relations) to bring private and public stakeholders together in collaborative decision-making processes (von der Porten et al. 2015; von der Porten and de Loë 2013; Wilson 2020). Co-governance, in the context of settler societies, requires that both parties (Indigenous and the settler-state) share authority on a state-to-state basis and that Indigenous peoples explicitly agree to share authority over their ancestral water bodies with non-Indigenous peoples (Kotaska 2013; Muller et al. 2019; Simms et al. 2016; Wilson 2020). Many scholars forcefully argue that the creation of such collaborative governance and management arrangements are critical to the advancement of Indigenous capacities to manage their water resources effectively, and improve inter-jurisdictional catchment management (Jackson 2018; Memon and Kirk 2012; Parsons et al. 2017; Poelina et al. 2019; Tsatsaros et al. 2018).

While there is a growing body of scholarship outlining the establishment of co-governance arrangements, there has been less attention given to examining the practical day-to-day realities of how Indigenous-state co-governance arrangements operate (Bakker et al. 2018; Muru-Lanning 2016; Simms et al. 2016; Wilson 2020). Although scholars often report the hesitancy of settler-state governments to share decision-making authority with Indigenous peoples as a constraint to co-governance (Bakker et al. 2018; Simms et al. 2016), existing power disparities also marginalise Indigenous legal and governance regimes by prioritising and normalising Western (settler) ontologies and epistemologies (including the types of governance) (Kotaska 2013; Simms et al. 2016; Tipa and Welch 2006).

Connecting scholarship on Indigenous-settler-state freshwater co-governance to EJ is critical to understanding the injustices faced by Indigenous peoples as a consequence of governance and management regimes. EJ scholarship, as we outline in Chap. 2, provides a three-dimensional account that can be employed to understand better the (in) justice implications of emergent Indigenous/settler-state river co-governance regimes. Schlosberg (2004) created a “trivalent concept of justice” that includes three types of justice: distributive (the allocation of environmental risks and benefits or entitlements); procedural (how

decisions are made, what procedures are used to make decisions, and who shapes decisions); recognitional (what or who are valued or not) (Schlosberg 2004, p. 521) (see Fig. 7.1). Each of these dimensions overlaps and are bound together through socio-cultural, economic and political processes. However, as Indigenous scholars including Whyte (2016), McGregor (2014), and Winter (2018) caution, environmental justice for Indigenous peoples include particular configurations that necessitate that scholars consider Indigenous environmental justice as consisting of Indigenous sovereignties, knowledges, legal and governance systems. The linkage of co-governance and EJ literatures necessarily involves, as Wilson recently writes, “adapting environmental justice frameworks to acknowledge Indigenous water rights, responsibilities and authorities, as well as recognising the conflicts’ sources and understandings of the jurisdiction in Indigenous and colonial legal orders” (Wilson 2020, p. 95). Accordingly, we highlight the interlocking dimensions of (in)justices in the Indigenous

Fig. 7.1 Different dimensions of justice

and settler-state freshwater co-governance regime, and the different sources of authority that flow from different legal orders (Indigenous and settler state) within such a justice framework. In what follows, we apply this framework to examine the implementation of co-governance regimes for the Waikato and Waipā Rivers.

Treaty Settlements and Reconciliation

In 1994, the Office of Treaty Settlements (OTS) was established as a separate agency (located within the Ministry of Justice and entirely distinct from the Waitangi Tribunal) to negotiate with individual iwi (and sometimes larger pan-iwi groupings) about legal-financial reparations packages that acknowledge and sought to address the Crown's failures to honour the Treaty and as a means to reconcile with Māori (discussed further in the works of Treaty scholars including Jones and Hickford (Hickford and Humphries-Kil 2018; Jones 2016, pp. 21–22; Te Aho 2015; Wheen and Hayward 2012). A range of 'Treaty settlements' started to emerge from the mid-1990s (with the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Settlement) and continuing into the 2020s. Treaty settlements include a formal apology from the Crown for historical and contemporary injustices against a particular iwi, financial reparations to the iwi (monetary payments and return of Crown landholdings), and the introduction of new legislation (Jones 2016; Williams et al. 2018). Ruru argues that settlements (including deeds and subsequent legislation) provide a catalyst for transforming legal education and public understandings of law by recognising Māori rights and interests and for incorporating aspects of tikanga. For instance, the Deed of Settlement that contributed to the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act (1998) included aspects of tikanga and embedded in the statute are pūrākau (traditions and stories) of the whenua (the land). More recent Treaty settlements, including those with Waikato-Tainui and Ngāti Maniapoto, include specific provisions for Māori iwi to co-govern and co-manage culturally significant sites, including rivers, lakes and national parks. And, most notably, are settlements that recognise the legal personality of Indigenous ancestors (the forest of Te Urewera and the river of Whanganui) (New Zealand Parliament 2014,

2017). We now turn our attention to recent Treaty settlements concerning the Waikato and Waipā Rivers and how these settlements and resulting legislation are exemplars of both legal and ontological pluralism.

Treaty Settlements, Legislation, and Co-Governing and Co-Managing the Waikato and Waipā Rivers

The Waipā River Deed of Settlement, reached by way of direct negotiations between Ngāti Maniapoto and the Crown, was signed on 27 September 2010. Ngā Wai o Maniapoto (Waipā River) Act 2012 (hereafter the Waipā River Act) gives effect to the Deed. The Ngāti Maniapoto Deed and legislation built on earlier Treaty settlements with another iwi (Waikato-Tainui, Raukawa, Te Arawa, and Ngati Tūwharetoa) and the Crown and resulting legislation regarding the Waikato River, which acknowledges Māori interests in and authority over waterbodies. The three acts (known as the River Acts) acknowledged the importance of the Waikato and Waipā Rivers and catchment to the five River iwi groups. The acts emphasise the need to protect and restore the river and its tributaries, with the Waipā River Act also emphasising the care and protection of the mana tuku iho o Waiwaia (in contrast to Waikato-Tainui, who identify the Waikato River as a tupuna (ancestor). Waiwaia is a taniwha who acts as a kaitiaki of Ngāti Maniapoto and is the essence and wellbeing of the Waipā River. The mana tuku iho means the ancestral authority handed down from generation to generation in respect of Waiwaia (New Zealand Parliament 2010b, 2012; Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010).

