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**The good fight:  
Power and the indigenous struggle for the  
Manawatū River**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

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# Abstract

Power is the central theme of this research. This thesis examines how power structures iwi contributions to freshwater planning and decision-making. Power has received little attention in literature on Māori and natural resource planning, even though it reproduces and potentially transforms existing inequalities among Māori, other actors and planning institutions. In failing to analyse power, scholars have left a significant gap in the literature.

In New Zealand, the deleterious effects of agricultural expansion on water have significant implications for iwi, as water is linked to tribal identity and mana. Both past and current generations have struggled to protect water. Contemporary strategies to restore degraded water bodies and reclaim mana, as control and authority, over water include co-management arrangements.

Simultaneously, Government has taken an enthusiastic, uncritical stance to promoting collaboration as an approach to freshwater planning, including iwi as one among multiple actors. In this pro-collaboration climate, however, power has been ignored. So, this research asks: *How does power structure iwi contributions to freshwater planning and decision-making?*

To answer this question, a case study was undertaken of the Manawatū River, a highly degraded water body in the lower North Island of New Zealand. Two main methods were used to collect data: semi-structured interviews with 13 key informants and an analysis of 214 documents, including 180 newspaper articles. To interpret the data, the theoretical framework used Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus.

The research found that power structures all contributions to freshwater decision-making into a hierarchy, with iwi contributions typically marginalised. The

hierarchy is a colonial legacy which continues to be reproduced in multiple ways. So, while collaboration, as advocated by the Crown, has some benefits for iwi, it will not help re-structure this hierarchy to enable iwi to regain control over water. Other strategies, such as Treaty of Waitangi settlements, are liable to be more effective.

This finding implies that iwi must assess whether co-management or collaboration strategies will enable them to reshape power imbalance. Gaining power is critical to transform inequality, reclaim authority and restore the mauri of water for future generations.

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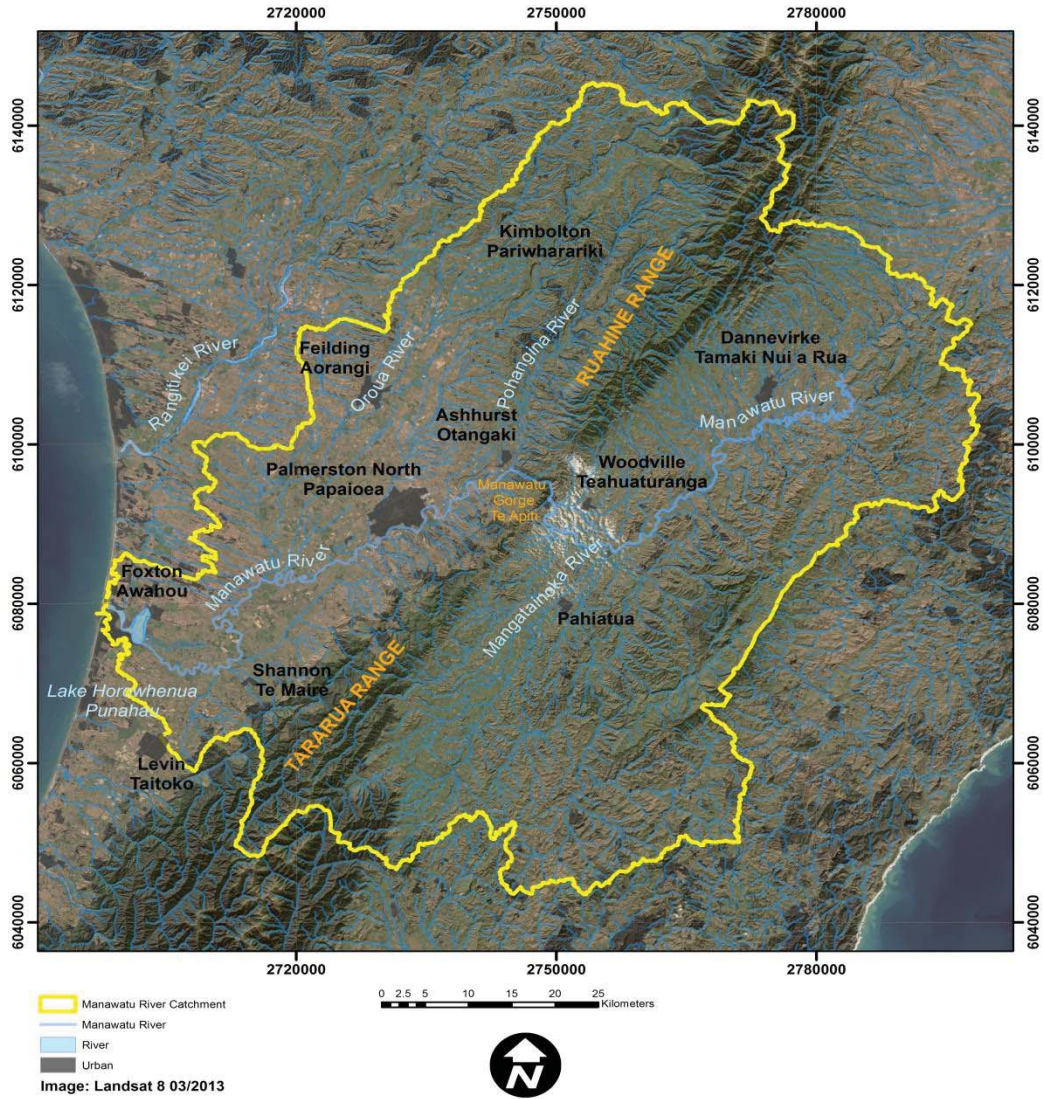
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# Abbreviations

DOC	Department of Conservation
EERNZ	Ecological Economics Research New Zealand
IFS	Integrated Freshwater Solutions
JMA	Joint Management Agreement
LUC	Land Use Capability
MP	Member of Parliament
NOF	National Objectives Framework
NPS	National Policy Statement
NZHC	New Zealand High Court
NZLR	New Zealand Law Reports
NZTPA	New Zealand Town Planning Appeals
PCE	Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
PNCC	Palmerston North City Council
RMA	Resource Management Act
TMI	Tanenuiarangi Manawatū Incorporated (also referred to as Tanenuiarangi o Manawatū Incorporated)
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



**Figure 1: Manawatū River catchment**

(Map prepared by J. Procter)