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**ENVIRONMENTAL GUARDIANSHIP IN
NEW ZEALAND: A CROSS CULTURAL
ENCOUNTER**

A thesis submitted for the partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master in Resource and Environmental Planning
at Massey University, Palmerston North
New Zealand

Paulina Hassey Fernández

December 2002

A mi mamá y papá

Que sin saberlo empezaron a escribir estas líneas hace muchos años,

A Paulo

La hueya junto a mis pasos a lo largo de este camino.

ABSTRACT

In New Zealand, managing natural resources and planning for the environment entail a cross-cultural encounter between the Maori and the Modern Western worldviews. As different worldviews, each of these groups gives meaning, form and order to their respective experiences of reality in fundamentally different ways. The Maori notion of a spiritual ultimate reality and the rational apprehension of a material reality in the Modern Western worldview produce incompatible and irreducible views over the guardianship of natural resources and the environment. The Resource Management Act 1991 as the major piece of legislation for environmental planning in New Zealand is, however, predominantly monocultural, i.e. based on Modern Western worldview as an absolute and exclusive approach. Therefore, the relationship between Maori and the New Zealand Government in this regard, is characterized by both a deeply-rooted imbalance, and a difficulty to effectively communicate and understand each other. It is suggested that the first step towards an appropriate framework for a cross-cultural relationship, is to overcome exclusivist and absolutist attitudes and claims that sustain the predominance of the Modern Western worldview over the Maori. Creating communication and understanding in symbolic levels may bridge the gap between Maori and the Government, and lay the foundations to redress the imbalance in their relationship. Examination of the Resource Management Act and the Treaty settlement process suggests this is feasible and successful approach for dealing with cross-cultural issues and to move towards pluralism in managing natural resources. This thesis concludes in recommendations for moving towards pluralism in New Zealand environmental management, and thereby a reduction in the imbalance between Maori and the government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I wish to thank Taranaki and Waimarino Nuri, Niwa and the rest of the family for taking me into the heart of your wonderful culture, for sharing with me valuable knowledge and time, and most of all, I thank you for showing me that which one cannot find in books: the spirit of Maoridom. For this thesis, and my own personal journey would not have been possible without it.

To my supervisor, Dr. Meredith Gibbs I wish to express my most sincere gratitude for being really committed with this project, for believing in it, and for her guidance and lengthy discussions. Thank you so much for that critical lawyer-way-of-thinking and enthusiasm, for it is what anyone would wish from a supervisor. I also wish to thank Dr. Scott Eastham who generously offered to review and comment on the thesis.

I would like to thank the New Zealand Official Development Assistance programme for giving me the opportunity to come to New Zealand and learn about policies, processes and mechanisms that may be helpful for the situation in México. Special thanks to Sylvia Hooker from the International Student Office for looking after us.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Jorge Alvarez, Mexican ambassador for New Zealand, and Mr. Eusebio del Cueto, Minister of the Mexican embassy for New Zealand for their support, time, enthusiasm and for contacting me with Taranaki Nuri and family.

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