The River Acts formally acknowledged the historic and ongoing relationships iwi possess with the Waikato and Waipā Rivers and their tributaries, and collectively determine the architecture and mechanisms to enable co-management and co-governance across the extent of these two catchments (see Fig. 7.2). Though similar, there are differences between the two Waikato River Acts and the Waipā River Act; in particular, the Waikato River Acts refer only to “co-management” whereas the Waipā

Fig. 7.2 Map showing the location of co-governance and co-management arrangements over Waipā and Waikato Rivers. (Source: Authors' own)

River Act distinguishes the co-governance framework (comprising four mechanisms to coordinate governance across the Waikato and Waipā Rivers) and co-management arrangements (specifically related to the Waipā River and discussed further in this chapter). We adopt the approach taken in the Waipā River Act and refer to both co-governance and co-management in the context of the Waipā River. The four co-governance mechanisms are the Waikato River Authority (as the co-governance entity), Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa Waikato/Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River (V&S), the Waikato River Clean-up Trust (WRCuT), and the integrated river management plans), which are elaborated below.

Vision and Strategy (V&S) for the Waikato River/Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato

In 2008, the Guardians Establishment Committee (GEC) created and published the V&S for the Waikato River as a component of the Waikato River Settlement between Waikato-Tainui and the Crown. The GEC comprised of sixteen members, half of whom were Māori, and marked a significant shift in river management in the Waikato since Waikato-Tainui participated for the first time in more than a century in creating an environmental planning document for their ancestral river. The principle vision, outlined in V&S, was for an “a future where a healthy Waikato River sustains abundance life and prosperous communities who, in turn, are responsible for restoring and protecting the health and well-being of the Waikato River, and all it embraces, for generations to come” (Waikato River Authority 2011, pp. 3–4). The objectives reflected specific priorities of Waikato-Tainui as *mana whenua* (authority holders) to practice *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship) over their ancestral river (Waikato River). Following the passage of the other River Acts, the V&S was extended to include the middle and upper reaches of the Waikato River (the traditional waters of Raukawa, Ngati Tūwharetoa, and Te Arawa) and the upper reaches of the Waipā River (the *rohe*—traditional territories of Ngāti Maniapoto).

The V&S is included as a schedule in each of the River Acts and is identified by parliament as the direction setting document for the Waikato and Waipā Rivers (and its catchments) (Waikato River Authority 2011). The V&S applies to the entirety of the Waikato River's 11,000 km² catchment (from Huka Falls to Te Puuaha o Waikato) as well as the Waipā River catchment. With the passing of the River Acts, the V&S was deemed to be part of the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (a mandatory planning document prepared under the Resource Management Act—RMA) and to prevail over all policy or planning documents that are inconsistent with it; this includes the national policy statements that are produced under it, such as the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management (NPSFM) (Ministry for the Environment 2017). The Waikato Regional Council (WRC) (the body responsible for freshwater management for the Waikato Region under the RMA), underwent a plan change to The Waikato Regional Plan (a plan prepared to implement the Regional Policy statement) to further ensure it gives effect to the V&S (Fig. 7.3) (Waikato Regional Council 2020; Waikato River Authority 2011)

Waikato River Authority (WRA)

The Waikato River Authority (WRA) is the co-governance entity established for the Waikato River following the passing of the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010, with iwi membership expanded with the passing of subsequent legislation (New Zealand Parliament 2010b, 2012). The WRA is also the sole trustee for WRCuT, which is a trust for charitable purposes that provides funding for restoration within the Waikato and Waipā river catchments to achieve the V&S. The WRA oversees the contestable funding rounds and makes decisions regarding allocation. At the time it was created, the WRA was hailed as a new era of co-governance and co-management in Aotearoa (discussed in Chap. 8) (Te Aho 2010, 2015). In line with the bi-cultural partnership that underpinned the Treaty as well as the Treaty settlements, the composition of the WRA comprises of an equal number of government (five) and River iwi representatives (one from each of the five River iwi) (Forster 2016). Representatives of local government included the

Fig. 7.3 The relationships between Aotearoa's national legislation and Waikato's local legislation framework. (Source: Authors' own)

Waikato Regional Council as well as territorial authorities (Waikato District Council, Otorohanga District Council, Waipā District Council, Hamilton City Council), and central government (Minister for the Environment appointed co-chairperson); each of the five River iwi (Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Raukawa, Te Arawa, Ngāti Maniapoto) appointed their representatives and decided on a shared iwi co-chairperson.

At the time of its creation, the WRA embodied co-governance far more than other government-led consultative models of governance already operating in Aotearoa such as the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (Memon and Skelton 2007; Nissen 2014; Pirsoul and Armoudian 2019). The WRA formally promotes a kaitiakitanga-based approach to river management and is focused on restoring and enhancing the mauri (life force), mana (power, authority and prestige), and health of the Waikato River and its tributaries (Waikato River Authority 2011). The WRA is intended to ensure greater Māori participation and decision-making authority within freshwater management processes (including water extraction and discharges into the waterways).

Assessing the Implementation of Co-Governance Arrangements

The creation of co-governance arrangements between the Crown and iwi, in regard to the Waikato and Waipā Rivers, represents an important shift in freshwater governance; however, the implementation of these arrangements are criticised by representatives of Ngāti Maniapoto (see Fig. 7.4: a map showing jurisdiction boundaries for co-governance of Waipā River). However, they acknowledged that beneficial changes had occurred as a consequence of the Waipā River Act and the formal recognition of Ngāti Maniapoto connections with and authority over their ancestral river, the co-governance arrangements are not living up to their expectations. Iwi acknowledges that they have experienced gains as a result of the co-governance and co-management arrangements; however, the majority of gains occurred in the context of co-management rather than co-governance arrangements (Muru-Lanning 2016; Stevens 2013). The

Iwi Waikato and Waipa River Co-Management Areas

Fig. 7.4 Map showing jurisdictional boundaries of co-governance over the Waipā River. (Source: Authors' own)

critiques are organised into three broad categories: distributional; recognitional; and procedural.

Distributional (In)Justices: Lack of Resources and Capacities

Ngāti Maniapoto iwi members highlight the distributive (in)justices of freshwater governance with regard to the Waipā River (and more broadly those of other iwi within the Waikato River catchment) is a consequence of the settler state's limited acknowledgement of iwi authority (rangatiratanga), tikanga (laws), and responsibilities (as mana whenua—spiritual authority holders and kaitiaki—environmental guardians). A key query that iwi members raised within their discussions is who should possess jurisdiction and authority to make decisions about the water and land within the Waipā River catchment. From their perspective, their whakapapa (genealogy), tikanga, and centuries of governance and management of their rohe, as well as their more recent agreements with the Crown (the Deed of Settlement, Waipā River Act, and co-governance and co-management agreements), give them decision-making authority (which they now agree to share with another iwi as well as the settler-state). They possess this authority by way of the responsibilities and rights that flow on from their status as mana whenua under Māori tikanga as well as their position as Treaty and co-governance partners conferred under the settler-state laws. Moreover, various legislation (RMA and Waipā River Act), environmental plans and strategies (V&S and Waikato Regional Plan), and co-governance arrangements (WRA and WRCuT) are meant to give iwi the power to shape how their awa is governed, planned for, and managed, yet there are barriers to their capacities to influence decision-making processes.

Ngāti Maniapoto iwi members report on the numerous challenges they face in their capacities to translate their aspirations to restore and protect their awa as a living entity (as well as those human and more-than-human beings that they are kin to). They spoke of the lack of adequate money and time to allow them to participate in new co-governance

and co-management processes. One member of iwi explains how the “WRC is forever asking” him and other members of Ngāti Maniapoto to participate in meetings, give expert advice to the council, and undertake other management and restoration tasks. However, the WRC regularly inform him and other members of his whānau (extended family), hapū (sub-tribes), and iwi that they (the council) cannot afford to pay them for any of their work. They simply say “good luck ... Oh, we [the WRC] can’t resource that” they expect “us [to work] for free and stuff”. (Māori Business Owner 1 2019). Money, an iwi restoration manager declared, “that’s a big barrier, is actually being able to get funding” (Māori Business Owner 1 2019).

Many iwi representatives spoke about the multiple burdens, they and others faced in their day-to-day life and how this impeded their capacities to meaningfully participate in co-management and co-governance processes as well as enact on-the-ground works to restore its mauri and that of its human and more-than-human communities. They spoke about how they and other members of their iwi held down paid work, as well as multiple other (unpaid) jobs including caring for their whānau, hapū and iwi (be it within their homes, on their marae—meeting complex for each hapū, urupā—cemetery, and wāhi tapu—sacred sites) as well as within official governance and management forums. As one research participant, who works as a scientist alongside her iwi in their restoration efforts, reports that the “hardest thing or the biggest barrier is that our kaitiaki [guardians] are time poor because they’re across so many different kaupapa [initiatives]”. It is not that kaitiaki “lack motivation” but that “they have so much other stuff to do ... look after their whānau and keep a job so that they can support themselves” (Scientist 2 2019). Another interviewee describes how government efforts to support iwi and engage with Māori “sort of stops ... at the regional level” and resourcing (be it from WRC, WRA, or district councils) are not filtering down to local level (especially marae, hapū, and whānau) (Māori Business Owner 1 2019).

So yeah, there’s definitely more work needed in that area of actually recognising what co-management means—and getting some money and resourcing done so that people are actually doing the work there. (Māori Business Owner 1 2019)

The council officials, iwi representative, complain, simply assume that all five iwi (named in the River Acts) that are part of the current freshwater co-governance and co-management arrangements can fund themselves. However, “we [Ngāti Maniapoto] don’t even have that much [money] at Maniapoto because we’re still [have yet to reach full Treaty] settlement” with the Crown (unlike the other River iwi). “There’s definitely an inequity in there” between Ngāti Maniapoto, other iwi, and councils (Māori Business Owner 1 [2019](#)).

Without adequate financial resources, the process of decolonising freshwater co-governance arrangements and challenging the hegemony of settler-colonial rule is not possible. They report how they face substantive barriers in accessing the grants for river restoration (administered by the WRCuT) because they lack sufficient funds and trained staff members to apply for and win the contestable funding; competing against more well-resourced and larger organisations with more employees (such as Fonterra and local government bodies). Iwi also notes they do not possess sufficient financial resources to pay lawyers to hold the Crown (and its agencies) to account when it fails to uphold its end of the deal (such as launching legal action against the government or other organisations who breach environmental laws and regulations) (Iwi Rep 2 [2020](#); Iwi Rep 4 [2020](#); Iwi Rep 5 [2019](#); Iwi Rep 8 [2019](#)).

Efforts to address environmental justice require attention to how resources are distributed amongst groups, not just in how environmental risks and goods are distributed across geographical and temporal domains. Financial and other capacity constraints undermine Ngāti Maniapoto (and other iwi groups’) abilities to participate fully in and influence decision-making processes regarding their awa. Often, the activities surrounding co-governance and co-management of the Waipā River (including the Waikato Regional Plan change as well as resource consent applications) require that iwi and hapū organisations invest substantial amounts of their time (including staff and volunteer hours) and money (to pay staff); this includes Maniapoto Māori Trust Board (MMTB) staff as well as outside experts (including scientists, and lawyers) who are contracted to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities as kaitiaki, and try to maintain (or improve) the mauri of the awa and the communities (human and more-than-humans) whose lives (their mauri and

wairua—spiritual integrity) are dependent on it. The lack of financial parity between iwi and settler-state (not to mention private companies and other stakeholders) forces Ngāti Maniapoto to make decisions about where it is best to invest their constrained resources (time, personal, and money) and to gauge if it is worthwhile to be involved in all decisions made about their taiao (environment). While Ngāti Maniapoto is still at an early stage of the implementation of its co-governance and co-management agreements (as the Waipā River Act is less than eight years old), and there is a lot more possible.

Furthermore, once Ngāti Maniapoto and the Crown reach a final Treaty settlement, iwi hope that they will achieve further. However, there is no question that constrained resources are slowing down and impeding Ngāti Maniapoto iwi's ability to implement what they deem to be equitable, effective, and just co-management arrangements. As numerous scholars note, marginalised social groups (including Indigenous communities) require processes that give them some “locus of control over their destinies as part of a recognition of identity and place” that extends beyond words on paper (be it the Waipā River Act, Deed of Settlement and V&S) (Adger et al. 2011, p. 21). As philosopher Nancy Fraser argued, marginalised social groups need to gain participatory parity, with participation directly tied to recognition, and both linked to the distributional equity (Fraser and Honneth 2003).

Scholarship from Aotearoa and around the globe highlights that the equitable resourcing of Indigenous peoples can support efforts to build trust, enhance legitimacy and increase involvement in collaborative processes, making planning processes more procedurally inclusive, and in doing so address environmental injustices (Brink and Wamsler 2018; Denny and Fanning 2016; Harmsworth et al. 2016). Insufficient resourcing poses serious ramifications for the outcomes of collaborative freshwater management planning processes more generally, but especially in the context of Indigenous-state shared co-governance and co-management agreements (Cradock-Henry et al. 2017; Memon and Kirk 2012; Woldesenbet 2018). In the Canadian context, scholars including Roburn, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Nadasdy critique co-governance agreements that expand First Nation powers to include self-government but do not provide the First Nation government with an increase in funding to build

capacity and ensure the Indigenous state possesses sufficient financial, technical, and human resources necessary to successfully implement their expanded powers (Nadasdy 2017; Roburn and Hwëch'in 2012). First Nations rely on funding provided by federal and provincial governments through a variety of different projects and programmes, which frequently are only short-term funds and prone to being cut or reallocated whenever there is a change in government priorities. Accordingly, those First Nation's funds are highly unstable (compared to settler-colonial governments) (Wilson 2020). First Nations with self-governing agreements face a situation of expanding powers but even more financial insecurity (Nadasdy 2017, pp. 31–37). While the situation in Aotearoa is different from that of Canada, especially in the fact that Ngāti Maniapoto does not hold self-governing powers, financial insecurity and the precariousness of being reliant on a government project and/or grant funding are similarly experienced by Māori institutions like First Nations in Canada. The lack of money and financial stability presents implications for Māori formal institutions such as mandated tribal authorities (such as the MMTB) as well as informal institutions (hapū and marae, and whānau) capacities to engage in environmental planning and governance processes.

Our research indicates that inequalities in resourcing are contributing to inequities in iwi capacities to participate in the freshwater co-governance and co-management arrangements. In particular, representatives from iwi and hapū struggled with financial and time constraints created by the council designed planning processes (involving multiple working groups and hearing processes), as well as the Eurocentric framing of discussions, knowledges (centred on scientific and technical expertise), and governance and management approaches. Māori groups often, Harmsworth et al. (2016) previously identified, encounter such barriers (lack of resources and capacities) which limit their abilities to engage and influence freshwater management decision-making (Harmsworth et al. 2014, 2016). Yet, Ngāti Maniapoto iwi representatives maintain that lack of adequate resourcing is not the most critical factor that currently impedes their capacities to engage in and influence the new co-governance regime (Māori Business Owner 1 2019).

The Waipā River Act (and the other two River Acts), WRA, and V&S ostensibly hold the potential to disrupt entrenched settler-colonial water

governance systems and management practices, particularly given the extent to which statutes and plans now afford legal recognition to tikanga, iwi values, and aspirations. However, the persistence of settler-colonial structures, including the legal order and institutional arrangements, undermines the possibilities for enacting transformative changes to the settler-colonial status quo. As one NGO worker reflects:

I think councils [need to be] brave enough to give things a go and to relinquish some of the power that they feel like they hold. [But there is] seemingly a long way [to go] ... under [the current] co-management/co-governance situation ... council staff get paid to do [water] monitoring all the time [but] why aren't our kaitiaki [iwi members working to undertake river restoration] being paid on the other side of that equation? They're expected to do it voluntarily.

Once again questions about the lack of access to resources (or the continuation of distributive injustice) feature heavily in iwi accounts.

Procedural and Recognitional (In)Justices: Iwi Involvement in Planning Processes

The explicit recognition of Māori rights and interests in water, within the new legislation and co-governance regime, means little if the decision-making procedures in place do not allow for equitable and inclusive processes that allow for Māori interests to not only be recognised but also incorporated into policies, plans, and actions (Māori Business Owner 1 2019). At present, iwi members report that many central government agencies and local government authorities still treat iwi like they are just another stakeholder group, rather than Treaty and co-governance partners. Rather than decision-making authority being shared between state-to-state/iwi-government, iwi members report how the WRC continues to run its environmental planning processes (consisting of workshops, hearings, hui—meeting, planning meetings) as exercises in extended public consultation (so-called collaborative planning processes) with different stakeholder groups. Iwi are treated as little more than stakeholders by the

regional council (“the same as Beef + Lamb, the same as Fonterra, the same as anyone else”) even though they are both *mana whenua* and “iwi partners” (Māori Business Owner 1 2019).

One Ngāti Maniapoto participant, who was involved in the process of creating the new Waikato Regional Plan Change, reflected on his feelings about the (supposedly) inclusive and collaborative planning process:

I mean yes, it's nice that we're starting to see working groups being formed to consult on [Regional Council's Regional] Plan changes, but it still seems like ... a real tick in the box [bureaucratic] kind of thing for me; but it's progress, it's something, but ...

I found out [the community working group] not just [an iwi] working group, there [are] farmers and all of these other people as well sort of thing, so it's not giving [the River iwi] the *mana* to [they] deserve. We [Ngāti Maniapoto and other River iwi] are co-partners, we are co-managers, we are more than the farmer down the road and the fruit grower and everything else. We are equal to the council and the government if we are [to] true governance partners and true co-management partners then we should have more than just being treated like everyone else ... [The working group] was meant to be our opportunity [as *mana whenua*] to have our say and really it was just like [something that looked] nice [on paper,] but this is still going [to be] council [telling us their decision] because [they] need to meet the[ir] deadlines and we've [the River iwi] got to do [support] this and [the council already] decided this and [they had] already told the public. (Māori Business Owner 1 2019)

The above quote highlights the problems associated with recognition-based justice, as we previously discussed in Chap. 2, as despite the Deed of Settlement, V&S, and River Acts iwi perspectives remain marginalised within local government planning processes. In Aotearoa, like other settler-nations, it is the settler-state and its institutions who decide what Māori groups are recognised and how they are recognised. Such state-based definitions and solutions allow for existing unequal power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to effectively remain unchallenged. Accordingly, as scholars Coulthard and Schlosberg argue, recognition alone is not sufficient to guarantee just outcomes for Indigenous peoples (Coulthard 2014; Schlosberg 2013; Schlosberg and

Carruthers 2010). Environmental justice requires a clear focus on translating recognition (of Māori as *mana whenua* as well as Treaty and co-governance partners) into equitable political participation (procedures) and the achievement of distributional equity.

Such political participation requires that procedures are not just one that replicates those of the settler-state, but instead include Māori preferences about and ways of organising participatory processes (Māori Business Owner 1 2019). Iwi members express the importance of more in-depth planning procedures that are more in line with the decision-making processes run within Māori governance systems that centre on *korero* (talking) over days, weeks, and months (and sometimes years) about an issue, which does not just involve leaders and/or experts, but include all iwi members (who want to participate) (Mahuika 2010; Webster and Cheyne 2017). These typically involve local-level (flax-roots) discussions held on *marae* whereby iwi, hapū, and whānau members can discuss and debate the issue before reaching a consensus-based decision (Iwi Rep 7 2019). The new co-governance institutions and arrangements should allow iwi to be able to choose what modes of governance suit them best (to choose between *Te Ao Māori* or *Te Ao Pākehā* or occupy the “middle ground” between cultures) (O’Malley 2013). However, at present many iwi representatives felt that the co-governance arrangements are solely designed to accommodate Pākehā ways of knowing and doing rather than those of Māori.

Wider scholarship highlights that such shortcomings in collaborative or joint arrangements are commonplace (Denny and Fanning 2016; Pirsoul 2019a, b; von der Porten et al. 2015; von der Porten and de Loë 2013). Bureaucratism and box-ticking, Pirsoul and Armoudian (2019) observe, during consultative or collaborative governance and planning mechanisms mean that Indigenous peoples experience procedural inclusion in formal processes “without any substance of authentic power” (Pirsoul and Armoudian 2019, p. 4827). The concept of “wallpaper democracy”—whereby people focus on talking about the style and colour of the wallpaper without discussing the substance, arrangements or structures more generally—could be evidence in some of the procedures that are occurring within the Waikato context (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Pirsoul and Armoudian 2019). Such occurrences highlight how power

imbalances between partners can emerge from co-governance arrangements, which is also noticeable elsewhere in Aotearoa, where the Crown shows a tendency to treat iwi as junior partners (Morgan and Te Aho 2013; O'Sullivan 2007; Pirsoul and Armoudian 2019; Stevens 2013). An obvious example was the 2012 legal challenges made by Māori iwi against the Crown's partial sale of its government-owned hydroelectric and geothermal energy companies (including the Mighty River Power Company that operated on the Waikato River). The Treaty settlements for Waikato-Tainui, Raukawa, Ngati Tuwharetoa, and Te Arawa, from the perspective of iwi, included them being given the first right of refusal to purchase any Crown-owned assets (including energy companies) before the Crown offered them for sale on the open market. However, this did not occur, and the Crown instead sold it to private buyers (non-Māori) (Jones 2012; Muru-Lanning 2016; Strang 2014).

Procedural and Recognitional (In)Justices: Critiques of the WRA

The lack of transparency in the WRA decision-making processes is of particular concern to iwi members. One scientist acknowledges that while the co-governance and co-management arrangements are important for Ngāti Maniapoto, she holds “mixed feelings about the WRA” as an institution (Scientist 2 2019). The leadership of the WRA, in her view, is “quite underhanded and ... personality-driven, not kaupapa driven”. The kaupapa (principle) for the WRA is “very clearly laid out in the vision and strategy of the Waikato and Waipā rivers”; however, it is not being translated into actions (Scientist 2 2019). There are some “big influential personalities that are leading that organisation”, which means they are “ticking the boxes but not necessarily genuinely trying to give effect to the vision and strategy at all times” (Scientist 2 2019). Furthermore, since the WRA is not subject to the legislation governing freedom of information (such as the Official Information Act 1982 and the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987) its “trustees do not have to make minutes of their meetings public or publicise where meetings are

held and can hold meetings behind closed doors” (Pirsoul and Armoudian 2019, p. 4827).

The closed nature of the WRA and its failure to share the information with iwi members raises concerns about what influence the settler-state, powerful interest groups (such as political parties, lobby groups and businesses), and individuals have on how the institution operates. As one scientist involved in river restoration states: “I don’t know who and why this [the allocation of funding is occurring] but I still feel like it’s being influenced more heavily from [other groups and] ... there are complicated organisational and political relationships” (Scientist 2 2019). Indeed, while she acknowledges “the mahi [work] they [the WRA] are funding” for whānau to do is “amazing”, she argues that “there’s just a huge imbalance of how [the WRA] are investing the money which is intended for iwi”. The overall leadership of the WRA is “kind of dictating the tone of how that funding is spent”, irrespective of its policies and regulations. Interviewees expressed ambivalence about the proportion of funding awarded to non-iwi-led projects, which reflected a more general desire for iwi and hapū to exercise *kaitiakitanga* (environmental guardianship) over their awa as a way of redressing historical and contemporary inequities (Iwi Rep 5 2019; Iwi Rep 6, 2019; Māori Business Owner, 2019). Many of our interviewees, both Māori and non-Māori, query how the WRA makes its decisions, noting that the co-governance entity is not truly representing the interests of iwi members; instead, it may be guilty of perpetuating the distributional and procedural injustices that it is designed to redress (NGO Rep 1 2017).

The work of Māori scholar Muru-Lanning (who iwi is Waikato-Tainui) rearticulates the criticisms made by our research participants about the co-governance structure of the WRA being largely a Western model of governance rather than a Māori or hybrid governance structure (Muru-Lanning 2012a, b, 2016; Pirsoul and Armoudian 2019). Muru-Lanning (2012a) describes it as an inherently western institutional arrangement wherein “appointed representatives mak[e] formal statutory decisions on behalf of the various groups” and, thus, “a model or way of viewing the river which is foreign to most Māori and one in which they cannot easily participate” (Muru-Lanning 2012a). Indeed, the operations of the

co-governance entity currently left much to be desired for iwi members we interviewed (Iwi Rep 5 2019; Māori Business Owner 1 2019). While interview participants agreed that the kaupapa (purpose and objectives) of the WRA remains correct, they also had concerns that the “the practical application of the [Waikato] River Authority is another matter” (Iwi Rep 5 2019) particularly in light of challenges arising from increasing pressure on the Waikato and Waipā Rivers (including lag effects associated with landuse activities). In marked contrast, local government officials we interviewed consider that the new co-governance arrangements are working exceeding well and see no reason for any changes to existing processes or institutional arrangements (Local Government Rep 1 2018; Local Government Rep 2 2019). These differences in perspectives highlight the extent to which settler-colonial knowledge, values, and governance systems continue to be the taken for granted norm and that those in positions of power (and settler privilege) are not able to see their ontological and epistemological blind spots, and in doing so fail to appreciate other ways of knowing and engaging with water

Recognitional (In)Justice: Ngāti Maniapoto Ontologies and Epistemologies

Ngāti Maniapoto iwi representatives criticised the current freshwater co-governance arrangements for not adequately reflecting Māori ontologies, epistemologies and governance systems. As one iwi member noted:

If I was to draw a picture, I'd be drawing a picture saying this is *Papatūānuku* [Earth Mother]. This is *Ranginui* [Sky Father]. ... If it's about caring for everything that exists between these two [*Papatūānuku* and *Ranginui*] and including them, ... You can't take a *Pākehā* process and put them [*Papatūānuku* and *Ranginui* into it]—you can't... it wouldn't work. It ... [is] our *mana*. Our sovereignty and our space. [The] lens ... says [that] *Papatūānuku's* here ... It's... [a] Māori worldview. (Iwi Rep 8 2019)

Iwi members describe the refusal (or inability) of non-Māori, specifically Pākehā council staff, consultants employed by councils and private developers to ‘consult’ with iwi, to seek to understand Māori ways of

knowing water. Some Pākehā, iwi members, observe, remain steadfast in their narrow view of water as a resource (to be used and managed by humans for their benefit) (Iwi Rep 2 2020; Iwi Rep 5 2019; Iwi Rep 7 2019); although, some Pākehā (often scientists) perceive water as a combination of elements (H_2O) that is tied to the health of both human and ecological communities but struggle to comprehend water worlds that are not premised on Western scientific knowledge and practices (Scientist 1 2017). The limitations of current co-governance arrangements, many iwi members describe, as due to the incapacity of Pākehā to embrace plural ontologies and epistemologies of water, and their lack of respect shown to wai (water) as a living entity as well as the other more-than-human entities that dwell within their waterscapes and landscapes. For Ngāti Maniapoto, the Waipā River is a living being, she (as the river is female) is the tupuna of the iwi, who possesses her own mauri and wairua (Iwi Rep 5 2019).

Elsewhere in this book, we detail the meaning of rivers as more-than-human-entities for iwi, and the implications of different ontologies of water for how water is (and was historically) governed and managed in Aotearoa. In particular, we build on the work of other scholars to highlight how the lack of respect given to rivers as entities who possess their own mauri, wairua, and mana translates into water governance and decisions that continue to favour the settler-colonial status quo (Blaser 2014; Sundberg 2014). Iwi members highlight how their abilities to harvest freshwater resources (most notably indigenous biota including freshwater eels/tuna) remains severely limited due to poor water quality and a low number of aquatic fauna and flora living in the awa, and how their attempts to hold councils to account through planning processes remains restricted (Iwi Rep 2 2020; Iwi Rep 4 2020; Iwi Rep 5 2019; Iwi Rep 8 2019).

Iwi members argue that to understand the purpose of the River Acts and the WRA requires that decision-makers comprehend the “Maori component” of the River Acts, which includes a preamble written in Te Reo Māori (the Māori language) and Māori terms (such as mana, mauri, and wairua) used throughout each of the three River Acts. Similarly, the recent changes made to the Waikato Regional Plan include references to mātauranga and tikanga. Thus, it is important that officials (be it Māori

or non-Māori) involved in co-governance initiatives (“it doesn’t matter who’s sitting across the table” as one iwi representative stated) “always hold the true intent” of the meanings of the terms. All parties should be working to protect and restore the mauri and wairua of the awa as outlined in the statutes and V&S (Iwi Rep 5 2019). Iwi members spoke of being tired and frustrated that they are always responsible for explaining not only Te Ao Māori and tikanga but also legal documents (such as the Treaty of Waitangi, Treaty settlements, and the Waipā River Act) to officials and stakeholders, and that the settler-state needed to ensure it educated its staff on such matters.

Water pollution, which we discussed earlier in Chap. 5, continues to be a problem despite the new co-governance and co-management arrangements. Local councils continue their earlier practices of discharging sewage into the waterways, despite Māori opposition to water-based waste disposal. District councils continue to use the practice (which is authorised by the WRC and supported by the judgement of the courts) because such water-based waste disposal is, according to the dominant knowledge, values and management approaches of Te Ao Pākehā, both cost-effective and safe. Yet, from the perspective of Ngāti Maniapoto, the disposal of waste into water is a deeply offensive and completely unacceptable practice which breaches their laws and threatens the health and wellbeing of both human and more-than-human communities (Amohanga et al. 1997; Hauauru Ki Uta Regional Management Committee 2012; Unknown Author 1996; Waitomo District Council 2011); any human waste (treated or untreated) that enters water diminishes the mauri, wairua, and mana of that water as well as all those who are connected to that water (be it mana whenua, the taniwha waiwaia, or flora and fauna). Such ontological politics of water are similarly found in other settler-colonial contexts. In the context of the Yukon (Canada), where a range of water co-governance agreements exist between Indigenous First Nations and the settler-state, scholars including Wilson and Inkster (2018) note how Indigenous views of the water as a living entity is continually disregarded by the settler-state (Wilson 2019; Wilson et al. 2019; Wilson and Inkster 2018). The disrespect of water (as a living entity) is shown, as the work of Wilson (2020) highlights, in the “water licensing decisions that prioritise industrial water use over First Nation

relationships to water and over the current or projected impacts of the water licenses” (Wilson 2020, p. 108); which parallel the ongoing decisions made in Aotearoa (by central and local governments as well as the courts) to prioritise local councils’ use of rivers, lakes, and seas for waste disposal over Māori relationships to water. While numerous scholars advocate for approaches that employ ontological pluralism to address power disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in colonial contexts, there remains a disconnect between theory and practice (Ahmad 2019; Blaney and Tickner 2017; Blaser 2014; Grosfoguel 2015; Howitt and Suchet-Pearson 2006; Maldonado-Torres 2016). The ontological conflicts evident in the Waipā River of Aotearoa (paralleling those in Yukon Canada) highlight the problems associated with trying to translate ontological pluralism (even when embedded within statutes and co-governance agreements) from paper into on-the-ground (more specifically in planning forums and court decisions) actions.

The lack of knowledge amongst government officials extended not only to their failure to comprehend Māori worldviews and values but also to their limited understanding of Waikato and Aotearoa histories. Iwi members note that few government officials seemed to know anything about Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) nor of Māori experiences of violence and dispossession as a consequence of the Crown’s failure to honour the Treaty. Without this historical knowledge, officials remained ignorant about what the Treaty principles (see Chap. 6) are as well as the purpose of the Treaty settlements and the new co-governance arrangements. Ngāti Maniapoto iwi members (in line with Te Ao Māori) perceive everything as connected, with the past events (particularly those experienced by one’s ancestors) of critical importance to guiding the decisions that current and future generations make; thus, “everything [is based on] relationships” between living beings (human and more-than-human) (Iwi Rep 5 2019). In contrast, iwi members report that many of those members representing the settler-state in co-governance arrangements (in line with Te Ao Pākehā) only focus on the present and “only look as far as the legislation [establishing the WRA], so they only go back to ... the signing of the legislation in 2010”. However, to understand the legislation and the purpose of the WRA, as one iwi member argues:

“you’ve got to look like way before then [to the Treaty to understand the context”. The lack of historical understanding means that in the “practical application of the mechanism [of co-governance] sometimes [is] get[ting] lost in translation and [it is currently] fall[ing] short of the expectations of iwi” (Iwi Rep 5 2019).

Mark Hickford’s work on Treaty settlements suggests that there are often difficulties reconciling the “complexities of co-existence” following Treaty settlements when the reality of pluralities (of multiple worlds) are operationalised. There is an “interpretive risk” when “strangers to the processes of negotiating [Treaty settlements] end up interpreting what was agreed at earlier moments in time and constructing different ways of understanding those concepts captured in legislation and deed of settlement” (Hickford and Humphries-Kil 2018, p. 170). Yet, these interpretive dangers, we argue, are more prevalent for non-Māori than Māori iwi given the extent to which large numbers of iwi members typically participate in Waitangi Tribunal and Treaty settlement processes (as demonstrated most recently within the Te Rohe Potāe Waitangi Tribunal inquiry wherein hundreds of individuals and whānau made written and oral submissions to the inquiry as well as participating in oral histories collected by researchers). The majority of iwi representatives we interviewed had been involved in either the Tribunal inquiry and/or the Treaty settlement process in some way, and so they are no strangers to the process or documents. Rather, it is government officials and stakeholders who are the strangers, and it is iwi members who are constantly left with the task of trying to explain the kaupapa (purpose) that rests behind co-governance arrangements (Iwi Rep 5 2019). Yet, we argue, that this seemingly never-ending task imposed on Māori as the educator and/or translator to non-Māori about not only Te Ao Māori but also the shared histories, legal frameworks, and institutions that are the building blocks of modern Aotearoa (the Treaty, Treaty settlements) is simply rearticulating colonial oppression; once again, the power and entitlements are unfairly distributed to maintain the status and to privilege of Te Ao Pākehā and the settler-state over Te Ao Māori and Māori communities.

Māori scholars Nēpia Mahuika and Graham Hingangaroa Smith, drawing on theorist Paulo Freire's theory of transformative praxis, contend that both oppressor (settlers) and the oppressed (Indigenous peoples) can be liberated through the praxis of reflection and action that involves a process of consciousness-raising (Mahuika 2009; Smith 1997, 2015). Freire maintains that: "Liberation is a praxis [which] cannot be unfold[ed] in isolation or individualism, but only through fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between the oppressors and the oppressed" (Freire 1986, p. 79). Mahuika argues, in the context of how histories of Aotearoa are written, that the "transformation of the 'nation' is not a process or dream that can only be realised by Māori alone" (Mahuika 2009, p. 143). He calls on Pākehā historians to educate themselves (about Māori histories, tikanga, and knowledges) and in doing so adopt the process of reflecting on and taking actions that transform how they research, conceptualise, and write national and local histories in a way that does not reinforce colonial narratives, stereotypes and injustices against Māori (Mahuika 2009, 2015). Indeed, we argue that such a cyclical process of learning, critically reflecting, and transforming one's actions are similarly necessarily for non-Māori (be it council officials, consultants, board members, or other stakeholders) involved in freshwater governance and management to ensure that the litany of environmental injustices experienced by Māori are not repeated in the future. We are not arguing, however, that recognition and actions by Māori (and other Indigenous peoples) to resist, contest, reflect, and take actions (which includes actions to reassert their knowledges and sovereignties) are not critical; but rather that in settler-colonial societies, wherein multiple cultures now live, the importance of all people being able to practice the act of "two-eyed seeing" (Bartlett et al. 2012), walking between worlds (Salmond 2017), or existing in the pluriverse (Conway and Singh 2011; Hutchings 2019; Oslender 2019) is a fundamental part of environmental justice. Such acts of thinking and walking in and between water worlds (of Te Ao Pākehā and Te Ao Māori) cannot be ones that only Māori are expected to perform, all those who are involved in water governance in Aotearoa should be expected to walk the ontological and epistemological tightrope as a means to address current and avoid future injustices.

Conclusion

Ngāti Maniapoto iwi members argue that the ontological pluralistic visions, knowledge, and values (incorporating both Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā—the worlds of Māori and Pākehā) that underpin water co-governance agreements (as with the Treaty more than 150 years earlier) are not being translated into practice. Instead, the implementation of co-governance arrangements continues to be situated within the world of Pākehā and Western systems of governance, and in doing so, Ngāti Maniapoto ontologies and epistemologies continue to be marginalised. Yet, the results of our research highlight that research participants who whakapapa to the Waipā River strongly emphasise how changing to co-governance arrangements, in favour of more local-level (iwi- and hapū-centred) decision-making, should enable them to fulfil their aspirations to restore the health and wellbeing of their awa in ways that are more in touch with their knowledge, values, and governance structures. Flax-roots initiatives can, we suggest, ensure that “deliberative functions of establishing mutual respect and creating inclusive” and equitable decision-making processes are achieved, which includes redressing social and environmental injustices experienced by iwi (Pirsoul and Armoudian 2019, p. 4630). Yet, since environmental justice is plural rather than single (recognition, procedural, and distributional justice), actions required to address the continued misrecognition (or failure to recognise) of Ngāti Maniapoto interests, their mātauranga and tikanga, as well as the distributional inequities, and lack of procedural inclusion they continue to experience. While explicit recognition of Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies within the legislation, government plans, and co-governance agreements are important steps towards addressing injustices, recognition alone is not enough to guarantee just outcomes. Further and ongoing changes are needed to ensure distributive equity and fairness in decision-making processes, and provide Indigenous peoples with a locus of control over their lives, livelihoods, and ancestral territories. Within the context of freshwater co-governance arrangements, the extension of

iwi authorities decision-making powers over their awa and resources, which includes not only the right to be consulted but also the capacities to make decisions (including vetoing developments that are against tikanga) are critical steps to address the environmental injustices experienced by Māori.

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